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Unlawful Entry

Male Fears of Psychic Penetration

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In this paper, it is argued that males as well as females have an early experience in relation to the nursing mother of being receptive to bodily and psychic penetration. Males tend to lose access to this experience and may come to fear penetration as a threat such that a masculine sense of self is felt to be dependent on an impermeable psychic boundary that is *not* to be penetrated. Instead, phallicism as a fortress of emotional self-sufficiency—which the author labels the *citadel complex*—becomes the matrix of a subjective sense of masculinity. The multiple and combined forces of bodily development, the establishment of gender identity, and the process of separation-individuation are examined for their role in this process.

A critique of the Lacanian concept of paternal law suggests that the “law of the father” can be interpreted as a law regulating penetration. Paternal law can be viewed as a code for the establishment of an impenetrable masculinity whereby entry into an adult male psyche becomes unthinkable, “unlawful.” An impermeable bodily and psychic boundary—the ability to penetrate without the *ability* to be penetrated—collapses a necessary dialectical tension that may affect men’s experience of sex and of love and that may shape and limit their desire.

IN CLASSICAL PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY, MALE FEAR OF SYMBOLIC penetration (a frequent theme in analyses) has been viewed as conflict over latent homosexuality—wishes for, and fear of, anal

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penetration by the analyst. In that formulation, psychic penetration is *by* a male and equates with homosexuality. More recent approaches focus not on tabooed homosexual wishes but on fears regarding loss of masculinity (Wisdom, 1983; Kaplan, 1991; Purcell, 1993). Being penetrated is then seen to be experienced as equivalent to femininity and is thus an issue of gender rather than of sexual orientation.

I argue that the original basis for identifications as penetrator and as penetrated is not gender delimited: Males as well as females have an early experience of being penetrated by the breast in the nursing relation with the mother (Elise, 1998a).¹ A woman is the first penetrator, and the experience of being penetrated is enjoyed by both sexes. Males tend to lose access to this experience and may come to fear penetration as a threat—a threat to their heterosexual identity, a threat to their sense of masculinity, and, I would add, most basically a threat to their very sense of personhood, to a separated and individuated identity.

I discuss the degree to which a masculine sense of self in many heterosexual males² may tend to be based on, *may be dependent on*, an impermeable psychic boundary that is *not* to be penetrated. This requirement appears to be central in so many ways to so many men that it is inadequate to view it solely as reflecting fear of homosexuality, and it may not be fully descriptive to think of this emphasis on masculine impenetrability as reactive to threats to core gender identity. I believe that male fear of psychic penetration may be basic enough to be seen as responsive to a perceived threat to core *identity* from which masculinity is seen as inextricable. Christiansen (1996) wrote that the equilibrium of male personality may be threatened “due to the fact that *a deep, psychotic kernel of sexual nondifferentiation exists side-by-side with and is continually experienced as threatening to core male gender identity*” (p. 119). Sanity itself may be felt to be at stake in male confusion over fear of, and desire for, penetration.

Analytic theory based on the Lacanian concept of paternal law considers the father to be the “third” who intervenes in mother–child symbiosis and thus establishes difference—individual, gender, and

¹ The current paper reviews and builds on this earlier work.

² In this paper, I do not take up the role of psychic penetration in the psychology of gay men. My clinical experience does not allow me to adequately theorize the salience of this dynamic for gay men, which I envision may involve certain complexities that should be given careful consideration.

generational—necessary to the acquisition of a solid sense of self and the avoidance of psychosis. I suggest, however, that the “law of the father” (Lacan, 1958) can also be interpreted as a law regarding penetration, regulating who can do what to whom. Paternal law can be viewed as a code for the establishment of an impenetrable masculinity whereby entry into an adult male psyche becomes unthinkable, “unlawful.”

Eissler (1977), looking through an essentializing lens, argued that penetration, as a psychobiological entity, is the key issue differentiating the sexes. He acknowledged that these wishes to penetrate and to be penetrated “are not as sex-specific as one might expect” given their “biological mission” in male and female sexuality (p. 37). I propose that it is not primarily the penetrability of the body, but of the mind, that influences sense of self, gender, sexuality, and relational dynamics. For many men, a fixed versus a permeable bodily and psychic boundary—the ability to penetrate without the *ability* to be penetrated—may collapse a necessary dialectical tension that can affect men’s experience of sex and of love and that can shape and limit their desire.

The difficulty that numerous men tend to have with psychic permeability can be seen to manifest itself in relations with other men, such as coworkers and friends (Kaftal, 1991), in love relations and sexuality with women (Chodorow, 1978; Rubin, 1983), in the resistance men have to entering and engaging in treatment (Kaftal, 1991; Axelrod, 1997; Real, 1997), and in resistances that male analysts may experience to certain transferences (Renik, 1990). I propose the possibility of a male 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. It is seen as an important aspect of adult male development to work through this fear.

Let me be explicit at the outset that I am not describing all men for all time. I view the dynamic I am addressing as too pervasive in male psychology in this culture, and the question I pose to the reader is whether this description sounds (too) familiar, not whether it describes each and every man. Many individual differences exist, and yet phallicism depicts a myth of masculinity that males have to contend with even if this fictive cultural icon does not reflect their individual personality. It is an important question as to whether these penetration anxieties are prevalent for men of varying race, class, ethnicity, and

sexual orientation, as well as for given individuals who do not adopt the dominant cultural fiction (Silverman, 1992) regarding masculinity. I hope to further explicate a particular matrix of masculinity under patriarchy that has been problematic for many men and thus warrants attention. Often at the time when a specific psychic configuration is starting to change, perspective can be achieved on its pervasiveness. Clarifying a trend is not meant to entrench but the opposite—to further change.

The Closing of the Male Psyche

One Woman's Perspective

In a previous paper (Elise, 1998a), I described a bisexual, female patient whose sexual experience in relationships with men and then with women expanded her gendered sense of self. My patient showed shifting gender identifications depending on the relational context—the geography of the lover's body and mind. My patient came to see herself as able to be psychologically as well as physically penetrating, and she felt that another woman was more penetrable *psychologically* than she experienced men to be.

In this woman's relations with men, male fears of being bodily and psychically penetrated posed an obstacle to certain aspects of her expanded gender repertoire. She felt frustrated with the apparent absence in men of a particular quality of psychological vulnerability that she experienced women lovers to have. She remarked, "You can literally take a man's clothes off, but you can't really undress him in the more figurative, symbolic sense." I understood her experience to indicate that penetration is not inherently male. The theme I pursue in the present paper concerns a certain psychic impermeability in various men that interferes with their *receptivity* to penetration. The concept of male psychic permeability and receptivity rests on a theory regarding the universality of bisexual identifications.

The Nursing Couple

In viewing the nursing relation as the first, primitive act of intercourse, sexually stimulating for infants of both sexes (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1995), I have elaborated the following theoretical formulation.

The basic elements of bisexuality are contained within the creative relation to the breast, which involves the relation of the penetrated to the penetrating and the ability to imagine oneself in both positions (Elise, 1998a). The infant is the recipient of the mother's penetration and becomes a penetrator by identification with the mother. The nursing relation is a form of potential space allowing for many imaginative possibilities regarding sexual anatomy and activities. The interpenetration of bodily surfaces is central to erotic desire and is deeply linked for both sexes in the early relation with mother (Kernberg, 1991). To penetrate and to be penetrated form a core of sexual excitement as psychic and physical boundaries are crossed. Kernberg (1991) underscored that these polymorphous perverse features are a "crucial aspect of normal sexuality" (p. 340) and represent universal bisexual identifications. To the metaphors of the combined parent and the primal scene (Aron, 1995), I add the metaphor of the nursing couple (Winnicott, 1952, p. 99) as the earliest matrix of bisexual self- and object representations.

If, as I have been arguing, males have an early bodily and psychic experience of receptive excitement and an enlivened sense of interiority, what then are the forces that close down this self-representation and lead instead to a masculine focus on externality? Given the powerful pull for a male to represent the self as *not* permeable, it is necessary to consider the multiple and combined forces of bodily development, the establishment of gender identity, and the process of separation-individuation. I believe that a closed quality in a masculine psyche may have roots in a certain bodily/genital closing up that parallels—and that is reinforced on an emotional level through—the specifically masculine experience of separating from the mother and identifying with the father. Significantly, these intertwining developmental experiences take place within a particular cultural context.

The Body and Male Genital Anxiety

Friedman (1996) provided an important perspective in understanding male psychology by focusing our attention on the male body—specifically, the neglected influence on the psyche of the testicles and their development. Friedman stated, "Male body image formation after the phallic stage is a complex emotional and intellectual task involving

temporary denial of the inner body and testicles” (p. 201), and he called for a revised account of male sexuality. He reviewed earlier and eventually forgotten papers by Anita Bell (1961, 1964, 1965, 1968; Bell, Stroebel, and Prior, 1971), who stressed that the testicles have basic feminine and passive connotations and that “universal castration anxieties concerning the testes and scrotum exist deep in the biological bedrock of the male psyche” (Friedman, p. 202).

Friedman (1996) reviewed anatomical development. Prenatally, the testes begin as an internal organ, high in the abdominal cavity near the diaphragm, descending only two months before birth through the inguinal canal. All young boys experience testicular retractions to some degree, and it is possible for the testicles to actually disappear back into the body: “Approximately one-third of pre-school boys have testicles that will migrate into the inguinal canal when they are stroked on the thigh. . . . Even at age 11 years 50 percent of the testes can still retract to the top or out of the scrotum. Only at age 13 years have retractions out of the scrotum disappeared altogether” (p. 208). The testes connect to internal sensations that are confusing and anxiety-provoking for the boy, and the fact that the testicles can actually retrace their path back up into the body leads to quite reality-oriented castration fears (vs. the classical emphasis on the sight of the female genitalia). In response to disappearing testicles and disturbing inner body sensations, a boy invests defensively in the penis, which is *never* missing.

Bell (1968) emphasized that the testicles—symbolically equated with breasts, babies, eggs, and uterus—play a central role in a boy’s feminine identification and bisexuality: A boy identifies with the mother’s procreative ability. Castration anxiety and fears of helpless passivity soon lead, however, to a denial of the internal body and toward a defensive focus on the external body and on mastery of the external world—a phallic identity. Friedman (1996) questioned the idea, prominent in analytic theory, of male body image as unproblematic. He saw the traditional representation of male sexuality—as purely phallic, with testicles ignored—as a defensive distortion. Friedman underscored the need to include in our definitions of maleness “more of the ‘inner space’ repudiated by men and projected onto women” (p. 249). He stressed the need for men to deal with anxieties regarding their own “dark continent” of their inner body.

Friedman’s thesis parallels that of Kestenberg (1968), who felt that repudiation of femininity by both sexes is based on anxiety regarding

inner genital sensations and that “extreme denial of the inside makes a man unable to identify with women” (p. 463). Kestenberg also noted the reluctance to acknowledge the testicles. The diverting of the castration threat to the penis “counteracted man’s need to open himself—equated with death—and penetrate himself—equated with femininity” (p. 490). Projection onto women of the wish to be penetrated bolsters a phallic identity and detracts attention from the secrets of a male’s own insides.

It is easy to understand the foundation for what Kestenberg (1968) described as “the boy’s fantasy of the inguinal route as passage of impregnation and delivery” (p. 508) when recalling Friedman’s statistics on testicular retractions and the fact that some boys masturbate by actually inserting the testicles into the body. I note that the Latin term for the pathway of original descent of the testes is *processus vaginalis* (Romanes, 1981, p. 556); the boy’s fantasy has its counterpart in medical terminology. It becomes clear that males have ample opportunity, even at the level of the physical body, to develop images of being penetrated in a manner that is quite analogous to vaginal penetration of the female. Just as females experience anxiety about entry into their body and the resultant sense of vulnerability and loss of control, males too can experience this anxiety. Males, however, must also contend with an additional anxiety, the fear that, if they *are* penetrated, they will then be unable *to* penetrate—and this is felt to equate with loss of masculinity. When a bodily experience of a genitally based closing up occurs for a boy, anxiety is reduced; he does not lose his “balls,” either literally or figuratively.

Not only do boys repress these frightening images regarding the testicles and the inner body, but, as Bell et al. (1971) pointed out, psychoanalytic theorists have maintained a long-standing silence on this topic. Only in more recent literature has emphasis been placed on boys’ envy of the ability to have babies and has recognition been given to the fact that genital envy is not limited to girls (Fast, 1994; Lax, 1997).³ Fast (1994) stated that boys, in coming to terms with the

³Although Klein (1945) emphasized that “feminine desires are always an inherent feature in the boy’s development” (p. 411), gender has been relatively ignored in subsequent Kleinian literature (see Breen, 1993, p. 8). In the analytic literature on gender, focus on male envy of the female has been submerged by the preoccupation with female envy of the penis.

fact that the valued capacity to give birth is a female prerogative, may believe that “all fundamental creativity is denied them” (p. 64) and may then “forgo their wishes to be nurturant as inappropriate to their maleness” (p. 65). Lax (1997) wrote of the pressures on a boy to “shun, devalue and repress his wishes for feminine attributes” (p. 135). Thus, males may defensively disidentify with any womb-like qualities and may repress an internally based sense of self. In denial of certain wishes and fears, the interior of the body-self comes to be seen as unimportant.

With the work of Fast, Lax, Friedman, Bell, and Kestenberg, we see that boys may both envy procreativity and greatly fear the basis in their own psychic and physical experience for identifying as penetrable, receptive, and internally generative. Too frequently, being the one to penetrate becomes the singular goal whether it be in sex, athletics, or outer space. The mystery of exploration is comfortably “out there”—penetration into somewhere or someone else, not into the self and certainly not into the male body. I now address aspects of development—separation-individuation and male gender identification with the father—that unfold concurrently with these bodily concerns and that may reinforce a masculine focus on externality.

Desire for, and Escape from, the Archaic Mother⁴

I have referred to the mother’s penetration of the infant in the nursing relation. As a reciprocal expression, an intense, early desire to penetrate the mother’s body arises in the infant. In addition to this primitive desire to penetrate the mother is a fear of being engulfed by, lost inside, and controlled by her (Klein, 1928). Eventually, a small child may come to view the father’s penis as the privileged form of access to the mother. Children envy a father’s ability to penetrate the mother; he is the one who gets inside mother without being engulfed, lost, or controlled. A boy has the possibility of a gendered identification with the father and his patriarchal prerogatives that is both an aid to separating from the archaic mother of symbiosis and a form of reconnection through imagined omnipotent control. In defense against the mother, feared as threatening to reengulf the separating child, an idealized ability for “phallic” penetration is projected onto the father;

⁴ See Elise (1998a) for an earlier version of this section.

penetration is equated with the penis and is then elaborated into “phallus.” The image of the father as penetrator develops with the corollary that the father shall never be penetrated—“the impenetrable penetrator” (Butler, 1993, pp. 50–51). Paternal hegemony over penetration is established.

As development proceeds from the preoedipal period, the oedipal complex structures previously existing bisexuality into male-dominant heterosexuality (Benjamin, 1995; Bassin, 1996), and the male is seen as inherently the one to penetrate and not to be penetrated. What was originally a reciprocal experience for each sex—of mutual interpenetration with the preoedipal mother—**devolves into a split, gender polarity**. A phallic ego ideal presides over male development (Diamond, 1997), and the penis is imbued with magical qualities of power (May, 1986) as *the* organ of penetration. Phallicism wins out, operating as a combined defense against both maternal omnipotence and male fears regarding the internal body and castration.

Phallicism also defends against a loss of the mother that takes a specific form for a boy in the repudiation of identification with her. Rey (1994) described how the penis is used in a manic defense against mourning the intolerable loss of the mother. Denial of the lost maternal object is achieved by the creation of the “manic penis” (p. 220): The penis becomes omnipotent, and a boy in identification becomes omnipotent as well. Rey wrote:

The boy’s initial turn away from his mother, in part out of hurt and envy when he discovers that he cannot *be* a mother, is for many men the kernel of a character style involving the **denial of hurt**, the compensatory assertion of power, and an aversion to the “feminine” qualities of attachment and tenderness. This attempt to demean and subdue the female presences in one’s internal world [leads to] . . . the alternative achievement of control through fearful identification with a more powerful male [p. 189].

However, I emphasize that a boy does not simply “turn away from the mother”; too often, he *is turned* away from her most powerfully by a father who has a significant stake as well in his son’s identification with *him*.

Benjamin (1995) noted that a father’s narcissism is centrally involved in his fostering the son’s identification. For a boy, the

relationship with the father may have a quality of “desperate urgency . . . as if it were the bulwark of the boy’s representation of gender as identity (his sense of self-cohesion . . . implicitly aligning the father with the self-cohering object)” (p. 60). It can be seen that the urgency of gender self-coherence may operate in both parties. Benjamin underscored that a boy should not have to choose between father and mother in the sense of forgoing maternal identifications. However, this foreclosure has been typically what has occurred in order for a boy to be deemed masculine. **Furthermore, a boy’s mourning for this maternal loss (and loss of a part of the self) usually goes underground.** Instead, a boy is likely to identify with a powerful, phallic father to whom he now transfers the mother’s original omnipotence, and thus “the boy effects another reversal: maternal sexual activity is appropriated to the masculine, and infantile passivity is attributed to the mother, the feminine sexual object” (p. 100). As I have been explicating, it is a particular form of (sexual) activity that has to be most denied: **The ability of a mother to be penetrating and the corresponding ability of a boy to be penetrated are relegated to the dimmest regions of the unconscious.**

A male may reject being penetrated as a way to distance himself from infancy, bodily based fears and any supposed lack of masculinity (see May, 1986; Diamond, 1997). The ability to penetrate (and not to be penetrated) becomes central to the definition of “man.” We see, then, the potential threat to men in being permeable to any penetration, psychic or bodily: It may seem to signal the loss of manhood, and it appears to endanger core gender identity and core sense of self **in a way that the ability to penetrate does not so threaten a female.** Many men’s particular difficulty with being penetrated (both sexually and emotionally) may lead them to **accentuate and overdevelop their role as penetrators.** Braunschweig and Fain (1993) referred to phallic narcissism as an inheritance from the father that consecrates the father. This paternal inheritance requires a further consideration of the Lacanian concept regarding the “law of the father.”

The Law of the Patriarch

Lacanian theory, taken up by influential analytic theorists such as Chasseguet-Smirgel, Andre Green, and Joyce McDougall, among

others, purports that the father must break into the mother–infant symbiotic orbit in order for the child to separate and individuate. The father is considered to have *the* essential role in the child’s recognition of individual, gender, and generational boundaries. For example, Chasseguet-Smirgel (1991) described all perversions as having the aim of destroying reality: “Reality, from a psychosexual perspective, may be defined as resulting from the existence of the father separating the mother and the child . . . reality is recognition of sexual and generational boundaries” (p. 399). From this perspective, we have the father frequently depicted as the hero of psychological development (seen as synonymous with increasing separation), and any attempt to resist his order is seen as a sign of serious psychopathology.

Of course, it is true that, for healthy psychological functioning, the infant must separate and individuate from the early sense of dyadic oneness with the primary caretaker(s); this is not being questioned. What is at issue here is the tendency in analytic literature (and generalized within the culture) to portray the father’s role in a particular manner that emphasizes his activity with regard to increasing separation, leaving the mother’s activity in this regard untheorized, as well as neglecting the importance of increasing connection in healthy development (Benjamin, 1988). Although Lacan insisted that “the father stands for a place and a function which is not reducible to the presence or absence of the real father as such” (Mitchell and Rose, 1982, p. 39), this distinction regarding the paternal *metaphor* is often blurred as the concept is generalized within psychoanalytic theory. Parallel to the frequent conflating of phallus with penis, paternal law is often equated with the actual father. This continual slippage in spite of repeated clarifications cannot be merely an accident or the result of lazy thinking. Something is at work in this ubiquitous collapsing of a psychological function with the person of a father, and it is this aspect that I hope to elucidate in the following pages.

Let me restate that I am adding a particular perspective, not attempting to undo an entire body of theory that contains much that is valuable. In looking at the role of the father as it has been traditionally understood, I offer an argument that may tend toward the hyperbolic—what Butler (1995) described as “a hyperbolic theory, a logic in drag, as it were, that overstates the case, but overstates it for a reason” (p. 179)—in order to pull into sharpened focus a view that might otherwise remain obscured. I wish to take another look at this concept of paternal law specifically with regard to the patriarchal

construction of masculinity: From what vantage point is an act deemed lawful or unlawful? This is determined within the context of a patriarchal culture. The law is not neutral; it is derived to protect certain interests and not others. The symbolic paternal function is a tall order for the average fallible human.

The father, often seen as (and sometimes feeling himself that he is) reclaiming his sexual, territorial imperative regarding his wife, penetrates the early mother–infant bond. Often this may be done in a way that competes with and ousts the small child, just as a father himself may feel excluded from the mother–child dyad. A father may be a jealous husband; he may feel and actually be somewhat sexually and emotionally deprived in early stages of traditional parenting. He has no breast-feeding hormones coursing through his body to subdue his sex drive, and he does not have a bodily/“sexual” relationship with the infant on a par with the nursing mother. The infant’s desire for the breast is in competition with the father’s desire. This father–infant competition suggests a new aspect to “weaning”: *Who weans the baby and why?*

The father typically regains the mother by penetrating the dyad, and the child is forced into a kind of relinquishment that has gender variations: The girl gives up the right to penetrate anyone, and the boy gives up the right to penetrate the mother and any father figure. The father’s “law” concerns unilateral penetration done by him and never to him. Any sexual arrangement that does not have the male in the dominant, penetrating position is strictly tabooed.⁵ A boy learns that, to be a man, he must be the one to penetrate as long as it is assumed that this does not include the father. Any penetration of the father and therefore of any adult male (especially by a woman) constitutes an “unlawful entry.”

However, from a child’s perspective and phantasy, a father’s breaking into the mother–child unity may itself seem unlawful—indeed a crime of the first order (recall that it was Oedipus’s father who had him thrown out and left for dead). A paradox is presented: An unlawful act by the father institutes patriarchal law perceived by the child as a criminal attack on the child’s bond with and desire for the mother. **How does something that may be experienced in the unconscious as a crime become the basis of a law?** Not without a lot of confusion, which

⁵ See Rubin (1975) and Johnson (1988) regarding hierarchy in heterosexuality.

I suggest may be reflected in the degree to which “masculinity,” as it has been defined in a patriarchal context, seems to be defensively based.

Father as Outlaw

The 1992 crime-suspense movie *Unlawful Entry*⁶ perseverates on the theme of one male penetrating the already formed unit of a woman and her male consort, who is an ambiguous lover (husband as well as son). In the opening scene, the wife in her negligee carries “Tiny,” the couple’s cat, into the husband’s study. The overworked husband registers a complaint regarding Tiny: “He gets to sleep with you more than I do.” The theme is set: The “father” feels left out of the mother/“son” relation even though he does not have time for them.

Next, a burglar breaks into the couple’s home while they are asleep in bed together and manages to grab the wife and hold a knife to her throat, threatening a violent penetration of her body. The husband can do nothing about this intrusion and becomes the castrated boy, small and impotent against this evil. Soon, the “law” arrives in the form of police officer Pete, who in his official capacity proceeds to intrude into their home, relationship, and privacy. Pete is initially seen as the impressive, protective cop with his gun and macho displays of physical aggression against criminals. By contrast, the husband in identification with the (pussy)cat becomes “tinier and tinier” and is displaced as the husband.

It soon becomes apparent that this Pete (Peter/penis) is entirely unlawful. As the movie continues, he is shown to be obsessed with obtaining the wife for himself, and, under cover of the badge, he breaks into every aspect of the husband’s life: his home, his marriage, and even his business venture. The husband yells in frustration, “I’m kicking you out,” but he is totally unable to do so. Finally, he gets his own gun—something that both wife and cop have argued against.

Having regained some phallic power, the husband is having sex with his wife (though she is “on top”) when suddenly Pete is in their bedroom. The husband screams, “Get out of my house!” Pete backs

⁶ The title and thesis of this paper had formed in my mind when I then recalled a film with this title. Upon viewing the film, I was surprised to find how much its subject matter illuminates my thesis.

out only to return again. In the final scene, the criminally crazed cop has trapped the wife and is about to have sex with her when at last the husband returns and is able to prevail physically in reclaiming his wife and home—he shoots Pete. We can assume that the only remaining competitor is, once again, Tiny.

This film depicts the phallic law of the father gone amok—a most violent rendition from the perspective of a boy's unconscious fantasy. In an ironic twist of lawlessness, the “law” breaking in can be seen from a boy's-eye view as the father's wanton destruction and takeover of the mother–son union. The boy feels murderous about the father's intrusion—which itself can have a hostile and competitive tone—but is forced to desist until he can grow up and have his own woman. Imagine his disgruntlement when he finds that his tiny son can now claim *this* woman. The cycle is repeated. One's job as a male becomes the effort to keep other males, big and small, out of the sexual-symbiotic bond with the female—paradise regained and maintained against the evil of phallic intrusion. The point I wish to emphasize is that, as long as the father's law is a *phallic penetration* of the mother–son bond, this unhappy configuration will likely continue to be regenerated from one generation to the next.

Manninen (1992) described the basic trauma of infancy as the loss of the ideal state with the mother; the search for this lost paradise becomes the basic project of the masculine psyche.⁷ Writing about the ego ideal in a boy's development, Manninen stated, “The essential content of the developing ideals takes the form of his early conception of male power. This power will make it possible for the traumatic separateness from the mother to be transformed into increasing influence over her and a promise of her love. The boy sees evidence of this in the father” (p. 3). The fantasy of phallic supremacy fuels the unconscious masculine project of regaining unity with the mother by conquering and possessing her and by penetrating into her body. A boy is on a long, solitary journey to capture the phallus—narcissistic completeness and omnipotence—and “new evidence is constantly needed of the effectiveness of one's own strength, power and ability. From these arises the male obsession: it is only by conquering the world that one can conquer the mother” (p. 7).

⁷I have previously considered what some of the implications of this lost paradise with the mother might be for the girl's psychosexual development (Elise, 1998b).

Manninen (1992) stated that the key question in a boy's development is the balance between an identification with a loving father versus with the magic phallus. I emphasize that a dilemma arises when a father may himself be identified with the magic phallus. Too often, a boy's conception of male power revolves around seeing it play a major role in *creating* his traumatic separation from the mother in the form of the father's phallic penetration. Although it is true that the child wants to get away from the omnipotence of the mother, phallicism seems the only way to eventually win back control of the mother and her love when the father's phallic supremacy is associated with the original loss.

As Manninen (1993) stated in another paper, a father can experience destructive envy in being left out of the mother-son unit and thus has a strong narcissistic investment in the child's separating from the mother's world: "By leaving his mother, the son shows that the connection to the father does exist, and that it is real and permanent, and that the son will want it to become the basis of his life. With this masculine alliance, the son grants the father the imperishability of the father's masculinity, his most important achievement" (p. 40). The son submits to his father and expresses his allegiance by a repudiation of the bond with the mother as well as of all things deemed feminine. "It is the father's pride and joy when the child directs itself towards an active, individual search for . . . satisfactions [other than the maternal relation]" (p. 39).

The likelihood that certain fathers may be overly invested in the son's *disidentifying* from the mother is a crucial point. Literature has shown that fathers are much more likely to sex-type children than are mothers (Lamb, 1976; Chodorow, 1978; Mead and Rekers, 1979; Langlois and Downs, 1980) and that masculinity is defined in the negative, as what is *not* feminine. Real (1997) stated: "For most boys, the achievement of masculine identity is not an acquisition so much as a disavowal . . . a negative achievement" (p. 130). However, we have been slow to investigate the boy's disidentification from the mother (Greenson, 1968) in light of a father's narcissistic issues. That mothers use their children as narcissistic extensions, and thus impede separation-individuation, has been a frequent topic in the literature. The possibility that various fathers may tend to promote an overly emphatic separation for their sons in line with their own phallic concerns needs to be further examined.

Manninen (1993) referred to father and son forming a “masculine combat unit” outside of the feminine universe (p. 39). What is the masculine universe? It is a place of impossible projects, heroic achievements, and death-defying adventures aimed at a phallic-omnipotent conquering of (mother) nature. These feats serve to deny dependent longings for relationships and to form the model of “safely” relating to women. Manninen, in addition to following Ahab’s obsession with chasing down Moby Dick, the sperm whale as giant, mobile phallus (1996), also analyzed phallic quests in two Arctic explorations (1992). These heroic ventures represent a typical masculine project of achieving ever more magnificent goals.⁸

In an article on deep-sea diving, Hunt (1996) specifically emphasized the father’s role in the attraction of male divers and other elite athletes to high-risk, high-injury sport. Hunt footnoted that “women comprise about 76% of the population of recreational divers, most of whom dive in warm water. No more than 1% of deep divers are women and few women dive cold-water wrecks in the Northeast even at recreational depths” (p. 609).

In a thesis that closely allies with Manninen’s, Hunt (1996) stated that fathers of athletes often support the fantasy that manliness and physical sacrifice are linked: “They may display their ‘love’ for their sons by minimizing the seriousness of their injuries and encouraging them to play with pain” (p. 620). I believe that this emphasis on withstanding physical pain may be a counterpart to a paternal definition of masculinity that requires, as well as obscures, the *emotional* sacrifice and *psychological* pain of a separation from the mother, from one’s feelings, and from relationships. Boys are indeed frequently encouraged to “play with pain”—to be active and achievement-oriented in the face of painful feelings that they are pressured to keep submerged. Real (1997) referred to this definition of manhood—withstanding physical and emotional pain—as a form of “emotional amputation” (p. 133).

As Manninen went on to express in his 1996 paper, “The Supremacy of Evil,” the narcissistic layers of masculinity lead to “compensatory phallicism as a weapon and fortress for the sake of the security of his self. When the phallicism thus increases, the black side of it, fear of

⁸ See Axelrod (1994) for an examination of men’s avoidance of their internal life through an overemphasis on work—“impossible projects” characterized by intense, grandiose absorption in solitary activity.

castration, also grows in force, and a vicious circle is created” (p. 73). Evil must be conquered with its own weapons.

Who or what is this evil? Evil is the loss of the blissful unity with the mother, and it is the father who is viewed as the devil for his role in this loss. Manninen focused on the *absence* of paternal power in *protecting* the mother–child bond,⁹ but I am addressing a father’s potentially jealous and competitive phallic *presence* in *dismantling* that bond. It is taken for granted in patriarchal culture that the law of the father is beneficial and that the main injury a father can inflict is by his absence, the absence of the paternal “third.” Theorists often remain remarkably uncritical regarding what this law may actually consist of, and seem concerned only that it is in place. In the analytic literature, the worst thing (short of physical and sexual abuse) a father can be is absent, whereas it is usually the *presence* of mothers that is written about as pathogenic. Ample literature exists describing the myriad things that mothers in their presence do badly, to the detriment of their children’s mental health and emotional well-being.

Although it is crucial that we do not substitute father- for mother-”bashing,” I believe we need to be a little more critical in our stance toward “paternal law.”¹⁰ Thus far, there has been a tendency in our literature to depict mothers and children as “guilty” of all sorts of psychological crimes; by contrast, the father, if he is around, is typically described as bringing in sanity, separation, recognition of gender, and generational difference. It is possible that mothers can do these productive things as well and that certain fathers’ introduction of sanity may contain its own form of craziness, not the least of which is an exaggerated emphasis on difference.

A father’s emphasis on difference may be in the service of his narcissistic needs regarding sexual access to the mother and phallic supremacy. He may exert control over the children by ensuring their “separation” from the mother, by inducting the daughter into male-dominant heterosexuality (sometimes literally, with himself, in committing incest with the daughter)¹¹ and by insisting that, to be a male, the boy has to follow suit in a most unnatural emotional act. Manninen (1993) made it clear that, without patriarchal control, many

⁹ See Diamond (1997) regarding watchful paternal protectiveness.

¹⁰ To begin, consider the odd-sounding quality of the phrase “maternal law.”

¹¹ Father–daughter incest is statistically prevalent and represents a blatant and total collapse of the recognition of generational difference (Johnson, 1988).

a father would fear being “a mere initiator of something” and then being left behind: “In other words, his divinity would have been deprived of him” (p. 40).¹²

Manninen (1993) stated that countless fathers have not resolved their relationships with their own fathers and thus are frequently castrating and deeply hurtful toward their sons (p. 44). (See also, Real, 1997.) Images of fathers’ potential for destructive power surface in the literature—not surprisingly given statistics on domestic violence and sexual abuse—but psychoanalysts seem to be somewhat more comfortable dwelling on the child’s primitive fear of the archaic and omnipotent mother. I think equally significant terrors of the archaic and omnipotent father exist that may gain a further sense of reality by the father’s ascension to the paternal oedipal throne, where he resides not only in the unconscious of the child but—as we have all been children—in the collective unconscious of psychoanalytic theorists.

As a possible example of psychoanalytic theory and paternal law coinciding, Siegel’s (1996) analysis of Kafka’s (1935) masterpiece *The Trial* is illuminating. Kafka’s novel concerns the trial and execution of K, a man accused of an unknown crime by a mysterious Court. Siegel, in reviewing many literary critiques of the work, indicated that previous, nonpsychoanalytic commentators have not fully appreciated the role of K’s actual unconscious guilt and instead have tended to identify with K, seeing him as innocent, unjustly accused by an unfair Court. Siegel gave an excellent account of unconscious oedipal guilt and the role of the Court as K’s externalized superego. Without dismantling his account, I would like to add another. As Siegel stated, the greatness of Kafka’s *The Trial* is that it lends itself to multiple interpretations and “forestalls definitive understanding” (p. 589). Siegel referred to incestuous desires as one component of the oedipal drama and to the overthrow of legitimate paternal power as the other component—the wish “to kill the authority and rule in turn” (p. 576). I focus on a father’s wish to kill the son and rule in perpetuity as the “other side” of the oedipal drama.

Siegel (1996) explicated Kafka’s personal history, including the deaths of his two younger brothers when he was between four and six. Siegel noted the potential for unconscious guilt over sibling rivalry and subsequent fratricidal wishes and the possible stimulus of death

¹² See Green (1996) for an expression of fear of the father being left behind in analytic theory.

wishes toward his father. I suggest that death wishes toward the father might also exist because the father is unconsciously viewed as having killed the brothers out of *his* competitive rivalry. Kafka's three sisters lived, leaving one son, Kafka, who, as K, is haunted, hunted, and eventually captured by the Court.

Siegel (1996) saw Kafka's short story "The Judgement" as reflecting Kafka's ambivalence regarding his relationship with Felice Bauer, but I view the emphasis here as on the paternal relation, just as it is in *The Trial*. In "The Judgement," a young man named Georg B (the first of Kafka's dead brothers was named Georg) announces his engagement and is immediately ordered by his aging father to kill himself by jumping off a bridge. The story implicates the father who needs to sexually prevail. The castration threat is made real by the death of Georg B, just as it may have been for Kafka with the death of his brothers.

The Trial captures the vague, (bad) dream-like quality of the father's increasing intrusion—represented by the Court—into the son's preoedipal/oedipal relation with the mother. K becomes the excluded, defeated child witnessing the primal scene. The Court "as the punishing authority, *as outraged Father*" (Siegel, 1996, p. 569, italics added), appears inexplicably whenever K desires a woman. "The Court whips its employees, seduces and violates women, and its officers read pornography" (p. 571). In Siegel's account, numerous references are made to the father-doorkeeper of the vagina, "the powerful guard-father" who will not permit passage to the desired woman. When K comes "before the Law" (a parable in the novel), he seeks entrance to the Law but is never admitted. Themes are repeated of the Court as penetrator—as intruding on, bodily invading, and eventually killing K. Siegel suggested, "Perhaps the sudden punishment was so dreaded and expected by Kafka because of his helplessness and terror surrounding his brothers' deaths. Kafka must have formed a paradigm that his world could be shaken to its core with little warning, and that murderous wishes can be tragically realized" (p. 588). I believe it is open to interpretation as to whose murderous wishes are here under consideration. Crimes deriving from the father/son oedipal drama cannot be understood by looking into the mind of the son alone. The oedipal complex is an object relationship that involves and implicates (at least) two people in competition, a problematic patriarchal heritage for men (and then for women as well). Idealization of the Law and rigid adherence to the masculine "moral order" are outcome phenomena.

Whereas others may have taken up the position of the son, Siegel as psychoanalyst may have identified with the father in thinking of the Court only as an externalization of K's guilt regarding incestuous and parricidal impulses. The Court also may be a representation (along with the plot of the film analyzed earlier) of a corrupt aspect of paternal law as it is internalized in the masculine superego, the heir to the oedipal complex—a story of patriarchy. If “original” sin (a patriarchal, biblical perspective) is the appropriation of paternal power and patriarchal knowledge (see Siegel, 1996, p. 568), it is evident who is “sinned” against. In patriarchal myth, the father's power is idealized and legitimized; a similar (lack of) perspective may inhere in psychoanalytic theorizing regarding any culpability of a father in terms of unconscious infanticidal impulses. (We are at this point in history forced to acknowledge numerous fathers' *incestuous* impulses.)¹³

The impulse to murder is a two-way street—a theme so prominently depicted in the film *Unlawful Entry*. In *The Trial*, K is passive and ineffectual in his confrontation with the law. In contrast, the husband in the film takes up phallic weapons and strategy to prevail against unjust justice. His particular efforts vividly embody Manninen's articulation of the masculine belief in phallicism as the only respectable, only possible way to secure the self. Phallicism becomes a fortress of self-sufficiency and precludes vulnerability or dependency. Only with his own gun and aggression to use it—what Manninen (1996) called “compensatory phallicism as a weapon and a fortress” (p. 73)—could the husband destroy evil, the lawfully sanctioned but criminally unlawful intruder who threatened his home and woman. The husband's initial vulnerability was that he was not phallic enough; he did not have the right weapons, or the fortress, to keep evil out. This scenario is a depiction of what I label the *citadel complex* in masculine personality.

The Citadel Complex

Citadel is defined in the dictionary as a fortress overlooking a city “intended to keep the inhabitants in subjection or to form a final point

¹³ Although these impulses may apply to specific individual fathers, behaviorally or as an unconscious aspect of their psyche, I am considering how a cultural archetype might be in place without “bad behavior” by any given father.

sieg

of defense during a siege . . . any strongly fortified place, stronghold” (Webster’s, 1992). I believe this is the definition Manninen gave of the phallic matrix of masculinity. I regard this citadel quality in masculinity as a reliance on being the one to penetrate and an avoidance at all costs of the experience of being penetrated, not just by evil fathers and other such outlaws but by anyone, anywhere, and most especially and most problematically by a woman. A masculine phobic response to being penetrated may profoundly influence sexuality, as well as the emotional dynamics of a love relationship, with a woman.

Kernberg (1991) defined erotic desire as based on the mutual interpenetration and intermingling of the partners. The crossing of bodily and psychic barriers involves the **capacity for bisexual identifications**, including both active incorporation and penetration and the receptive experience of being penetrated. **The simultaneous identification with each sex temporarily erases the boundaries of the self and has its basis in the early mother–infant interplay.** This particular type of bisexual, symbiotic identification appears to be especially threatening to certain men.

When a collapse occurs in the dialectical tension regarding the ability to penetrate and to be penetrated,¹⁴ a collapse of desire may soon follow, leading to sexual boredom for both partners. Even in the absence of passion, many men may be likely to continue to pursue sex, given its role as a mainstay in their identity (Person, 1980). Person (1980) referred to a compulsive quality in men’s (hyper)sexuality whereby **“relative gender fragility in men fosters excessive reliance on sexuality”** (p. 57) that serves to consolidate and confirm gender. Sex can also confirm male power over women, especially when dependency needs and vulnerability are both covertly met and denied by the very form that sexuality may take.

This confirmation of male gender and power (seen as synonymous) is most apparent in the preoccupation that some men have with sex as penetration of the woman and as very little else. Tooley (1977) referred to the heavy responsibility the penis carries for an adult man “for the whole range of self-esteem and pleasure possibilities” (p. 191). I specify that it is the ability of the penis to penetrate that is most emphasized and that this focus significantly shapes the object relational

¹⁴ See Benjamin (1988) and Ogden (1989) regarding the need for a dialectical tension to be maintained in same-sex and cross-sex gender identifications.

possibilities for each partner. Tooley noted that in sex therapy a man is specifically forbidden to engage in intercourse in order to explore a range of sexual possibilities and to remove “the internal demand to *prove* himself in a sexual athletic competition” (p. 192). Many men may have a tendency, as with athletics and work, to turn sex into a heroic achievement based primarily on the ability to penetrate and conquer.

Sexual excitement is dimmed when mutuality in experience and a range of relational possibilities are collapsed into a rigid, gender polarity—a true *sex role*—where a man has one type of physical and psychic experience and a woman a complementary opposite. Complementary roles limit the repertoire of each participant, and sex tends to become perfunctory and perseverative. One scenario is continually reenacted—a likely indication of a compromise formation at work. A tendency for one particular sexual scenario to repeat, due to its defensive value for a male—as a primary form of “safe” “intimacy” with a woman—contributes, I suspect, to a high potential for female “frigidity.”¹⁵ A diminishment of desire may show up more readily in a woman, given the vulnerability and risk versus defensive value of being physically and psychically penetrated. Over time, a woman may become guarded about, and even resentful of, having her body—if no longer her psyche—penetrated if there is little reciprocal vulnerability on the part of a man regarding his interiority.

We are familiar clinically and anecdotally with women’s expressions of frustration at trying to get inside men emotionally. Perhaps some women’s apparent diminishment of sexual desire may represent in part their reaction to being thwarted at getting inside sexually—in both bodily and psychically penetrating their male partner. The inhibition of women’s desire, so well noted in the literature, may represent not so much an inherent female tendency toward frigidity but a loss of passion and erotic excitement in and between both partners that goes unnoticed in a male given the valence that sexual penetration of the female has for men psychologically (Elise, 2000b).

I have found, in my clinical work, a certain male psychic impenetrability to be a significant aspect of marital unhappiness in numerous couples; an adult male’s “citadel complex” may make him

¹⁵ It would be interesting perhaps to see the statistics on male “frigidity” if sexual encounters were predominantly shaped as a woman’s physically and psychically penetrating a man.

an extremely frustrating and, too often unfortunately, ultimately unfulfilling partner in a love relationship with a woman. Like the bisexual woman described at the beginning of this paper, many heterosexual women can find men emotionally impenetrable¹⁶ and in this are frequently quite dissatisfied (Rubin, 1983). A woman complains, "He doesn't share his feelings with me. I never know what he's feeling, what's inside him." This familiar complaint cannot be viewed solely as an example of the female, reverse anatomical chauvinism described by Mayer (1985) in her paper, "Everybody Must Be Just Like Me." Mayer gave numerous examples of female patients' asserting that men "are emotionally closed, unable to be receptive or empathic, and without access to inner feelings or inner sensations" (p. 331). Mayer explained the frequency and repetitiveness of these characterizations as stemming from a form of female genital anxiety about males' being genitally different—"closed up." However, as Friedman (1996) indicated, many males have their own anxiety about being genitally open and thus may tend to *be* more closed, not just bodily but emotionally, than even the male genital would suggest. The psychological inaccessibility of many males that women commonly complain about has been too often a problematic reality of masculine character structure in patriarchal culture.

Psychic impenetrability is a problem most of all for the men who exhibit it, as is attested to by many contributions to the literature. The theoretical formulation that I have been developing aligns with the work of numerous writers on male psychology, derived from their own clinical experience with male patients. The dynamic I am describing is quite explicitly detailed by the many authors referenced and quoted in this paper. My thesis makes use of, dovetails with, and further elaborates the theoretical contributions of these clinicians based on their accumulated understanding of masculine personality structure. I have been influenced by their case examples as well as by my own clinical experience in many years of working with men. Even though space is limited in which to present more clinical data here, I offer a brief and very condensed clinical vignette to further illustrate what I am referring to as the citadel complex. Of many possible case examples that could be included, Mr. R is particularly expressive regarding his subjective experience of citadel-like qualities.

¹⁶ The manner in which certain heterosexual men may be sexually impenetrable, both physically and psychically, may be something that various heterosexual women experience but find difficult to articulate, having no point of comparison.

Mr. R is a relatively high-functioning professional from a white, middle-class family in which he experienced considerable well-being as a child. His mother was actively engaged in work both in and outside the home; his father was a successful engineer. Mr. R, age 37, sought analytic treatment when he began to feel that something was threatening his marriage of five years. He wasn't sure what the problem was, but he was increasingly aware of a tension between him and his wife. She seemed to be expressing more and more dissatisfaction with their level of emotional intimacy. It took a number of months of work before he and I could articulate what might be undermining the marriage. During that period, I found him to be a likable man, but a rather challenging patient in a subtle way, given his difficulty with introspection.

During one session, he was describing to me a recent argument with his wife that once again centered on the issue of how close they were (or were not). He was quite agitated as he spoke, and eventually he exclaimed, "But I don't let her get to me." The contradiction between his palpable emotional state and his statement about himself captured my attention, and I found myself recalling how often I had heard him use the phrase, "I don't let it get to me." This phrase would tend to evoke in me a sense of my being warded off, used as it was to cap any further exploration of his emotional truth. I started to envision the source of his wife's feeling that they lacked a certain closeness.

In response to his comment, "But I don't let her get to me," I asked, "Where would she have to get to get to you?" As Mr. R tried to take in my question and spatial metaphor, the intonation of his protracted "Uhhhh . . ." conveyed the impression that he was thinking but not saying, "Hey, lady, is this one of those weird analyst-type questions?" or, equally plausible, "Hey analyst, is this one of those weird female-type questions?" I definitely felt in those few moments of silence that he didn't want *me* "getting to him."

At the point where he could mentally breathe and actually begin to think about my query, he stated, "Okay, so you're asking where am I—where does the real me reside that someone would have to get to, to reach, in order to get to me." After a few minutes, he continued,

I guess I'm sort of walled off in a certain way; it's not that easy for me to show my feelings—to *know* my feelings for that matter. I don't let my emotional guard down very often. I think guys are generally kind of protected in that way. [a few minutes of

reflective silence] You know, this sounds kind of stupid, but I remember as a kid—you know how boys are—being totally into building forts, castles with moats, that kind of thing. My friends, we all did this for hours, looking for the enemy through the turrets at the top with our guns pointed out, ready for an attack. It definitely wasn't a dungeon. No, I was on top looking out—a "room with a view," you might say . . . but not easy for anyone to see in or get in. I was in control of that with the moat.

I softly commented, "Remote." He replied,

Yes, and now it's difficult to open myself up even if I want to. . . . Sex is dicey. I feel really close to my wife then and like I could be vulnerable to her in a way I'm not sure guys are supposed to be. I certainly don't have any sense that to "get to" my wife I have to go through anything like this in reverse. She's just there, out and about in the world. Funny—it looks like I'm out in the world what with sports and all, but that's physical stuff. Emotionally, I'm not "out and about" at all! . . . We want kids, but would I be like this with them? And if I have a son, is it Okay *not* to be like this?"

Thus, Mr. R formed his own link between his boyhood pastime and his current internal state of being emotionally guarded.

As Real (1997) emphasized, males are generally forced out of an expressive-affiliative mode: "Men do not have readily at hand the same level of insight into their emotional lives as women, because our culture works hard to dislocate them from those aspects of themselves. Men are less used to voicing emotional issues, because we teach them that it is unmanly to do so" (p. 82). Kaftal (1991) identified a tacit form of emotional communication common among men that "demands that one's emotional life be unlabeled and undescribed" (p. 307). One of Kaftal's patients put it this way: "I know that I'm really close to somebody when I can go on a three-hour car ride with them without saying anything" (p. 307). This style of "emotional communication" is exactly what makes many women want to scream in exasperation. In couples work, I find female frustration with a male's distaste for verbalizing emotions to be a prominent reason for the woman's seeking treatment and, often, for seeking divorce. At present, in a reversal of history, women seem to be leaving their husbands much more than

the other way around. It sometimes appears as if the female population has taken Chodorow's (1978) statement that many men are frequently unprepared "to fulfill women's needs for intimacy and primary relationships" (p. 207) as the clarion call to marital revolt.

Treatment must gradually and gently dismantle the male citadel complex when it exists and reveal this stance for what it is—a defense and not a viable way of living and relating to anyone . . . friends, wives, children. Until these men let down their guard in relation to women and children, and in relation to themselves, their female partners will tend to feel relationally unfulfilled and dissatisfied, and their children will likely learn that masculinity is about being emotionally and interpersonally impenetrable. That we are as a culture so "successful" in eradicating tears from male emotional expression is to my mind one of the single most blatant examples of the closing up of the male psyche. Just this one example alone speaks volumes about what we do to a person to make him into a man.

Fogel (1998) wrote of phallic defense as a hardening of the heart that protects men from the "dangers of exposing softer and more tender inner organs and psychical sensibilities" (p. 679). In a similar vein, Real (1997) described typical male development as the clamping of a band around the heart, where boys are "systematically pushed away from the full exercise of emotional expressiveness and the skills for making and appreciating deep connection" (p. 23). Too often, a father devalues his wife and her interest in emotional expressiveness and connection such that his son knows he too will be devalued if he engages in these "feminine" ways. A paradox ensues: The only way for a boy to connect with such a father is to echo the father's disconnection (Real). As a man, he is then expected to be capable of intimacy in an adult love relationship with a woman, as well as with friends and with his own children. This appears to be the psychological equivalent of pulling the rabbit out of the hat.

Male character and defensive styles have been described variously as narcissistic, obsessional, schizoid. Christiansen (1996) explicated Freud's account of male obsessional activity as a defense: "An active masculinity originates as a defense against the pleasures of a passive and hysterically unpleasurable femininity" (p. 99). Obsessionality defends against the passivity, helplessness, and dependence experienced in the preoedipal relationship with the mother. Christiansen believed that clinicians have been overly optimistic regarding "the capacity of the developmental processes to gather up

and ameliorate the more distressing effects” of the boy’s separation from the mother (p. 109). The relationship with the father may reinforce a male terror of (and desire for) the feminine: “More often split off than fully resolved, too often repressed only to return in displacements and distortions, the **early male terror of the feminine leads to a fragmentation which founds the ‘psychotic kernel’ of contemporary male identity**” (p. 109).

Christiansen’s (1996) formulation of a psychotic kernel is very similar to Rey’s (1994) conception of the “manic penis” that “presents itself as the universal substitute, which leads to the formation of a false self” (p. 18). Rey described a schizoid splitting whereby the penis is narcissistically aggrandized in opposition to the maternal breast. **The experience of gender as a relationship of opposites was described by Sweetnam (1996) as characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid mode of functioning.**¹⁷ Paranoid-schizoid anxiety regarding gender reflects a fear of contamination by opposite-gender qualities as well as the “sense that gender is being controlled and defined from the outside, leading to its being an empty, unvital experience” (Sweetnam, 1996, p. 450).

It is apparent from these clinical formulations that a male’s fearful disidentification from the mother and defensive counteridentification with the father form a fragile foundation for the sense of self, gender identity, and sexual orientation. This fragility can permeate many developmental stages¹⁸ and may influence the nature of relationships with the opposite sex, making the establishment of an intimate and unconflicted connection with a woman a precarious venture. Hansell (1998) deftly explicated the way in which females, beginning at adolescence, are typically expected to embody the disavowed femininity of males in order to make it possible for males to come into sexual contact with them without being overwhelmed with anxiety.

Manninen (1993) described a need in male development to create a mental barrier against closeness, especially with a woman—a **“symbiosis anxiety” as a warning signal** (p. 39). Emotionally intimate relationships may make certain men vulnerable to feeling retraumatized regarding the original loss of the mother. When love seduces, “laying

¹⁷ It seems that the culture at large has not yet reached the depressive position.

¹⁸ See Blos (1962) regarding male fear of reengulfment by the archaic mother in adolescent development.

down the shields . . . [and] yielding to love would make the self helpless” (Manninen, 1996, p. 83). “Submitting” to love, getting attached, is experienced as surrendering one’s masculinity. Instead, a fortress of self-sufficiency is erected—a citadel. **As Mr. R’s vignette illustrates, the boyhood game with forts and castles is no mere game but the projection of an internal psychic configuration.**

It is not just a male patient who needs to open himself to a receptive introspection. Aron (1996) critiqued Freud’s portrayal of the phallic analyst—“thought of as the fearless and adventurous male who seeks to uncover, expose, and penetrate the feminine ‘unconscious’” (p. 258). Freud, our analytic patriarch, was true to form in emphasizing the centrality of the father and the oedipal complex. Green (1996) gave a recent rendition. Aron’s explication of a relational perspective emphasizes the need for an analyst to allow a patient to penetrate the analyst’s subjectivity and for an analyst to be comfortable with, and allow access to, his own interiority. Similarly, Kaftal (1991) spoke of the need in treatment for affective interpenetration, “a sense of ‘sharing’ one’s inner and private self with another without undue anxiety and with *relative confidence that one will remain in possession of one’s own body and mind*” (p. 311, italics added). **This type of confidence seems to be a particularly difficult “achievement” for many men, whereas it should be their birthright.**

Renik (1990) described the difficulty male analysts may experience countertransferentially in being receptive to specifically sexualized penetrations in the form of patient fantasies toward the analyst. He gave a case example of a woman who had strong desires to sexually penetrate him, which she then repudiated as being impossible. Renik pointed out that male anxieties about being the object of a female patient’s desires to be sexually penetrating may have the analyst collude with the patient’s defenses against recognition of these wishes: “In order to address a woman patient’s conviction that he cannot be penetrated, impregnated, and excited by having these things done to him, a male analyst must disagree with that conviction in the first place! **We know that every male analyst has resistances to acknowledging his femininity**” (p. 43).

Possibly the fragility of masculine gender identity is neither inherent to the male sex nor a result even of early parenting by a female, but due instead to an **inhuman definition** of masculinity as it is socially constructed in patriarchal culture. Although females traditionally have been devalued and curtailed from expanding themselves out into the

world in an assertive way, something central to being a vulnerable human seems too often to have been ripped out of the core of male personality (Real, 1997). The experience of being penetrated is then imagined to be somewhat analogous to a balloon being “penetrated”: This socially constructed masculine sense of self would burst if it were to be “punctured” in this manner. When the capacity for intimate relatedness is seen to entail a receptivity that is equated with being feminine rather than with being human, male fear of psychic penetration results.¹⁹

Kaftal (1991) stated that the “heroic model of manhood is an attempt to strengthen and stabilize the gendered self-representation” (p. 305). He viewed the absence of fathers from the nurturing matrix as critical to the instability of masculine gender identity. Diamond (1997), in articulating the need for fathers to have the ability to hold and contain the mother–infant dyad, gave voice to interiority as a crucial aspect of the paternal function. Real (1997) pressed even further: “It becomes clear that boys don’t hunger for fathers who will model traditional mores of masculinity. They hunger for fathers who will rescue them from it. . . . Sons don’t want their fathers’ ‘balls’; they want their hearts. And for many the heart of a father is a difficult item to come by” (p. 159).

We arrive at a definition of good fathering that focuses on womb-like psychic capacities: soft, nurturing, emotionally warm qualities. This quality of fathering is very much in contrast to the law of the father, as evidenced in a phallic penetration of the mother–child bond promoting difference, separation, and autonomy at the expense of connection and mature dependence. Robertson-Lorant (1996) described Melville’s underlying message in *Moby Dick* as an effort to challenge and subvert the “soulless, misogynistic competitive construction of masculinity” (p. 620). Only by embracing “the inner feminine side of himself” and by “a kind of spiritual midwifery can a man give birth to himself” (p. 287). According to Robertson-Lovant, Melville intended “to dissolve constructions of masculinity that erect boundaries, not bridges, between man and man . . . an alternative

¹⁹ We might question why gender is so difficult to establish—why any effort is needed at all. Do we need gender? Why is the acknowledgment and acceptance of one’s sex not enough as a basis to one’s personal expression of self. What would happen or not happen without gender?

to masculinist cultural paradigms that were crippling to men as well as women” (p. 619).

I have argued that males as well as females have an early experience in relation to the nursing mother of being receptive to penetration. The mother is active in a manner that is culturally deemed masculine and phallic. Just as it is important to allow the mother “phallic” qualities, it is invaluable to be able to attribute “feminine, womb-like” qualities to the father and for fathers to be comfortable embodying these qualities. Although very young children may be overinclusive in their attribution of gender characteristics to self and others (Fast, 1984), adults are too often underinclusive in their gendered expression of self.²⁰ I have described a particular difficulty that various men may face in developing a sense of self that is penetrable, internally containing, and generative. **Deeply anxious about experiences of interiority, certain males may tend to focus on the outside of the self and of the body. The penis and the ability to penetrate are then defensively overemphasized.** The idea in psychoanalytic theory that women treat their entire body as a penis can be reversed to see that some men may treat their penis as their entire body. Penetration becomes the primary mission. Instead of being nurturing and containing toward their sons (and wives and daughters), historically too many fathers have tended to poke and prod the next generation of males into “manhood.” If men treat boys, and boys grow into men, in this fashion, we will likely see continued a defensive, “citadel” quality in masculinity. **It is not “law” but love that fathers need to bring to their sons’ development**—another source, alongside the mother’s, of support and affectionate engagement.

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²⁰Regarding the use of the word *overinclusive*, I (Elise, 2000a) suggested that gender identity might be better referred to as either *inclusive* (flexible and integrated) or *underinclusive/exclusive* (rigid normative splitting into “feminine” and “masculine”).

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