

**SAPPHIC EXPERIENCE: LESBIAN GENDER IDENTITY  
DEVELOPMENT AND DIVERSITY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation explores lesbian experience, or the psychological meaning of being lesbian from the point of view of women who call themselves lesbian. The researcher suspended the binary paradigm of sex and gender, and argued that lesbians' identity development must be understood against the background of how patriarchy understands the category 'woman' through history. Towards this purpose the position of women in the West, as well as contemporary images and literature about lesbians, was reviewed. On the basis of this review questions about lesbian gender construction, lesbian identity development and lesbian individuation were identified. In order to access the psychological meaning of being lesbian, or lesbian experience from the inside out, the dream-series of three lesbians constituted an empirical basis for further exploration. These dream-series were amplified with intensive face-to-face interviews, transcribed, and subjected to a hermeneutic-phenomenological inductive method. Common inter-case concerns were identified and synthesized. In dialogue with the literature reviewed, twenty-two statements of meaning about being lesbian were distilled. These revealed two possible constructions of gender for primary lesbians. In addition, primary lesbians involved in the research demonstrated remarkable flexibility with respect to their gender orientations and gender identifications, were in the process of integrating with and differentiating from different aspects of their masculine and feminine potentials, and developed and negotiated their gender identities in relationship to both their lovers and friends. The explication also revealed that participants identified with archetypal aspects of the father that their fathers' did not express, and desired archetypal aspects of the mother that their mother's did not express. Finally, in so much as the method distinguished sex, sexual identity and sexual orientation from gender, gender identity, gender identification and gender orientation, it may prove useful for exploring gender in heterosexual relating.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## EXPLORING GENDER IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Lesbian theorist Teresa de Lauretis puts her finger on the problem of invisibility of unpartnered lesbians when she writes, "It takes two women to make one lesbian." Minus a partner, we are also minus an identity (Hall, 1998, p. 51).

Foucault (1976) commented that sexuality in modern Western society has been the site of an explosion of discourses of power and knowledge. According to him, Western society expresses a culture that has become obsessed with the significance of the sexual, has elevated sexuality to unprecedented dimensions, and has sought sexuality as the truth of being human. Psychology, as a body of theory, proves no exception to this, at least in terms of the fundamental assumptions used by its founding fathers. Freud (1915), for instance, posited *libido*, or the sexual instinct, as vitally significant for human motivation and development. He thus emphasized the omnipresence of sex (Samuels, 1985a). Jung (1963; Storr, 1973; and, Mattoon, 1984) extended the meaning of *libido* beyond biological sex when he explored the relationship between contrasexual tendencies (*anima* and *animus*) and their relationship for the individuation process. As Samuels suggests, Jung emphasized the symbolic significance of sex.

Despite the central role of sexuality to psychological theory, until recently heterosexuality was presumed to be the only normal choice for sexual expression by mainstream psychology. Both Freud and Jung claimed that the infant was initially bisexual and that under ordinary circumstances development proceeded smoothly along a heterosexual course. Deviations from this norm were largely ignored, infantilised (regression/fixation) or pathologised (Carrington, 1993; O'Connor & Ryan, 1993). Homosexual and lesbian relational choices were therefore considered abnormal (Duberman, Vicinus & Chauncey, 1989).

Research concerning sexual behaviour gained some prominence through the work of Kinsey and his associates during the 1950 and 1960s, and the Masters and Johnson studies during the 1970s. As a subject of systematic investigation however, homosexual behaviour remained relatively unexplored until the 1980s (Duberman, *et al*, 1989). Formal inquiry into lesbian behaviour suffered an even less visible fate, despite its reported prevalence (Storr, 1964), and was further confounded by the reluctance of many contemporary scholars to define being lesbian exclusively or even predominantly in sexual terms (Rupp, 1989). Moreover, debates concerning the elementary or elective status of lesbian desire (Greene, 1994), and the diversity of lesbian experience both historically (Faderman, 1991) and personally (Rule, 1975; Golden, 1994) added to the controversy about lesbian sexuality, and created problems at the level of definition. These debates highlight questions concerning the relationships between sexual identity, sexual behaviour, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender identification.

Freud himself wrote relatively little about the subject of homosexual behaviour (Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1992), and even less about lesbian behaviour. Nonetheless, O'Connor and Ryan (1993) argue that he provided the grounds for later psychoanalytic theorists' tendency to pathologise lesbian experience. The list of possible causes for the choice of same-sexed love objects for women among psychoanalytic authors refer to a mother fixation, a masculine complex and/or rejection of men following disappointment. O'Connor and Ryan are critical of these arguments on the grounds of the problematic split between masculine/active/lover/father-as-object and feminine/passive/loved/mother-as-object, or what feminists term 'the binary paradigm of sex and gender'. A further criticism of the psychoanalytic perspective is that it assumes that being lesbian constitutes a repudiation of men rather than a positive desire for women.

While Kriele (1985/1993) suggests that Freud attended to *Homo sexualis* as the basis for *Homo sapiens*, and Jung upon *Homo religiosus*, in so much as he included the more mystical and spiritual aspects of human being, Jung's invitation to wholeness also relies upon the binary paradigm of sex and gender. More specifically, contrasexual tendencies based upon an individual's biological sex are considered central to traditional analytical thought (Schwartz-Salant, 1992). *Anima* (the man I cannot embody as a woman) and *animus* (the woman I cannot embody as a man) are deemed unconscious until either dreamt or projected onto persons of the opposite sex. Once conscious, these imaginal possibilities provide the grounds for dialogue with persons deemed 'other' by virtue of their biological sex. Normal, or heterosexual, desire is viewed as the projection of contrasexual tendencies between partners of the opposite sex, while lesbian desire is viewed as an *anima*- or masculine-identification, and homosexual desire as an *animus*- or feminine-identification. Traditional analytical theorists are also criticised for insisting that biological sex and gender are identified (O'Connor & Ryan, 1993). Contemporary analytical theorists, such as Swartz-Salant, question the gender-based view of *anima* and *animus*.

Radical feminists during the 1960s attended to the relationship between sex and sexual orientation from the point of view of socio-political events and circumstances. These theorists focussed upon aspects of the social totality that influenced the manner in which women organised their personal lives, and the ideological imperatives that men and women enacted and constructed in order to maintain the heterosexual *status quo*. One of the most significant roles of feminist theory has therefore been that of trying to account for women's subordination, or the phenomenon of 'patriarchy'. Originally used to describe the power of the father as head of the household, the term 'patriarchy' has been used in at least three ways within post-1960s feminism (Stacey, 1993). The first use of the term 'patriarchy' attempts to identify the historical emergence of systems of male domination. This usage includes feminist writers such as Millet (1970), Daly (1978), and Armstrong (1986). The second use of the term 'patriarchy' seeks to explain and elaborate upon how patriarchy works in terms of the different roles and activities assigned to women and men in society. This usage includes writers such as Hartman (1979) and Eisenstein (1979).

A third use of the term 'patriarchy' is demonstrated within feminist understandings of psychoanalytic theory, for instance Mitchell (1974) and Chodorow (1978). Rather than seeing patriarchy as a set of social structures or institutions which oppress women, these theorists analyse the operations of patriarchy on a psychological level. Mitchell, for instance, argues that the patriarchal exchange of women between men in

society is reproduced in the individual psyche, while Chodorow suggests that because child care in Western culture is gender specific, i.e., women do it, the mother remains the primary internal object for both the girl and boy child. To become a heterosexual woman implies that a woman redirect her erotic desire towards a nonexclusive secondary relationship to her father. Rich (1980) took this argument still further. She suggested that in terms of a feminist perspective, it would seem logical to ask why, if the search for love and tenderness in both sexes does not originally lead to women, women ever redirect that search. Both Rich and Chodorow thus suggest that being lesbian makes more sense than being heterosexual, since by implication the female heterosexual must negotiate the precarious shift of *libido* away from the primary love object (assumed to be the mother) to the secondary love object (assumed to be the father).

### **1.1.1 GETTING SEXED: FEMALES ARE WOMEN WHO DESIRE MEN**

On the basis of genital appearance, an infant is identified as either male or female. In the course of being related to by others, the infant internalises and enacts the accompanying role expectations associated with his maleness or her femaleness, i.e., the infant conforms to a specific sexual identity. By virtue of being in possession of either a penis or vagina, therefore, human beings are assigned to two mutually exclusive social categories: man or woman.

In getting sexed, or being identified as either a man or woman, conventional wisdom assumes that the direction of a woman's desire will induce category congruent behaviour with respect to what Boss (1982) terms loving-being-with, i.e., sexual attraction to the opposite sex or heterosexual conduct. This assumption, that biology means destiny, is challenged by lesbian sexual conduct. For while contemporary lesbians may conform to their sex and sexual identity, i.e., recognise themselves as female and women, they are deviant with respect to their sexual orientation. They do not embody and enact the sexual preference expected of the category woman.

### **1.1.2 GETTING ORIENTATED: SEXUAL DESIRE AND SEXUAL PREFERENCES**

By definition the term 'lesbian' suggests that an individual's sex is female and that her sexual identity is 'woman'. In terms of her sexual orientation however, she is deviant, i.e., her desire is directed towards women rather than men. This begs the question: is her deviant desire essential, genetic and/or deeply embedded in her psyche, i.e., is she born lesbian? Alternatively, is her deviance a personal and/or political choice, i.e., is being lesbian a socially constructed identity that reflects her rejection of men, and/or patriarchal definitions of women?

Bohan (1993) points out that there are two types of essentialism. Maximalist essentialism holds that all differences between women and men may be ascribed to biological origins. Embodying a vagina is essentially different to embodying a penis, and thus the two genders are fundamentally different. This is the position that traditional psychoanalytic and analytical theorists hold, and is a form of essentialism that is hostile to lesbians. In so much as lesbians deny their biological destiny as mothers, they are understood to compromise their receptivity to phallic fantasy (traditional psychoanalytic theory), and their possibilities for individuation (traditional analytic theory). In this view, which I call 'traditional psychological theory', there is

considered to be some essence within lesbians (genetic or psychological) that makes them different, separate and damaged. Moreover, by virtue of *coniunctio* or the union of contrasexual tendencies being unavailable to them, they cannot individuate. Minimalist essentialism also holds that genders are fundamentally different, but argues that this difference does not lie in an individual's biology. It lies instead in the different life experiences to which men and women are exposed by virtue of possessing a vagina or penis. Minimalist essentialism is therefore sensitive to, and inclusive of, the social constructionist arguments that have been articulated by feminists.

Social constructionist approaches regard male and female behaviour as a construction of the social context. Sexuality is a "blank slate, capable of bearing whatever meanings are generated" (Epstein, 1992, p. 244) by the context in question. It is a socially constructed script that constrains the possibilities for sexual expression. In so much as patriarchy was seen to limit women's possibilities for sexual expression to men, it was seen to dismiss and/or pathologise lesbian sexuality. In turn, feminists deconstructed traditional psychological theories of lesbian development and posited the direction of a woman's desire, rather than her genital form, as her destiny. Moreover, they suggested that desire was socially constructed, and that 'normal' women were coerced into heterosexuality by virtue of how patriarchy arranges power relationships between the sexes. 'Lesbian' is a label, or social type, created by cultures and applied to the individual. It is a social fiction and category that is imposed, rather than revealed. It is a creation that belongs to the world of culture, ideology and positioning rather than the biology or personality of the 'deviant' individual. In short, being lesbian is a political rather than a psychological statement, and to ask questions about the psychological meaning of being lesbian is nonsensical.

Feminism permitted women to choose to love men or women (Faderman, 1991). The stance also implied a rebellion against traditional psychological theories which assumed that sexuality is a biological drive that propels people forward, and that by virtue of her femaleness a woman gives expression to feminine potentials and desires men. The maximalist essentialism at the heart of traditional psychology alienated lesbians, for the direction of lesbian desire could not be accommodated in a psychologically meaningful or healthy way. Instead, feminist theorists, by virtue of their social constructionist approach, attempted to pin point, track and deconstruct the negative stereotypes and constructs associated with being lesbian in traditional psychological theory and media images. While their approach included a focus upon the psychological consequences of being socially positioned as a lesbian, they neglected the psychological grounds for the experience.

Contemporary psychological theorists, such as Mitchell (1974), Chodorow (1978, 1992 and 1994) and Benjamin (1995) reworked traditional psychoanalytic theories from a social constructionist point of view. Wehr (1987) undertook a similar project with respect to traditional analytical theory. Their questions concern how 'feminine (and masculine) potentials' are constructed, who constructs their meaning, and how these social meanings come to dwell within the individual. As enlightening as these reworkings are, the focus is upon the internalisation of social experiences, and by virtue of this, the social constructions women use to identify as lesbian. The possibility for meaningful personal emergences is thereby obscured. Moreover, the focus is upon heterosexual relating. The latter is reflected as, at best, a neglect of lesbian experience.

In so much as lesbians' psychological experience has been pathologised, neglected, and ignored the psychological meaning of being lesbian has not yet been adequately explored. It is towards this project that the current research is directed.

The binary paradigm underlying patriarchal conceptions of sexuality rests upon the identification of sex, sexual identity and sexual orientation. Lesbian feminists during the 1960s and 1970s challenged the identification of sexual identity and sexual orientation by suggesting that being a woman does not necessarily mean desiring men. Sexual feminists during the 1980s and 1990s further toppled this binary paradigm by suggesting that being a woman does not necessarily imply being feminine. In other words, sexual identity and gender identity are not necessarily the same thing. Sexual feminism therefore challenged the assumptions underlying traditional analytical conceptions of individuation.

#### 1.1.3.1 Archetypes: Anima and Animus

Analytical theory holds that individuation, or the passage to wholeness, consists of an individual remembering who they really are, not who they think they are according to particular ideological imperatives. More important, individuation means living from this place of remembering. If a woman is to individuate, or become more fully what she essentially is, therefore, she must appropriate the powers and talents of her contrasexual tendencies.

The *anima* (soul) and *animus* (spirit)<sup>1</sup> are metaphors that provide a bridge to what is unconscious, and thus constitute processes that are deeply rooted in archetypal patterns of being. Analytical theorists hold that these unconscious patterns of being are projected onto others by virtue of their being autonomous, unavailable to consciousness, and at least in part, not subject to integration. Jung identified *anima* and *animus* with men and women respectively, both separately and exclusively (Tresan, 1992). Schwartz-Salant and Stein (1992) however, question the usefulness of this exclusive view for understanding contemporary aspects of the male and female unconscious. They enter into a vigorous debate between analytical theorists who maintain the traditionally exclusive position (Zinkin, 1992; Young-Eisendrath, 1992) and those who maintain an inclusive or *anima/animus* position, such as Schellenbaum (1992) and Whitmont (1992).

The exclusive analytical position suggests that while both sexes share their images of masculine and feminine, *anima* refers to an image of women derived from a male gaze upon femininity and women, while *animus* is derived from a female gaze of men and masculinity. The differences between male and female, suggests Zinkin (1992), are not simply due to prejudicial stereotyping but have their foundation in nature. Even if bisexuality presents as a possibility "a woman can never fully realise her maleness in the way a man can by being a man" (Zinkin, 1992, p. 141). The difference between male and female sexuality is therefore considered essential by exclusive analytical theorists. Moreover, Zinkin suggests that while *anima* and *animus* are intrapsychic potentials, they only come into life in relationships, i.e., in the interpersonal and interactive field formed by a group of two individuals which offers the possibility of union. In other words, the desire to relate is motivated by the acknowledgement of an intrapsychic lack that is potentially embodied by a member of the opposite sex. On these grounds, Zinkin suggests that *anima* and *animus* problems are most

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<sup>1</sup> Whitmont (1992) comments that the notion of spirituality (or logos) as a predominantly male characteristic and of the soul (or eros) as a female property are heirlooms of nineteenth century romanticism, and in that sense time bound. It would seem thus that because "consciousness-determining figures, spiritual guides, and psycho-pompic *animus* figures appear equally in conscious as well as unconscious material of both sexes, we can no longer maintain that consciousness is a masculine Yang quality and unconsciousness a feminine Ying quality" (p. 183)

fruitfully addressed in relationships where the genders are different, i.e., where both parties are faced with a gender barrier that is uncrossable except in the imagination. If the genders are the same, says Zinkin, fantasies about the opposite sex can never be properly tested out, and thus the *anima* or *animus* is never differentiated. Wholeness for Zinkin thus demands heterosexual encounters, and lesbian relationships from this point of view, cannot offer a passage to wholeness. In opposition to constructionist revisions of analytical theory therefore, Young-Eisendrath (1992) also argues that the difference between male and female sexual experiences is not only given by the world of embodiment, but also by the world of imagination.

Schellenbaum (1992, p. 56) opposes the essentialist conceptualisation of *anima* and *animus* when he suggests that:

Archetypal images of *anima* and *animus* are effective within both sexes...It becomes clear that in every individual there is a certain degree of consciousness and unconsciousness adhering to the masculine and feminine pole...It is in every sense wrong to identify one's own sex with consciousness and the opposite sex with unconsciousness.

Schellenbaum (1992) thus regards *anima* as a woman's more developed feminine potentials (femininity from a feminine point of view), and *animus* as her less developed masculine potentials (masculinity from a feminine point of view). Likewise, Whitmont (1992, pp. 179-180) suggests that those attempts to formulate *anima* and *animus* in terms of contrasexual dynamics are not born out by clinical evidence. More specifically:

The man's unconscious contains unassimilated archetypal and personal male components just as the women's contains unassimilated archetypal and personal female components...hence both sexes will be in need of compensation and complementation by all those gender qualities of either kind that happen to have been inadequately developed.

As Downing (1993, p. 34) suggests, therefore, "the opposite sex is not really opposite, but neither is a same-sexed other the same". Inclusive analytical perspectives therefore permit questions about lesbian individuation to be posed and explored.

### **1.1.3.2 Stereotypes: Social Constructions of Gender**

Gender stereotypes are based upon the essentialist assumption that there is a direct relationship between anatomy and psychology. A man, for instance, is assumed to be an assertive, penetrative creature because he has a penis, and a woman is assumed to be receptive to the needs of others because of the shape and function of her womb and breasts (Samuels, 1985a). Gender stereotypes therefore presuppose the binary paradigm of sex and gender; claim that what is 'really' or 'naturally' masculine or feminine can be established on the basis of biology; are based upon the perception that the feminine principle is passive and the masculine principle active; and, hold that masculine and feminine potentials stand in opposition to each other. This view is unable to accommodate a womanhood that is free of patriarchal regulation, control and domination. It is also unable to accommodate an authentic lesbian way of being.

Sayers (1982) argues against the binary paradigm of sex and gender by suggesting that it is culture and not anatomy that plays the decisive part in determining gender roles and expectations. In other words, the influence of biology is indirect and often difficult to identify. Sullivan (1989), in an attempt to transcend the male-as-active and female-as-passive construction of gender stereotypes, describes masculine and feminine principles in terms of both their static (passive) and dynamic (active) expressions. Static feminine qualities are characterized by holding and containment, while dynamic feminine qualities are characterized by relational receptivity. In contrast, static masculine qualities are characterized by differentiation and discernment, while dynamic masculine qualities are characterized by invitation and opportunity. Sullivan

therefore extends the possibilities for imagining masculine and feminine potentials, or archetypal patterns of being, by suggesting that both genders express passive and active qualities.

## 1.2 FINDING A LANGUAGE FOR BEING LESBIAN

A fundamental problem with respect to exploring the psychological meaning of Sapphic<sup>3</sup>, or lesbian, identity development is that of finding a language and theoretical forestructure that speaks of and understands lesbian desire in a non-pejorative light. More vexing still are the underlying political and ideological aspects of lesbian identity development and experience, as outlined by feminist writers. These issues bring to light a terminological and conceptual minefield that is unsurprising "given the startling newness of the idea of there being such a thing as a 'gay identity'" (Epstein, 1992, p. 240). According to Epstein the term 'lesbian identity' did not appear in writing by or about lesbians before the mid-1970s. As a social construction and point of departure for further debate it is a modern creation, although historical evidence suggests that as a mode of loving-being-with lesbian relationships have always existed (Miles, 1988; and, Duberman, *et al*, 1989)

In addition, definitions of 'identity' itself are problematic. Firstly, the term only entered the general social science literature during the 1950s. By the mid-1960's however, the term was "used so loosely that to determine its provenance in every context would be impossible" (Gleason, 1983, p. 918). Epstein (1992) defines 'identity' as a phenomenon that permits people to become active subjects who define who they are in the world, as well as receptive subjects who are subjected to the control and power of external categorization. In an attempt to marry essentialist and constructionist theoretical positions, Epstein distinguished between two different aspects of identity. The 'intrapsychic identity' is something that unwinds from within, and conforms to what analytical theorists understand as the projection of archetypal patterns and their subsequent differentiation and/or integration. The 'acquired identity', on the other hand, is "the internalisation or conscious adoption of socially imposed or socially constructed labels and roles" (Epstein, 1992, p. 266). The latter is an intrapersonal identity, and invites a more psychoanalytic understanding.

Secondly, both Erickson (1963) and Goffman (1963) are specific about the point that identity, or the scripts human beings habitually enact, emerge through an interactive developmental process. At its core therefore, 'identity' is what Epstein (1992, p. 267) defines as a "socialised sense of individuality". It is co-constituted in relationship to and through involvement with significant others and a community of others. In this sense, identity is an intrapsychic (archetypal), intrapersonal (internalised) and interpersonal (socially enacted) phenomenon. Identity is also a broader social phenomenon however, and feminist understandings of how patriarchy limits women's sexual options and identity (cf. Armstrong, 1986) prove useful as a backdrop for understanding the political and ideological aspects of identity, and particularly for lesbians as a category of women.

The issues raised above permits the researcher to adopt what Benjamin (1995) considers to be a more inclusive, eclectic and arguably post-modern theoretical position. In other words, I assume from the outset that being lesbian is the product of a dialectical interchange between both an individual lesbian's psychological meanings and the social constructions that are held about women who call themselves lesbian.

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<sup>3</sup> Storr (1964, p. 70) notes that lesbians may alternatively be called "Sapphic...referring to the Greek poetess Sappho, who lived on the island of Lesbos".

It is both a personal and a political process. Moreover, I attempt to access the psychological meaning of being lesbian by including rather than opposing the developmental insights of both psychoanalytic and analytical psychology. In so much as analytical approaches attend to the archetypal (intrapsychic) aspects of identity development, and psychoanalytic approaches attend to how stereotypes are internalised (intrapersonal) and then enacted (interpersonal), both perspectives prove helpful. As Epstein (1992, p. 285) suggests, "the constitution of a gay identity is not something that simply unwinds from within, nor is it just an amalgam of roles that proceeds according to scripts". Rather, identity development involves the interaction of intrapsychic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, political and ideological aspects of human being.

### 1.2.1 LESBIANS ARE NOT GAY WOMEN

Coming to an understanding of the development and nature of lesbian sexual and gender identities, as well as of lesbians' sexual and gender orientations, is obscured by the tendency to assume that because male (gay) and female (lesbian) homosexuals are both deemed sexually deviant, gay research findings can be generalised to lesbians. This assumption is evident with respect to research about 'coming out'<sup>4</sup>, as well as literature concerning the phenomenon of 'internalised homophobia'. At a semantic level Bristow (1989) distinguishes between the term 'homosexual' and 'gay/lesbian'. The former term is a clinical definition derived from nineteenth century medical discourse, or the specialised discipline of sexology. As a term it denotes a deviant relational choice from a specifically heterosexual point of view. Gay and lesbian, by contrast, are political terms that were established after Stonewall in 1969, and denote pride as well as opposition to and liberation from heterosexist ways of being. Moreover, as Bristow suggests, it is misleading to talk of lesbians as 'gay women' since the word gay almost exclusively means men-loving-men.

Several additional considerations would seem to confirm that generalisations from homosexual studies to lesbians need to be treated cautiously. First, there has been a reluctance "to define lesbianism exclusively, or even predominantly, in sexual terms" (Chauncey, Duberman & Vicinus, 1989, p. 6-7). Faderman (1991) and Vicinus (1989), for instance, minimize the genital aspects of being lesbian in their efforts to understand the history of romantic friendship. Rupp (1989) suggests that in order to remove the taint of lesbianism from women's studies some historians have insisted that evidence of genital contact is required before a relationship can be called lesbian. In contrast, Rich (1980) argues that a continuum of homoerotic feeling is the norm for women. According to her, all women are naturally homosexual rather than heterosexual. Moreover, the concern around the issue of 'lesbian bed death'<sup>5</sup> would seem to suggest that lesbians, unlike gays, are not necessarily viewed as 'walking definitions of sex' (Bristow, 1989) and, unlike gay and heterosexual sex in the age of AIDS, lesbian sexuality remains relatively free of the connotations of disease (Hamer & Budge, 1994).

Second, there are historical differences. Certainly, lesbian relating has never been the subject of

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<sup>4</sup> The term *coming out (of the closet)* refers to a gay, lesbian or bisexual person who acknowledges his or her sexual orientation (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992) and similarly *coming out* refers to the process of acknowledging this identity to oneself, and/or subsequently disclosing it to others. Being *closeted* refers to a person "who has, or who is thought to have homosexual tendencies, and who has not acknowledged them" (p. 248).

<sup>5</sup> Hall (1998) quotes research conducted by *American Couples* in 1983 which suggests that lesbian couples, after two years together, have significantly less sex than their gay male or heterosexual counterparts.



statutory law in Western society (Brown, 1989), partly because it was viewed as a preliminary apprenticeship into heterosexual relating (Miles, 1988), and partly because (as suggested by Brown) Europeans found it difficult to accept that women could actually be attracted to other women. Despite the apparent lack of formal sanction against lesbians however, both male and female homosexuals have been subjected to the process of scapegoating. They have been stereotyped<sup>6</sup> as an out-group and treated as if some unchanging essence marks them as convenient targets of fear, loathing and condemnation. Positionally and politically therefore, gays and lesbians do share something in common. They are convenient targets for the displacement and projection of widespread social confusion about sexual meaning. In short, they are subjected to homophobia, or "the irrational fear of homosexuality" (George & Behrendt, 1987, p. 81), described by Bristow (1989, p. 56) as "the social problem that keeps misidentifying (scapegoating, mystifying and sensationalising) gays and lesbians as corrupt, diseased and, at times, evil".

According to Bristow (1989) however, sexual fears directed and projected towards lesbians and gays manifest themselves differently by virtue of lesbians being at the receiving end of homophobia as well as misogyny. Wise and Stanley (1987, p. 92-93), for instance, suggest that gays can also be the agents of misogyny against lesbians by virtue of gays being men. For although:

Gay men are in no way sexually interested in women...that does not stop them from using and abusing, patronising and ripping off women wherever and whenever possible...Gay men are men who revere 'maleness' to the *n*th degree and, as we've said, male versions of reality confer superiority of men merely by virtue of their difference from 'inferior' women.

Third, lesbians belong to the category woman and are defined in terms of their sex role. In contrast, men (whether gay or straight) are able to escape the sexualisation of their identities by virtue of being defined in terms of their activities in the world, or vocation (Sheldon, 1977).

By virtue of being women then, lesbians are not only sexualised and subjected to male fears of female sexuality, or misogyny, but because patriarchy defines sexual intercourse as penetration it is assumed that lesbians cannot really have sex. Lesbians, by definition, can neither penetrate or procreate on the basis of their union. They are therefore not only positioned in a way that gays are not by virtue of a misogynist culture, but they also challenge the *status quo* in a manner that gays do not (Wilton, 1993).

### 1.2.2 POSING THE QUESTIONS

This research project focuses upon the relationship between several vaguely defined and complex concepts. Samuels (1985a) distinguishes between the concepts of sex and gender. The former, he suggests, refers to anatomy, reproduction and the biological substratum of behaviour (should there be one), while the latter refers to the covering role, attitude and expectation. The difference, he suggests, "is between our speaking of male and female or masculine and feminine" (Samuels, 1985a, p. 19). Lesbians are clearly female (sex), women (sexual identity), and desire women (homosexual). Their anatomical classification is not the subject of inquiry therefore. Their gender is the subject of inquiry however. More specifically, the focus for inquiry concerns lesbians': gender identity, or their identification with contrasexual archetypal patterns (*anima* and

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<sup>6</sup> Dyer (1977) distinguishes between socialtypes and stereotypes. The former are inclusive and are attributed to those who live by the rules of society, while the latter are one of the mechanisms of boundary maintenance that are designed to exclude and condemn those who refuse to conform.

*animus*); gender identification, or their identification with socially constructed masculine and/or feminine roles and expectations; and their gender orientation, or their preference for partners with a particular gender identification and gender identity. In other words, the primary questions concern: How do lesbians construct gender, both intrapsychically and intrapersonally, and how do lesbians live forth these constructions of gender interpersonally, i.e., in relationship to others?

Differentiating between gender as a complex of internalised social constructions (stereotypes) and gender as contrasexual images that arise from psyche (archetypes) has profound implications for developing a meaningful psychology for lesbians. It also has implications on the level of methodology. Jung (CW16, par. 304)<sup>7</sup> commented that “the dream describes the inner situation of the dreamer”. Dreamed existence thus promises to permit access to the intrapsychic or archetypal aspects of gender identity for lesbians, as well as provide insight into the individuation process itself. In so much as dreams also involve the internalisation of others from the lived world, dreams also promise access to the intrapersonal realm of human experience. In attempting to answer the questions noted above, nine women who labelled themselves ‘lesbian’ (hereafter termed participants) were asked to record a dream-series. These dream-series provided both a point of departure for the research and a point of access to participants’ intrapsychic and intrapersonal realms, and the relationship between them. Amplification of the actors who appeared in each dream-series permitted access to participants interpersonal realms of being, and lesbians’ gender identities and identifications as lived forth in relationship to others.

### 1.2.3 OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

It would seem that neither analytical nor psychoanalytical theory and practice have integrated homosexuality as a healthy possibility for human relating (Carrington, 1993; O’Connor & Ryan, 1993). The proposed research attempts to remedy this oversight in mainstream psychological theory by embracing the challenge articulated by the above authors: I aim to bring lesbian experience to light, give it a voice, and distill its essence. In attempting to achieve this aim, I adopt an inclusive, eclectic and arguably post-modern approach. From the outset I assume that lesbian experience is made possible by a dialectical interchange between psychological meanings of being lesbian and social constructions about being lesbian. The latter have been exhaustively explored by feminists. Being lesbian in terms of its psychological meaning has not often been a focus of their research however. It is this vacuum that the current project attempts to fill. Moreover, in the light of feminist criticisms of traditional psychology, I suspend the binary paradigm of sex and gender. More specifically, women (and by virtue of this lesbians) are assumed to have access to both *anima* and *animus* potentials, to express both masculine and feminine potentials and constructions, and to be both active and passive in their functioning.

In confining the empirical parameters of the current project exclusively to women who label themselves lesbian, the foundation for discussing sexual orientation is secured, and the possibility for exploring lesbian gender identities, gender identifications and gender orientations, and the relationships between them, is opened.

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<sup>7</sup> Given the number of times that most of Jung’s *Collected Works* have been re-published, it was thought more helpful to acknowledge references to his *Collected Works* in terms of their volume and paragraph number.

The focus on psychological meaning requires the contemplation of lesbian experience, or what it means to be lesbian, from the inside out. This implies exploring being lesbian as a personal identity, i.e., being lesbian in its intrapsychic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal manifestations. I acknowledge from the outset however, that lesbian identity development cannot be understood apart from its social positioning nor the feminist discourses that support it. Thus, while dream images and their amplification provide a point of entry into being lesbian as a personal identity, contemporary lesbian studies and the socio-historical grounds for their emergence provide the necessary backdrop for locating lesbian experience.

Towards this end Chapter Two, appropriately termed 'Contextualising the Sapphic', traces the socio-historical development of same-sexed erotic relationships between women. It is argued that the shift from viewing being lesbian as a behaviour to viewing being lesbian as an identity must be understood against the backdrop of the wider discourses around the issue of sexuality. Having contextualised the socio-historical emergence of lesbian as a category of persons, Chapter Three attends to contemporary lesbian studies. This chapter attempts to identify the stereotypes of lesbians as presented by popular culture, contemplate the nature of lesbian relationships, and explore contemporary understandings of lesbian development or the 'coming out' process.

Having contextualised and identified being lesbian as a social identity, Chapter Four attends to the epistemological and ontological questions that are raised in the foregoing chapters. It also attempts to create a psychological foundation for collecting, differentiating and linking concepts by means of which 'being lesbian' as a personal identity can be disclosed and understood. This forestructure is inclusive and eclectic, i.e., it adopts both psychoanalytic and analytical understandings of human being, rather than choosing one perspective over the other and setting them up in opposition.

Consistent with the spirit of a hermeneutic approach adopted, Chapter Five reveals the methodology as an evolving process. Actors (or lived and imagined others) who appeared within participants' dream-series were highlighted and used as an interview guide for the purposes of amplification. Questions raised by the literature review provided a reading guide by means of which participants' amplifications about these actors could be read for their constructions of gender, relational patterns, and developmental issues. The intention of the method was thus that of providing insight into each participant's personal understanding of what it means to be lesbian, as well as how participants lived these understanding forth in relationship to others.

Against the socio-cultural background, provided in Chapters Two and Three, and using the ontological foundations provided in Chapter Four, Chapter Six attempts to distill and synthesize lesbian experience. Each participant is introduced, and their common inter-case concerns are gathered into clusters and explored. The common themes explicated on the basis of this exercise provide the grounds for meaningful dialogue with the literature in Chapter Seven, as well as a deeper psychological understanding of what lesbian identity development means from the point of view of women who label themselves 'lesbian'. Chapter Eight constitutes a self-reflective exercise. Here the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology developed are acknowledged, and the merits of searching for the truth and essence of being lesbian evaluated. Finally, some interesting directions for further research are posed.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CONTEXTUALISING THE SAPPHIC

Lesbians obviously have different object choices from heterosexual women but they were raised as female no less than heterosexual women, and cannot easily overcome the effects of what has been so basic to their upbringing (Faderman, 1991, p. 270).

All scholarship and research take place within a particular socio-historical context. Psychological understandings of being lesbian are thus subject to the limitations and predispositions of knowledge presented by the historical epoch out of which these understandings arise. In an effort to contextualise Sapphic experience the following chapter traces the evolution of the category lesbian. In order to do so it reviews several key historical (Chauncey, Duberman & Vicinius, 1989), sociological (Faderman, 1991) and psychological (O'Connor & Ryan, 1993; 1994) texts which serve to demonstrate how scholars have thought about lesbians. The review of these texts raises epistemological concerns as well as questions that provide points of entry into the experience of being lesbian.

It is argued that questions about gender identity development only arise when the essentialist notion that biology means destiny is challenged. In other words, questions about gender identity do not arise when individuals conform to the idea that mutually exclusive genital differences produce mutually exclusive sets of role expectations. Where males are men, masculine and desire women, and females are women, feminine and desire men – where this is the norm and all other object choices are stereotyped as deviant, shameful and even evil (Bristow, 1989), then what Wilton (1995, p. 3) terms the "binary paradigm of gender (*either* being masculine *or* feminine) and sexuality (*either* being queer *or* straight)" remains the taken for granted nature of things.

In order to understand how being lesbian or Sapphic experience became a problem in the first place, the social and historical emergence of lesbianism is explored in terms of the options available to women through history. In an effort to understand these options, a theological historian called Armstrong (1986) is consulted. She explicates the influence of Christian texts on 'the war between the sexes' in the West, and in so doing, provides a framework for thinking through the various faces or images that women have carried through history. History however, always interprets the past. Like all intellectual activity the quest for understanding requires grounds for asking particular questions and these questions then provide a focus for the research activity. The history of women, and thus by definition lesbians, has for the most part been reclaimed and reconstructed by feminist scholars. In using the writings of Michel Foucault (1976) as a point of departure, these scholars suggest that female sexuality in Western society has been 'constructed' in a particular way. It is out of this ground that lesbian feminist and later sexual feminist discourses arise.

At the risk of making sweeping social and historical generalisations, the intention of this chapter is to open debate about lesbian gender identity development and identify questions through which the empirical

data can be approached. These questions pertain to images associated with being lesbian, lesbian relational dynamics, and the motives for being lesbian. The journey begins in ancient Greece with the poet Sappho and then traces intellectual thinking about being lesbian through Christian, taxonomic and psychological discourses. In order to contextualise contemporary thinking about lesbians, feminist discourses that attempt to politicise, redeem, and legitimise lesbian ways of being are also reviewed.

## 2.1 SEARCHING FOR SAPPHIC EXPERIENCE

Several epistemological concerns are raised by the attempt to trace the evolution of being lesbian as a social and historical fact, not least of which is scholars' almost exclusive focus on upon the *category* lesbian rather than the experience and meaning of being lesbian. Chauncey, *et al* (1989) and their contributors (Brown, 1989; Vicinius, 1989; Smith-Rosenberg, 1989; Newton, 1989; Rupp, 1989; and, Davis & Kennedy, 1989), for instance, research the gay and lesbian past and also begin their journey in ancient Greece. Faderman (1981; 1984, and, 1991), a sociologist who demonstrates a social constructionist perspective, traces the development of the category 'lesbian' from its inception by medical psychiatry or sexology during the mid-nineteenth century through feminist attempts to politicise being lesbian as a social identity. O'Connor and Ryan (1993; and, 1994) review psychoanalytic and analytical explanations for being lesbian. While these explanations are more psychologically sensitive to lesbianism as an experience, O'Connor and Ryan (1993) suggest that the heterosexist epistemological assumptions upon which these explanations are based discouraged scholars from imagining being lesbian as a positive choice – as a positive desire for women rather than a repudiation of either men or heterosexuality.

A second and related epistemological concern is the relative newness of the term: *lesbian identity*. Epstein (1992) argues that the terms homosexual identity, gay identity and lesbian identity did not appear in writing by or about lesbians and gays before the mid-1970s. In other words, "although every known society has examples of homosexual *behaviour*, only recently has there arisen a conception of 'the homosexual' as a distinct type of *person*" (p. 248). Despite the relative newness of the term, available historical records as well as various cross-cultural studies<sup>8</sup> confirm that there have always been societies that have accommodated individual deviations from the 'biological imperative' underlying sexual identity. North American Indian tribes, for instance, legitimized and even exalted individuals who did not conform to their gender roles, rather than insisting that they define themselves as socially deviant (Williams, 1987). Thus, while Chauncey, *et al* (1989) admit that "data for women are still far too sketchy to allow for even preliminary generalisations" (p. 10) the possibility of more fluid and less rigid constructions of gender suggests that women have not everywhere and always been defined in terms of their relationship to men or their ability to bear children.

A third epistemological issue that inhibits reconstruction of lesbian history is that if little has been written about the history of women (Miles, 1988), then even less information has come to light about lesbian

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<sup>8</sup> These attend to the phenomenon of the *berdache* (Whitehead, 1981; and, Blackwood, 1984), Chinese sisterhoods (Topley, cited in Weiringa, 1989), and woman-to-woman marriages in Africa (Herskovits, cited in Weiringa, 1989; and, Amadiume, 1987).

history. Despite what Wilton (1995) terms the "recent flowering and proliferation of lesbian/gay/queer studies" (p. 2)<sup>9</sup>, perusal of Western historical records for examples of women who have embodied a lesbian lifestyle leaves the impression social constructionists like Faderman (1991) are correct when they suggest that the category lesbian was invented by sexologists during the middle of the nineteenth century. For feminist scholars like Martin (1984) the "traditional lack of attention to lesbians in the literature" (p. 47) not only confounds serious efforts to trace discourses around lesbian experience, but provides mute testimony to the effects of a male dominated world that maintained an attitude of indifference to lesbian experience (Reiss, 1974). Finally, contemporary lesbian scholars, such as Reynolds (1993, p. xvi) suggest that the silence about lesbian experience reflects the patriarchal bias against women in general, for:

Lesbianism is about women, and all ideas to do with women include an ideology of difference which is generally an ideology of presumed inferiority. So if women do not really matter then lesbians and their ways do not matter much either.

Despite the ground breaking role that the dramatic growth of women's studies played in initiating critical intellectual thinking around the issues of gender and sexuality, therefore, Chauncey, *et al*, (1989) lament and apologise for the political and academic marginalisation and repression of homosexual studies in general, and lesbian studies in particular<sup>10</sup>. They also apologise for not having been able "to overcome entirely the considerable imbalance in the amount of work done" (p. 2) on lesbian history as compared to gay history, but are nonetheless pleased that at least a third of their collection of essays focus on lesbians in particular.

A fourth epistemological issue confounding the attempt to trace lesbian history arises out of the constructionist challenge to the essentialist notion that sexuality is an innate, natural and inherent force. Citing homosexuality as an example, Foucault (1976) suggested that sexual categories and identities are historically specific and socially constructed. Following from his thesis, social constructionists argue that because homosexuality was regarded as a behaviour rather an identity in ancient and classical Greece, it is not the same phenomenon as 'modern homosexuality'. Modern homosexuality, according to Plummer (1981), is a unique creation of late nineteenth century Western societies<sup>11</sup>. In other words, while there is no doubt that men in ancient and classical Greece practised homosexuality, they were not considered homosexual, nor were they expected to identify themselves as such.

### 2.1.1 ANCIENT GREECE: SAPPHO OF LESBOS

The first known recorded lesbian in history was Sappho, an ancient Greek poetess who lived on the island of Lesbos. Historians agree that Sappho lived about 600 BC and that she was regarded as one of Greece's

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<sup>9</sup> Plummer (1992) cites a study by Gough and Greenblatt which compares 500 books listed in print in 1969 with 9 000 by 1989.

<sup>10</sup> The Kinsey Institute for Sex Research, for instance, lost most of its funding in 1954 when conservatives denounced its research findings as a "threat to the moral fibre of America" (Chauncey *et al*, 1989, p. 1). Thereafter serious scholars either considered homosexual studies distasteful or feared that they would be marginalised if they specialised in homosexual studies.

<sup>11</sup> Until the twelfth century the Catholic Church demonstrated no special interest in homosexuality *per se* (Boswell, 1980), and until the act of Henry VIII of 1533, which brought sodomy within purview of statute law, homosexuality "was not considered a unified set of acts, much less a set of qualities defining particular persons" (Padgug, 1989, p. 59).

finest poets, as well as an integral part of their cultural history<sup>12</sup>.

Sappho's status as a lesbian however, is a hotly contested issue. It was only during the third and fourth century BC with the rise of classical Greece – and some three hundred years after her death that questions about Sappho's "shameful liaisons with women" (Balmer, 1984, p. 8) were raised. Although Sappho's poetry was rediscovered during the sixteenth century, most commentators refused to credit her lesbian feelings (Saslow, 1989). Again in 1913, Wilamowitz (cited in Balmer, 1984) repudiated her lesbian status, and claimed that she was the leader of a formal cult at Lesbos who were dedicated to the worship of Aphrodite. Congruent with nineteenth century understanding of lesbian love as an apprenticeship for heterosexual relating (Miles, 1988), Wilamowitz trivialised Sappho's status as a lesbian. In 1981 Lefkowitz (cited in Balmer, 1984) also denied Sappho's lesbian status and suggested that Sappho's name as synonymous with unnatural sexual relations between women deflected from her artistic excellence. Durant (1939) however, suggests that her poetry captures her "trembling intensity" (p. 149) and "reckless passion" (p. 139) for her female students whom she preferred to call companions.

The link between Sappho and the cult of Aphrodite proposed by Wilamowitz (cited in Balmer, 1984) proves intriguing. Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty, was born when the seed of the all-powerful father God Zeus spilt into the ocean. Unlike other Greek goddesses, Aphrodite was not seduced (Hera), abducted (Persephone) or raped (Demeter) into marriage, but was free to choose her husband (Bolen, 1984). Sappho's participation in a cult dedicated to Aphrodite suggests that she held autonomous thought and action on the part of women in high regard. This is confirmed by Balmer who notes that Sappho also admired Helen of Troy.

Even more important to the question of lesbian identity construction, however, is the goddess Aphrodite's union with Hermes, messenger of the gods and trickster. Their child Hermaphrodites not only inherited both their names but also the beauty and sexual characteristics of both parents. Thus while the question of whether Sappho herself practised as a lesbian is contentious, by virtue of her identification with Aphrodite she must certainly count as a legitimate 'mythic mother' of lesbianism – for the fruit of Aphrodite's womb, Hermaphrodites, calls forth the metaphoric possibility of androgyny and bisexual relating, or the attempt to transcend masculine-feminine duality. The historical fact of Sappho also raises the issue of lesbian companionship and its romantic and/or erotic basis.

### **2.1.2 THE CHRISTIAN WEST: SILENCING FEMALE SEXUALITY**

Armstrong (1986) explores how in spite of its belief in the resurrection of the body, medieval Christian theologians feared and distrusted the body in general, and expressed a horror of sexual pleasure in particular. Women were thought to be much more lustful than men, due not only to their apparent sexual insatiability, but also because of the messy and mysterious innards of their wombs. Women's bodies thus became the site of especial disgust in the Christian West, and criminal accusations against women on the grounds of sexual misconduct were therefore "rather frequent" (Brown, 1989, p. 67). In virtually all of the cases cited however, the issue concerned heterosexual misconduct. Lesbian sexuality, for the most part,

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<sup>12</sup> Balmer (1984) notes that her face was engraved on coinage, her statue erected and her portrait painted on vases, and Durant (1939) that many ancient commentators including Plato praised her literary genius.

was ignored<sup>13</sup>.

### **2.1.2.1 Options for Women**

Armstrong (1986) argues that Christian attitudes towards women in medieval Europe were fundamentally misogynist<sup>14</sup>. Eve was presented as a temptress, deemed responsible for original sin and blamed for humanity's separation from God. In the image of Eve, women were told that they lured men away from their pure and lofty spiritual selves. The terror of female sexuality as diabolical, by virtue of Eve having consorted with the Devil, resulted in the hatred of women. This, according to Armstrong, provided the grounds for the Witch Hunts during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Armstrong (1986) identifies three options or faces for women in the Christian West before the Reformation – Woman as Virgin, Woman as Martyr and Woman as Mystic. The Protestant Reformation collapsed these options into a single possibility – Woman as Wife and Mother. The final contemporary solution, according to Armstrong, is Woman as Witch. The latter woman has integrated, rather than denied (Virgin), sacrificed (Martyr), transcended (Mystic) and/or surrendered (Wife and Mother) her sexuality. The first three options, Armstrong argues, promote the idea that to the extent that women shed their sexuality they can be perfectly respectable human beings, i.e., on an equal footing in the world of men. Where women succeed in shedding their sexuality, i.e., become asexual, they become independent of men however, and male control of female sexuality is challenged. The Reformation during the sixteenth century offered women another option or face: Woman as Wife and Mother found her place in the home through marriage and material dependence upon a man. According to Armstrong, "woman was no longer evil, she was just weak and inferior" (p. 279). Integrating her sexuality thus demanded that a woman subordinate herself in marriage.

The rise of Capitalism and the nuclear family following the Industrial Revolution during the eighteenth century further reinforced the Protestant principle of wifely subordination. It became fashionable for a man to prove that he was wealthy enough to manage without a working wife, and this further reduced a woman's status to that of a consumer of products rather than a producer of products. Marriage thus served to reduce women to delicate, decorative creatures who bore men's children, rather than independent persons in their own right.

### **2.1.2.2 Christianity and Lesbianism**

Historical records about lesbians until the second half of the nineteenth century are typically sparse, for "even more than male sodomy, sodomy between females was the sin which cannot be named" (Brown, 1989, p. 75), and crimes which cannot be named leave few traces in history. Moreover, judgements about the appropriateness of lesbian sexuality remained the domain of theologians until the mid-nineteenth century (Martin, 1984). There is thus little first-person testimony that was committed to paper or survived, and our knowledge about lesbians was based upon what Saslow (1989, p. 94) terms "hostile sources".

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<sup>13</sup> Among the hundreds of cases of homosexuality tried by ecclesiastical and lay courts in medieval and early modern Europe, only a few involved sexual relations between women. According to Saslow (1989), four of these occurred in France, two in Germany, and one each in Spain, Italy, Geneva, and the Netherlands.

<sup>14</sup> Armstrong (1986) suggests that it was not uncommon for religious communities, such as the bishops in the sixth century and the Lutherans at Wittenberg, to debate whether women had souls or were human beings at all.



The Bible itself contains only one direct reference to lesbianism, in the proscriptions of Paul (Romans 1:26). Nonetheless, Christianity developed a loathing for this 'unnatural vice', and awareness of lesbian sexuality among a few ecclesiastical leaders led to efforts to curb it in monastic settings<sup>15</sup>. In the secular world there were occasional references to lesbian sexuality, but little civil legislation on the issue<sup>16</sup>.

The emergence of homosexuality as a widely observable and documented social phenomenon coincides with the Renaissance. As with most social life however, male homosexuality was better documented than was lesbian sexual activity because, according to Saslow (1989), fewer women were literate. Moreover, female deviance, like most aspects of women's behaviour, was of less concern to male authorities. Miles (1988), however, records several instances in women who dressed and/or acted like men were publicly sanctioned<sup>17</sup>. Both Miles (1988) and Brown (1989) independently suggest that it was not the lesbian's relational choice that earned the wrath of secular and religious fanatics but their attempts to pass as men, either by using so-called 'illicit devices' to make up for the defects of their sex, or by attempting to live and dress as a man.

By the early nineteenth century, according to Miles (1988), lesbian love was no longer a historical novelty and men who were familiar with the practice defended it as nothing other than an apprenticeship for the greater love of men. In short, unless a lesbian refused to serve in the role of Wife and Mother it was not considered problematic on a social level. The objection to lesbians was therefore grounded upon their male identification, appearance and conduct, rather than sexual orientation. This raises questions about the extent to which lesbians are male-identified.

### **2.1.3 TAXONOMIC SPECIALISTS: THE ADVENT OF SEXOLOGY**

Armstrong (1986) suggests that the Protestant Church attempted to regulate women's sexuality by sanctifying marriage and restricting women's roles to that of Wife and Mother. Faderman (1991) suggests that before the Industrial Revolution there were few women who were more pitied and despised than the spinster. With the Industrial Revolution and the transformation of the world into a mechanistic universe however, attempts were made to neutralise women's sexuality – women were deemed 'Angels' and thus by definition were regarded as sexless and/or asexual. Lesbians during this period, like women in general, "had no language in which to conceive of their erotic relations with other women as sexual" and thus "could not construct themselves as sexual subjects" (Smith-Rosenberg, 1989, p. 273). Instead, suggests Vicinius (1989), they confined themselves to 'romantic friendships'.

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<sup>15</sup> According to Brown (1989), the councils of Paris in 1212 and Rouen in 1214 prohibited nuns from sleeping together and required a lamp to burn all night in dormitories.

<sup>16</sup> Saslow (1989) reports that a search of secular literature yields virtually nothing about lesbian relations until the mid-seventeenth century. The word 'lesbian' appeared once in the sixteenth century.

<sup>17</sup> In 1721 a woman was burned at the stake for attempting to pass as a man and for marrying another woman. Similarly, nuns caught using 'sodomitical devices' (or dildoes) were condemned for usurping the male member rather than for their relational choice. Sister Bernedetta Carlini, and abbess during the Renaissance, for instance, was convicted of forcing lesbian acts on younger sisters through her impersonation of a male angel.

### **2.1.3.1 The Image of Women During the Victorian Era**

During the Victorian era, the 'good woman' was deemed a child who needed to be controlled by a man and her sexless status implied that her rapture no longer took the form of absorption in God, but in her husband. The neutralisation of her sexuality returned her to the status of Virgin, Martyr and Mystic, whilst at the same time she was paradoxically expected to embrace her role as Wife and Mother. As Armstrong (1989, pp. 290-1) suggests therefore, Victorian women were faced with impossible demands and double binds that mutilated them as much as the older images of alienation and hostility:

She has to be a mystic, whose special and spiritual perceptions are a guide to her husband, and yet she is to allow herself to be guided directly and absolutely by him. She is to deny herself sexual pleasure. She will always be virginal because she is incapable of real penetration. She will always remain aloof from the man with his dark bestial urges which he cannot control. And yet she has to endure sex without pleasure and as a virgin-mother bear as many children as possible. She is a martyr because she has to die to herself daily, and is not allowed to achieve personal fulfilment, but serve and love her husband.

The Victorian era thus presented the worst of all possible worlds for women. Not only did the fear of her sex and sexuality itself arise once again as the power of religious sanction declined, but women lost the autonomy that they once possessed, even if only ideally – women became the objects of male desire at the same time as female desire was neutralised.

In summary: Prior to the Witch hunts during the sixteenth century independent women denied, sacrificed and transcended their sexual desire for men through their relationship to an all-powerful male God, i.e., they joined a convent and married Christ. This form of sexual autonomy however, threatened men because it excluded them, and thus sexually autonomous women (or rather, women who refused to be sexual with men) were persecuted. The Protestant Reformation, in so much as it promoted the belief women could only relate to God through their husbands (Armstrong, 1986) implied that it was through sexual desire of a man (heterosexuality) that a woman could access her spirituality or God. This not only denied women a direct relationship to God, but suggested that a woman could only reach heaven through her husband. With the rise of Capitalism and the Industrial Revolution in the West, the power of religious sanction declined. A woman's dependence on a man, not only materially but spiritually, was challenged. This challenge was met by neutralising female sexuality, i.e., by believing that women (like Angels) are asexual. At the same time, her status as an Angel permitted men to idealize the female sex, i.e., women were treated as delicate, decorative creatures who inspired, but did not meet, male desire.

### **2.1.3.2 Ladies of Lavender, Romantic Friendships and New Woman**

Both Faderman (1991) and Vicinius (1989) argue that women needed to be minimally freed from the constraints of the family and kinship before they could hope to live with a beloved woman, and during the Victorian era single middle class women were permitted an education before marriage. This offered them a purpose in life other than that of being Wife and Mother. Moreover, along with the right to refuse male sexual advances came the right to choose erotic objects. Many women, suggests Faderman, made the obvious choice of another woman.

Vicinius (1989) argues that the strong emphasis upon self-control and public duty following the Industrial Revolution and during the Victorian era was incorporated into a schoolgirl's love for an admired teacher or older student. Victorian sexual self-discipline therefore became an expression of love, while genital

sexual fulfilment meant a failure of self-discipline and self-identity. Romantic friendships therefore flourished on the paradox of fulfilment through unrequited love. Vicinius suggests that these romances expressed the mythical Persephone-Demeter dynamic where "the mother-daughter moment became a special act of kindness by the loved one, promising untold, unrealizable future happiness" (p. 220). Erotic and maternal love were thus merged and subsumed under religious duty, and passion was transferred to the spiritual realm. This asexual relational option ensured love between women as more acceptable, from a Christian point of view at least, since the women in these relationships repressed their sexuality at the same time as they glorified the sexual roots of their spiritual love.

The women's movement of the late nineteenth century also raised educated women's consciousness, sights and self-esteem. Whereas before women remained in shadows of their fathers and husbands, awakened spinsters, or 'Ladies of Lavender', began to assert their right to public voice and power. This initiative "signalled the death of the earlier female subject, the refined and confined Victorian lady" (Smith-Rosenberg, 1989, p. 265) who was subordinate to her husband, and gave birth to 'New Woman'. New Woman became a role model for educated women. As career woman rather than spinster she adopted a "butch drag, professional woman style" appearance and an active style that "served as armour to deflect the arrows of sexism" (Faderman, 1991, p. 21). She did not need a man or buy into a *status quo* based upon female subordination and dependence. Instead, she challenged existing gender relations and the distribution of power. As the initiator of first wave feminism, she rejected the patriarchal family and her mothers' domestic role, and romantic friendships with women became an area through which she contested the control of her family while she pioneered new public roles and professional occupations.

It would seem thus that while the possibility for being lesbian always existed – some women have always loved women even if they have had to pretend to be men to do so, lesbianism as a social category and lifestyle arose out of first wave feminism during the Victorian era. The initial image was that of the embittered spinster or Lady of Lavender who rejected her feminine body and sexuality. This image was replaced by the more sexualised image of New Woman. These images raise questions concerning unrequited love and romantic friendship in lesbian relationships, as well as the possibility that lesbian loving may reflect a spiritual, rather than sexual, union.

### **2.1.3.3 The Invention of the Mannish Lesbian**

Intimacy or romantic friendships between women were encouraged by Victorian society until an "overall explosion of sexual and scientific discourse" took place during the 1880's (Smith-Rosenberg, 1989, p. 268) and pioneering sexologists began to publish their elaborate taxonomies of sexual behaviour in medical journals. Medical discourse at the time focussed exclusively upon lesbians' rejection of motherhood and most early definitions included descriptions of women who engaged in so-called male behaviour. While these medical men saw themselves as neutral, scientific recorders of existing and past sexual behaviour<sup>18</sup>, the 'Mannish Lesbian' became a sexual subject and the subject of political regulation.

Faderman (1991) suggests that sexologists were medical men from middle class backgrounds with a passion for taxonomy, who:

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<sup>18</sup> Smith-Rosenberg (1989) suggests that Ellis in particular prided himself on his efforts to remove sexuality from the realm of moral and social judgements.

Changed the course of same-sex relationships not only because they cast suspicion on romantic friendships, but also because they helped make possible the establishment of lesbian communities through their theories, which separated off the lesbian from the rest of womankind and presented new concepts to describe certain feelings and preferences that had before been within the spectrum of 'normal' female experiences (p. 35).

Von Krafft-Ebing (1889/1965), a pioneer in this field, differentiated between four categories of lesbians. The first of these categories included women who did not cross-dress or display masculine sexual characteristics. These women were responsive to the advances of more masculine appearing and behaving women. The second category included women with a strong preference for dressing like a man. She was the female equivalent of an effeminate male. The third category of lesbians were those whose inversion was fully developed, in so much as the woman assumed a definitely masculine role. The fourth category, called 'gynandry' suggested extreme degenerative homosexuality. According to Von Krafft-Ebing, a woman of this type possessed the feminine genital organs while her thought, sentiment, action, and even external appearance were otherwise those of a man.

Smith-Rosenberg (1989) points out that Von Krafft-Ebing (1896/1965) did not focus upon sexuality *per se*, but upon social behaviour (gender) and physical appearance, and that all of his case studies linked being lesbian to the rejection of conventional feminine roles. He also proposed lesbianism as degenerative process by which a woman (as socially defined) was literally transformed into a man with all but her genitals. The final stage of this transformation produced the "borderline hermaphrodite", a woman who desired male privileges and power. The issue remained, as in former times, not a problem of sexual orientation but of the lesbian's attempt to be like a man.

Ellis (1927) argued that true inversion, as embodied by the borderline hermaphrodite, was a biological condition, i.e., hereditary and irreversible, and the 'true invert' was powerless to change her condition. At the same time, he insisted that a woman's love for another woman was sexual and degenerate regardless of its stage of evolution. In arguing that genteel educated women who were thoroughly feminine in appearance, thought and behaviour might well be active lesbians, Ellis made a distinction between those lesbians who were beyond psychiatric help and 'potential heterosexuals' who could be cured. As such, he did not regard all women in romantic friendships as 'congenital inverts'. Rather, and congruent with more popular understandings of female sexuality at the time, he suggested that for most women the condition was temporary – a product of living in single-sex institutions and a lifestyle that should be discouraged.

In contrast, he considered the Mannish Lesbian to be a 'congenital invert' and sexual competitor – she was a woman who was on 'the make' for women and she desired equal access to power as men. Rather than being asexual therefore, this woman, according to Smith-Rosenberg (1989, p. 268), was:

A secretly and dangerously sexualized figure. Her social liminality was rooted in her sexual inversion. She belonged to an 'intermediate' sex. She embodied the unnatural and monstrous.

Amidst the explosion of interest in the area of sexuality, New Woman and her admirers "had no alternative but to accept the sexual discourse pressed upon her by male sexologists" (Smith-Rosenberg, 1989, p. 273).

New Woman, thus:

Adopted the rhetoric of male physicians and sex reformers which represented her as a social and sexual hermaphrodite, as an intermediate sex that existed between and thus outside the biological and social order (Smith-Rosenberg, 1989, p. 265).

New Woman, according to Smith-Rosenberg (1989), adopted the rhetoric associated with the Mannish Lesbian with intent. She used male sexuality myths to repudiate male power. At the same time, in framing her challenge in a language meaningful to the dominant discourse, she became the subject of misunderstanding and ridicule. Conscious of being seen and scrutinized, she reached out to other women and formed sisterhoods which were characterized by a shared identity and liminal experience. Moreover, along with the right to refuse male sexual advances came the right to choose erotic objects.

It would seem thus that being lesbian became problematic for sexologists not because it demonstrated a deviant or alternative relational choice but because this choice excluded men – it was a lifestyle rather than a phase on the way to heterosexual object choices. The image of the Mannish Lesbian, who by virtue of her masculine attitude was sexualised from the outset, again raises questions around lesbians' identification with and attitudes towards the category men.

#### **2.1.4 PSYCHOLOGY AND THE PATHOLOGISATION OF BEING LESBIAN**

O'Connor and Ryan (1993, and 1994), in their efforts to argue that lesbianism is an identity characterised by diversity rather than unity, review the place that lesbians have occupied in the psychoanalytic literature during the 1920s and 1930s. They note that this period was characterized by vigorously conducted debates about female sexuality because feminist awareness during the 1920s rebelled against Freud's alleged attempts to lock women up in the home and restore them to cooking and baby-tending, or the role of Wife and Mother. Instead, with the rise of first wave feminism, women began to openly explore their sexuality. Ironically, as women came to define themselves as sexual beings and "sex between women became an area of erotic exploration in some circles and some women were beginning to establish a lifestyle based on that preference" (Faderman, 1991, p. 92), lesbianism came to be characterised by a host of nasty moral attributes, many of which Freud's disciples endorsed.

##### **2.1.4.1 Traditional Psychoanalytic Understandings of Lesbians**

O'Connor and Ryan (1993) argue that despite Freud's initial refusal to pathologise homosexuality<sup>19</sup>, the condition proved problematic for psychoanalysis. There was little room in his theory for non-perverse, mature and integrated forms of same-sex love. Indeed, early psychoanalysis as a body of theory and practice considered homosexuality pathological – an immature form of love for which a cure must be found. More pertinent perhaps, was that Freud marginalised lesbians – despite his view that lesbians were a no less common phenomenon than were gays, he offered only one explicit case history (cf. Freud, 1920), and little

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<sup>19</sup> While psychoanalysis appears to have reinforced the notion of homosexuality as a form of mental illness, in so much as being homosexual is commonly regarded as a contraindication for the selection of analysts for training, Freud took a relatively neutral stance on the subject. In a letter to the mother of a homosexual son he says that while homosexuality "is assuredly no advantage, but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation, it cannot be classified an illness; we consider it to be a variation of the sexual development. Many highly respected individuals of ancient and modern times have been homosexuals, several of the greatest men among them (Plato, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, etc.). It is a great injustice to persecute homosexuality as a crime and a cruelty, too" (*Historical Notes: A letter from Freud, 1951*, cited in Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1992).

secondary literature<sup>20</sup>.

Freud (1905/1953) distinguished between perversion and inversion, and classified homosexuality as an inversion rather than perversion on the grounds that inversion involved variations in the sexual object (penis or vagina) while perversion involved variations in the sexual aim (objects that replace the genitals). Freud emphasized that a multiplicity of factors determined inversion and warned about the dangers of separating homosexuals off from the rest of mankind. In his single case study (O'Connor & Ryan, 1993) Freud suggested that lesbian desire was a result of: Oedipal disappointment experienced in relationship to the father; a 'masculinity complex', or determination as a child not to be inferior to boys; and, unresolved infantile fixation to the mother. In these terms, it was not possible to be psychologically healthy and lesbian.

Congruent with the belief that real women, as opposed to the invert, are passive rather than either receptive (feminine) or active (masculine), Freud considered 'normal' femininity to be based upon a repudiation of the mother, the clitoris and the wish to have a penis. To be heterosexual a young girl must turn away from her mother and establish a relationship with her father. Being lesbian, in these terms, was a negative and reactive choice that excluded men and denied or minimised the operation of any choice for a woman because her sexual possibilities were constricted by her fixation upon the mother. As O'Connor and Ryan (1993) suggest, the implied exclusivity of this shift foreclosed upon the possibility that a woman might choose a woman as her love-object without repudiating men, femininity and motherhood.

Horney and Klein, two of Freud's female disciples, disagreed with his thesis that *libido* is fundamentally masculine, and proposed that female sexuality is essentially different (O'Connor & Ryan, 1993). Horney (1924; 1926; and, 1967) focussed upon lesbians' identification with the father and suggested that for a woman to play the father's part amounted to her desiring the mother. She thus cast lesbian love in terms of the rejection of heterosexual desire. Moreover, being lesbian implied identification with, rather than relationship to, the father. Jones (1927), like Horney, appealed to masculine identification as the motive for being lesbian and understood lesbianism in terms of the repression of feminine impulses rather than as the expression of a positive or original desire for a woman.

Klein (1984a; and, 1984b) took an essentialist stance which assumed that sexuality was intrinsic for the emergence of gender differences and that sexual desire was intrinsic to gender identity. In so doing, and despite minimal contact with lesbian patients (Heenan, 1994), Klein contributed to the homophobic stance adopted by psychoanalytic theorists by describing lesbians as oral-sadistic, destructive and fixated at the paranoid-schizoid position. Being lesbian was thus not only pre-oedipal, it was a primitive and borderline psychotic condition. For Klein, lesbians had not achieved adequate ego-development and therefore their relationships could only be part-object relationships. Lesbians were, in Klein's terms, incapable of mature love and unable to relate to others as separate people.

Deutsch (1933; and, 1944) displayed an uncharacteristic openness to women's experience and criticised the psychoanalytic tendency to see homosexual love in terms of a replication of heterosexual roles. In her willingness to think outside the prevailing theoretical and ideological framework, i.e., to conceive of lesbians without reference to the phallus, she suggested that lesbian love was so happy precisely because it offered the possibility for playing both mother and child, or of relating from a position that was both caring

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<sup>20</sup> The 'girl' in his case history (altered to the 'female homosexual' by later writers) was, as O'Connor and Ryan (1993) suggest, not even deemed worthy of a name.

and supportive, and cared-for and supported. Her observations suggest that lesbian relationships enact the Persephone-Demeter dynamic noted by Vicinius (1989) with respect to romantic friendships. Deutsch, unlike Klein (1984a; and, 1984b), claimed that lesbians had reached the Oedipal position. Rather than being a simple fixation on the mother however, being lesbian presented a complex process of retrogression in which the biological summons to the father was annulled. Thus, although Deutsch freed herself from the confines of seeing lesbians as stereotypically masculine, her understanding that every homosexual act of love expresses an unfulfilled heterosexual hope betrayed her essentialist and heterosexist emphasis.

O'Connor and Ryan (1994) do not attempt to put forward an alternative theory of lesbianism, but in the course of their argument note several issues with respect to early psychoanalytic constructions of lesbianism. These issues concern: the alignment of gender and sexuality in the notions of identification and desire; the reliance on concepts such as oral sadism and unconscious identification with the father as developmental explanations; the consignment of homosexuality to the pre-Oedipal and narcissistic; the appeal to biological phenomena as constitutive of psychic reality; the *a priori* theorising based on normative notions of innate heterosexuality; and the obliviousness to counter-transference problems stemming from the personal and theoretical position of the practitioner (O'Connor & Ryan, 1993, p.12). The most vexing of the issues noted by them for the question of lesbian identity construction is the assumption that being male means being masculine, and a lover (active) whose desire is directed towards mother-as-object, whereas being female means being feminine, the loved (passive) whose desire is directed towards father-as-object. This 'binary paradigm of sex and gender' suggests that traditional psychoanalytic theory maintained the gender split between desire and identification and between sex and gender – on a theoretical level identification with one sex required desire for the other.

The taken for granted assumption by psychoanalytic theory that being lesbian is deviant raises questions about lesbians' images of the category men in general and heterosexual relating in particular. It also raises questions about their understanding of and attitude towards so-called feminine impulses. The developmental emphasis of the theory raises questions about lesbians' relationships to their mothers and fathers, in terms of whom they identify with and to whom they relate. Finally, if the binary paradigm underlying psychoanalytic theory is brought into question, then it is possible that 'male-identified' and 'masculine-identified' do not mean the same thing.

#### **2.1.4.2 Jung's Understanding of Being Lesbian**

Jung maintained the dualistic metatheory at the heart of traditional psychoanalytic theory and assumed that masculine and feminine aspects of psyche stand in opposition to each other. Individuation in the analytical frame, or what psychoanalytic theory calls mature development, was described as "the optimum psychic balance between masculinity and femininity" (O'Connor & Ryan, 1993, p. 160).

Hopke (1989) points out that discussions of lesbianism were strikingly absent from Jung's writings. In one of his few references to lesbianism, Jung maintained of lesbian relationships that their main value lay in the exchange of tender feelings and intimate thoughts. Jung described lesbians as high-spirited, intellectual, and rather masculine women who seek to maintain their superiority by defending themselves against men. Their attitude to men was defiant, and its effect on their character was to reinforce their

masculine traits and destroy their feminine charm<sup>21</sup>. In another reference, Jung gives an account of the dream of a lesbian patient, and concludes that this woman's attachment to her female friend was a defence against her frivolous streak and promiscuous feelings. She thus remained at an "infantile, homosexual level" (Hopke, 1989, p. 164). In his earlier work, therefore, Jung regarded female homosexuality as an infantile defence.

In his later work Jung (1921) suggested that being lesbian arose out of identification with the contrasexual archetype or the *animus*. The persona was consequently unconscious and projected onto a person of the same sex – inner and outer worlds were inverted. A woman's attraction to another woman was therefore a function of her attraction to the feminine aspects of herself that she had rejected. This argument provided the grounds for Jung's criticism of New Woman who entered work and politics during the early nineteenth century. Jung (1927) described her as an *animus*-identified or masculine woman who was frigid and aggressive.

In his mature work, according to Hopke (1989), Jung considered being lesbian as a resistance to wholeness or integration, or as an "incomplete detachment from the hermaphroditic archetype" (Jung, CW9/1, par. 146). In other words, by refusing to identify with a one-sided sexual being the lesbian disposition preserved the Hermaphrodite archetype or original *coniunctio*. While Hopke agrees that this view of lesbians looked beyond the *animus* to the archetype of Self, being lesbian was nonetheless viewed as a misplaced attempt to integrate without personal cost. It implied a refusal to individuate and differentiate, and was based upon the desire for regressive symbiosis with the mother rather than a union of opposites.

Jung's understanding assumed that lesbians reject men, paradoxically at the same time as they identify with their *animus* or masculine archetype. His deliberations (like those of mainstream psychoanalytic theory) therefore focussed upon the Mannish Lesbian. Moreover, as O'Connor and Ryan (1993, p. 161) contend, Jung accepted "the alignment of gender, sexual desire and social roles as the norm for human development and any deviation from this alignment was designated as a lack, a failure of integration or individuation".

Jung's concept of *coniunctio* raises questions about the very possibility of lesbian individuation. It also begs consideration of how lesbians make sense of their own and their partners' masculine and feminine potentials, and how this understanding impacts upon their intimate relationships. In other words, it begs the question: Do all lesbians identify with their contrasexual archetype and project their feminine potentials onto a female partner?

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<sup>21</sup> Armstrong (1986) suggests that charm is another hostile 'witch word', which like glamour and fascination, were seen as deeply malevolent during the sixteenth century but have now lost their obvious edge of hostility. She links the modern day meaning of 'charm', which women are expected to cultivate as part of their femininity, to the modern day witch – the glamorous *femme fatale* with her glossy, artificial beauty who both protects her inner core and attempts to enslave men. Charm thus implies enchantment. It describes a manipulative and sexy woman who wants to bring men under her spell in order to disempower them – "To charm a snake is to subdue it so that it is no longer dangerous but completely under the charmer's power. To charm a man can be an attempt to subdue him to our female needs with a web of sweetness, blunting his aggressive edge" (p. 106). It would seem thus that Jung regarded the castrating bitch (and earlier castrating witch) as the norm for women. Mannish Lesbians by rejecting this norm were regarded as infantile by virtue of competing for, rather than attempting to subdue, masculine power.



### **2.1.5 THE FEMINIST POLITICISATION OF BEING LESBIAN**

In terms of feminist theory the possibility of vocational and sexual autonomy for women following the Industrial Revolution, although restricted to those women who were educated, presented an obvious challenge to patriarchal society's ongoing efforts to further entrench the binary paradigm underlying sex and gender. The transformed and sexualised Lady of Lavender and her committed lesbian counterpart constituted a threat to continued male domination. This necessitated the pathologisation of love between women. It also paradoxically provided the grounds for its examination – in attending to those individuals who embodied this deviation from the norm, and with limited understanding of female sexuality, sexologists and psychologists provided the grounds for creating a political category.

Faderman (1991) suggests that women who called themselves lesbian broadened the taxonomic category into a lifestyle and ideology and established subcultures and institutions around this identity. As a separate category of women by virtue of their relational choices, the identity was taken up by (particularly lesbian) feminist writers during the late 1960s and early 1970s in the attempt to deconstruct patriarchy and envision a utopia *sans* male domination.

#### **2.1.5.1 Radical Feminist Understandings of Lesbianism**

The invention of the pill during the 1960s broke the link between sex and reproduction and liberated women in general to explore their sexuality without fear of the consequences. Being a woman thus no longer implied endorsing inevitable motherhood. Instead, and counter to early Christian views of women's lust as diabolical and Victorian attempts to neutralize women's sexuality, female sexuality was depathologised and redefined as a positive virtue. Given this new freedom, women not only became more sexually available to men, and more free to explore their sexuality within the parameters of heterosexuality, but by the mid-sixties a greater tolerance for lesbians was evident – to the extent that Protestant denominations began to review their position on the question of homosexuality. Nonetheless, as Faderman (1991) suggests, lesbians were more conservative than heterosexual women during this period. Rather than being openly promiscuous, a date implied the heterosexual equivalent of an engagement, and sex the heterosexual equivalent of marriage. Along with this, the phenomenon of serial monogamy was practised – a lesbian relationship lasted several years, the couple terminated the relationship, and both women became involved in a new monogamous relationship.

The 1960s also saw the reawakening of feminist ideas and promoted a new generation of politically aware lesbians who adamantly refused to take on the burden of guilt and fear that had once been successfully foisted upon them. These lesbians considered role playing old fashioned because it was based upon the assumption of power-based heterosexual models (Sheldon, 1977, p. 7) and sought loving relationships that were "encouraging rather than demanding and controlling" (Faderman, 1991, p. 196). The rigidity of butch (Mannish Lesbian) and femme (sexualised Lady of Lavender) roles evident among lesbians during the first half of the twentieth century thus came under feminist attack.

Radical feminists were at the forefront of this challenge. Like first wave feminists during the

nineteenth century, they viewed lesbian love as the highest form of loving. Congruent with this thesis, they promoted the ideal of a society of women-identified rather than male-identified women. In so much as feminism understood sexuality as the primary means by which men controlled women and maintained their power over them (Richardson, 1993), heterosexual love was viewed as female masochism. Being lesbian was thus "the only noble choice a feminist could make" (Sheldon, 1977, p. 207).

#### **2.1.5.2 Lesbian Feminists and the Woman-Identified Woman**

Whereas male-identified lesbians during the 1950s were assumed to identify with the male definition of the world – with men's needs, desires and cultural hegemony, women-identified lesbians during the 1960s were assumed to identify with women's struggles for an autonomous identity, social position and new consciousness. Lesbian feminists took up the radical feminist challenge for creating a self-defined, woman-loving, woman-identified culture during the 1970s and in so doing, idealized women's culture. Many heterosexual women within the feminist movement were thus put under pressure to adopt a lesbian way of being for the sake of political correctness (Faderman, 1991).

On the basis of this utopian woman-identified society *sans* heterosexuality, lesbian feminism in its transpersonal expression founded a spiritual base for women-identified social institutions. This spirituality, according to Faderman (1991, p. 229):

Served those diverse purposes of nurturing, providing a history, and furthering the cause of cultural (radical) feminism by proclaiming women's innate spiritual superiority.

Transpersonal lesbian feminists emphasized the importance of care and nurturance, as well as the resurrection of matriarchy and the goddess culture of Wicca. They undertook the vast task of feminine myth making and reclaiming, and adopted the sixteenth century Woman as Witch as a model. Witchcraft was reinterpreted as 'women's wisdom', and was built upon a reverence for life and women oriented values. Lesbian feminists were thus strong and self-sufficient, rather than male-identified, and "mutual sensuality became more politically correct than genital sexuality" (Faderman, 1991, p. 232). Moreover, monogamy was rejected as men's way of keeping women enslaved, and bisexuality was criticised because it stole lesbian energy. Lesbian feminists therefore alienated the Mannish Lesbian by virtue of believing that "thinking, acting or looking like a man contradicts lesbian feminism's first principle: The lesbian is a woman-identified woman" (Newton, 1989, p. 281). As Faderman suggests however, most lesbian feminists contradicted their ideological stance in so much as they appeared butch. Jeans and cheque shirts were the uniform of lesbian feminists.

Separatist politics and the denial of active feminine desire proved problematic for many feminists during the 1980s because it effectively alienated: Heterosexual women by virtue of excluding men as a relational possibility; middle class lesbians by virtue of their bourgeois position; and working class lesbians by virtue of their adherence to butch-femme role models. At the same time, because desire was assumed to require some kind of barrier – a taboo, a tension and the thrill of conquest, the fusion of gender polarities in lesbian relationships was assumed to produce affectionate rather than sexually exciting relationships.

Whilst crippled by vicious criticism within radical feminist ranks on the basis of its restraint on sexual excitement and its exclusive stance, lesbian feminists accomplished much in terms of raising questions about the binary paradigm of sex and gender. Moreover, their thinking served to lessen lesbian guilt and kindle their self-acceptance.

### 2.1.5.3 Sexual Feminists and the Sexual Woman

Lesbian feminists sought to eradicate the harmful objectification of women through male sexual habits, and suggested that sexuality as practised by men was corrupt and beneath women. Sexual feminists during the 1980s then criticized lesbian feminists for being conservative and boring by virtue of their almost exclusive focus on romantic friendship. Instead, they envisioned lust as a positive virtue and adopted the habits and gaze of the male sex for their own social and personal welfare. They also suggested that until women were as free as men to pursue anything they wished, including their sexuality, they would never be free. Sexual feminists thus adopted what Armstrong (1986) terms the fifth face of Eve, the contemporary and secular version of Woman as Witch – the glamorous and arrogant woman who manipulates others with her sensuality, independent sexuality, and autonomous existence. Unlike the Virgin who denies her sexuality, the Martyr who sacrifices her sexuality, the Mystic who transcends her sexuality, and the Wife and Mother who subordinates her sexual needs to the needs of others, the contemporary Witch reclaims and uses her sexuality in order to gain power over others. She is the woman who enslaves men (and women) with her beauty – the seductress and vamp with whom the lover becomes obsessed. She is the *femme fatale* who destroys and disempowers her lover. The lover is left feeling inadequate and outclassed, for the invitation into relationship is fundamentally contemptuous.

It would seem thus that while the pre-Reformation Witch, like the radical and lesbian feminist, rejected her sexuality in order to maintain her feminine integrity, the contemporary Witch and sexual feminist uses her sexuality in order to maintain her feminine integrity. She personifies what Harner and Budge (1994) term 'lesbian *chic*', and is a more evolved Lady of Lavender who, like her heterosexual counterpart, takes up the challenge of integrating her sexuality.

The influence of sexual feminist discourse during the 1980's provided the grounds for a resurgence of butch and femme roles, but in an increasingly self-defined and egalitarian form:

The roles became both a reflection of and a feminist expansion of the socialisation lesbians had undergone in the parent culture. But the goal was for women to use those roles for their own pleasurable ends, to demand freedom and sexual excitement (Faderman, 1991, p. 267).

The politicisation of lesbianism raises several important epistemological concerns. First, in taking opposed positions on the issue of female sexuality, lesbian and sexual feminism emphasized their opposing ontologies. Lesbian feminism assumed that because males are fundamentally and radically different to females in terms of their genitalia, the experience of being a woman and feminine is different from that of being a man and masculine. Lesbian feminists also argued that gays and lesbians differ in terms of their approach to sex and relationships, i.e., lesbians practise serial monogamy as opposed to promiscuity. In contrast, sexual feminists suggested that while it was "difficult for many lesbians to admit or encourage within themselves an unalloyed aggressive interest in sex outside of love and commitment" (Faderman, 1991, p. 259) by virtue of their female socialisation, lesbian feminists should try to "understand that sexuality, even for lesbians, may be far more complex than loving sisterhood and that it is sometimes connected with deep, dark aspects of the psyche that are not always 'politically correct'" (p. 263). These opposing positions resulted in heated debates concerning the centrality of sexual, as opposed to sensual, expression for lesbians. Rich (1980) argued for a lesbian continuum based upon solidarity among women in their resistance to patriarchy rather than upon identity or sexual behaviour. In her terms, both asexual and heterosexual

women who consider themselves feminist should be included within the category lesbian. In contrast, Faderman (1981) claimed that while romantic friendships involve deep commitment and sensuality, but not ordinarily genital sexuality, women who are involved in romantic rather than sexual relationships with women should not be considered lesbian *per se*. Rich thus defines women as lesbian on the basis of their political stance, i.e., the rejection of heterosexual relating. Faderman, on the other hand, includes only those women who express a positive and active desire for women on the basis of this political stance. This raises the question: Is being lesbian always a political stance, i.e., are all lesbians necessarily feminist?

A second and related epistemological issue concerns the definition of being lesbian if being lesbian is the only politically correct choice for a feminist. Sexual feminism paradoxically exploded and collapsed the category lesbian, and in so doing, encouraged women to practice bisexuality. In this sense, all women were considered potentially lesbian. In contrast, lesbian feminism regarded bisexual women as frauds by virtue of their being sexually available to men, and they were not considered true lesbians. Despite their woman-identified ideology then, lesbian feminists defined being lesbian as an exclusive sexual position. These debates raise questions about lesbians' attitudes towards and understanding of bisexual women and the extent to which such individuals are considered part of the lesbian community.

Several additional questions are raised by the foregoing review. In terms of the evolution of images available to lesbians it would seem that in an effort to create a woman-identified image of being lesbian during the 1960s, lesbian feminism gave rise to a more feminised image of 'butch', namely the 'dyke'. During the 1980s her femme counterpart, like the more general category of women to which she belonged, set about reclaiming and integrating her sexuality. Sexual feminism arguably inspired this more active expression of feminine sexual possibilities and gave birth to the lesbian version of the contemporary Witch. Unlike her premodern predecessor who was portrayed as asexual, this woman exercised her sexual power over her lovers. This raises questions about how lesbians understand power within their sexual partnerships.

Additional relational issues are highlighted by feminist discourses. For instance, how do lesbians understand promiscuity and serial monogamy? Are their relationships to women necessarily affectionate rather than sexual? Do lesbians experience their partners as supportive and encouraging or as demanding and controlling? The feminist politicisation of being lesbian also raises questions about the motives for being lesbian. Among the factors highlighted here are: the desire for autonomy with respect to male definitions of what it means to be a woman; lesbians' attitudes to their spirituality; and, whether being lesbian constitutes a phase or an ongoing and committed identity.

## **2.2 CONCLUSIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PROJECT**

The foregoing socio-historical review suggests that being lesbian as a means towards female sexual autonomy has always existed. As a *category* however, it was first identified by sexologists, then pathologised by traditional psychoanalytic and analytical theorists, then politicised by lesbian feminists, and finally sexualised by sexual feminists.

The epistemological concerns raised above suggest that intellectual understanding of being lesbian, or lesbianism as lived and experienced by women, remains an elusive and hidden psychological phenomenon. This is due to historians and sociologists' focus upon the emergence of lesbianism as a social

category rather than upon the experience of being a woman who loves woman, or indeed, of being assigned and affiliated to the category from the point of view of the individual subject. Psychological theories further marginalised the experience by suggesting it was deviant. This served to discourage serious scholarly inquiry into its meaning. Finally, debates between feminists about what constitutes female sexuality, as well as disputes about the essential or socially constructed status of sexuality, highlighted the ontological issues around being lesbian and generated a wealth of intellectual activity. This activity served to further obscure and divert attention away from being lesbian as experienced by individual subjects.

Despite these epistemological and ontological concerns, the foregoing review highlighted important questions with which to approach the experience of being lesbian. The socio-historical emergence of lesbianism revealed an evolution and diversity of images associated with lesbians. These images were transformed in response to, and limited by, socio-historical circumstances and events that affected women as a category as a whole. This suggests that the psychological meaning of being lesbian cannot be understood without reference to the position of women in a culture that is still struggling to integrate an authentic understanding of female sexuality. In addition, the extent to which lesbian desire was pathologised by traditional psychological theories suggests that lesbians were not only prejudged for being women but also prejudged for being sexually deviant. This raises questions around the issues of misogyny and homophobia, and the internalisation of these phenomena by individual lesbians.

Traditional psychological theories about lesbians and feminist deconstructions of this also raise questions about lesbians' relational dynamics. These questions concern the extent to which lesbians experience their relationships as: symbiotic rather than mature; affectionate rather than sexually exciting; supportive rather than controlling; and, serial rather than committed. Further questions concern lesbians' understandings of and attitudes towards asexual, bisexual and heterosexual modes of relating, the power dynamic evident in adopting particular gender roles, and the possibility for androgyny. With respect to the motives for being lesbian, questions concern the issues of lesbian individuation, the extent to which lesbians embody an autonomous existence, and lesbians' relationships to their mothers and fathers. In addition, questions are also raised concerning lesbians' understandings of and attitudes towards men and women as a category, the extent to which lesbians reject conventional feminine roles, and their understanding of their own and their partners' masculine and feminine potentials.

The questions listed above provide hermeneutic keys that promise to unlock the mystery of lesbian experience. They also prepare the ground for a more detailed review (in the following chapter) of the contemporary images or faces that lesbians embody, as well as their relational dynamics and motives for being lesbian in the first place.

## CHAPTER THREE

### CONTEMPORARY LESBIAN STUDIES

It seems obvious that one's homosexual feelings, desires and fantasies lie partially outside the realm of free choice. On the other hand the decision to identify oneself as 'gay' or 'lesbian', to enter a homosexual subculture, or to initiate a stable homosexual relationship entails more of a voluntary decision. There are, of course, strong and sometimes highly divergent familial, peer, societal, and personal pressures that make the elements of decision and choice very complicated and, on occasion, very painful. Escaping the inner agony and the complications involved with secrecy are not easy when one is then to be faced with general hostility, the loss of loved ones and loneliness. The rewards of being considered a 'normal' man or woman should not be underestimated (Buunk & Van Driel, 1989, p. 88).

The attempt to situate the category 'lesbian' within Western history established that the *term* lesbian was first invented in the sixteenth century. The *category* as a political statement and identity is a twentieth century development however, and is neither unitary nor consistent with respect to its definitions, positioning or images. In the previous chapter it was argued that the changing images of lesbians were the product of social and historical circumstances and events that affected women as a category in general.

Until the advent of sexology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars paid little formal attention to women, and in a social context that defined woman as wives and/or mothers, lesbians were hidden from history. Sexologists' attempts to categorize female sexuality arguably exposed lesbians to intellectual scrutiny in so much as the discipline provided a language with which to speak about lesbians. This language understood being lesbian as a degenerative disease. Likewise, traditional psychological theorists understood being lesbian as a pathological condition. This understanding was based upon a conception of women as passive, or as acted upon, rather than active. It is an unsurprising view of women in the light of the Catholic Church and its persecution of female sexuality, Protestant efforts to control female sexuality, and Victorian attempts to neutralise female sexuality. Phenomenologically women may indeed have been reduced to passivity.

The sexual revolution of the 1960s was instrumental in attempting to liberate women from this apparent passivity in relationship to men, and in an effort to redeem and legitimise female sexuality, radical feminist discourses promoted lesbianism as a politically correct solution to male domination. The desire for political correctness however, alienated vast numbers of heterosexual women from feminist ranks. Two relatively distinct streams of feminism can be identified after the 1980s, which as Wilton (1995) suggests, leave lesbians theoretically and politically suspended. Lesbian feminists, such as Jeffreys (1994), continued to maintain the radical feminist stance. This stance held heterosexual relational dynamics as the paradigmatic site of oppression. Lesbian feminists therefore challenged the power dynamic underlying heterosexual expression, i.e., they rejected dominance and submission as integral to sexual expression. Sexual feminists such Rich (1980) and Hamer and Budge (1994), on the other hand, held conceptions of gender, or socially constructed ideas about masculine and feminine ways of being, as the paradigmatic site

of oppression. For sexual feminists sexual expression by definition involved a power dynamic. Rather than avoiding this power dynamic they suggested that women use power in their sexual relationships with both men and women. Against this background, as Faderman (1991) suggests, the category lesbian has no socio-historical constants. Rather, it is a category that is characterised by continual shifts of meaning on a socio-cultural, and more specifically ideological, level of meaning.

The shifts in the socio-cultural meaning of being lesbian, or lesbians as observed in the broader social context, were also reflected in the evolution of images representing lesbians in cinema, television and literature, or what Hamer and Budge (1994) term 'popular culture'. It is argued in this chapter that while the broader question for this project concerns being lesbian as a lived experience rather than as a spectacle for public consumption, the images and icons constructed and consumed by popular culture constitute powerful role models for practising lesbians and for those who are attempting to come out or disclose as lesbian. In the current chapter the epistemological and ontological concerns noted in the foregoing chapter are suspended in order to further refine and differentiate butch and femme stereotypes as portrayed in popular culture. These stereotypes function as a hermeneutic key or resource for entering into dialogue about how lesbians construct their genders. A second objective is to achieve deeper psychological insight and understanding of lesbian relational dynamics and the motives for being lesbian. It is argued that psychoanalytic and analytical theories provide a language for accessing, describing and exploring lesbian modes of being as an intrapsychic (archetypal), intrapersonal (stereotypical), and interpersonal (relational) phenomenon, while literature that is concerned with the 'coming out' process provides the grounds for understanding how lesbians appropriate and are appropriated into the category lesbian.

### 3.1 LESBIAN IMAGES AND ICONS: THE DYNAMICS OF REPRESENTATION

If dream images offer insight into the unconscious aspects of what psychology terms the 'inner world', then popular representations or social images of lesbians provide insight into the unconscious and taken for granted aspects of the shared or 'external world'. Feminists such as Marshment (1993) regard representation as a political issue because without the power to define how they are represented, human beings are subjected to the definitions of others. Criticism of these representations is also a political issue however, because any critique involves the selection of images and a perspective from which these images are deemed significant in the first place.

Popular culture remains an important site of feminist discourses. Lesbian feminist film critics point out that while gays are the subject of *avant-garde* film, lesbians are the subject of pornography and thus, like women in general, have been sexualised by the media (Sheldon, 1977). Sexual feminists such as Budge and Hamer (1994) however, argue that the contemporary interest in lesbian sexuality reflects an obsession with sexual relations in general by mainstream society, and that the obsession with homosexuality serves as the lens through which heterosexual society can peer at its own anxiety about gender. In short:

Through looking at lesbian and gay sexuality, heterosexuality became the subject of inquiry and was put under the microscope, no longer taken for granted nor its naturalness assumed (Hamer & Ashbrook, 1994, p. 170).

The sexualisation of lesbians must therefore also be understood against the background of a general trend towards the sexualisation of relationships in general, as well as the general trend towards embracing lesbian and gay lifestyles as fashion statements (Hamer & Ashbrook, 1994).

Film theorists during the early 1980s, whether activists or not, resented and attacked images of homosexuality in the media. The principle line of attack for Dyer (1977) and others were negative stereotypes. Dyer suggests that the damaging stereotypes evident in film up to and including the 1970s portrayed lesbians as predatory. In other words, popular culture reflected the dominant culture's negative images of lesbians. These images, suggests Dyer, were based upon the unmistakable hatred, fear, ridicule and disgust that was evident during the 1950's. Stacey (1995) notes that contemporary lesbians are still portrayed as unnatural, deviant, predatory and depressed, while McDonald and Steinhorn (1990, p. 17) describe the stereotypical view of the lesbian during the 1980s as "short hair, wears jeans and men's shirts, and has a tough masculine air about her". The public image of lesbians thus remained the butch or masculine-identified lesbian, and the political message perpetuated by the majority of films up to and including the 1980s suggested that the free choice of sexuality by women choosing not to marry remained something that society must punish. As Sheldon (p. 1977, p. 16) suggests:

In general it appears that despite the emergence of a new consciousness about gayness and womanity, the cinema is entrenched in viewing (being lesbian) both as negative and potentially destructive (either to self or others).

More damaging, however, is that these negative and oppressive images are internalised by lesbians themselves, thus leading to self-oppression, or what scholars such as Weinberg (1972) and Sophie (1987) term 'internalised homophobia'.

Concerns that were raised about lesbians in film during the 1980's were not based simply upon the negative stereotypes and their internalisation by lesbians, but also upon the repression of lesbian images. This concern is still expressed by some scholars in the 1990s. For instance Hamer (1994, p. 70), suggests that "lesbian cinema is on an invisible screen" in so much as representations of all but butch lesbians is absent. Thus, despite what Plummer (1992) terms the golden age of gay and lesbian studies<sup>22</sup>, it is a political and theoretical truism to state that lesbian oppression is marked by an invisibility of diversity (Wilton, 1995).

Lesbian feminist film critics also draw attention to how the structure of relationships in these films recreates the social inequality characteristic of heterosexuality. The dynamics demonstrate a struggle for control of the beloved, a struggle in which the butch must be defeated. Her defeat by a man signifies that the true sexual definition of a woman is heterosexual and that she gets this definition in relationship to men. The most frequent obstacle to the lesbian romance film is thus, as Stacey (1995) suggests, the figure of the heterosexual male. Dyer (1977) suggests thus that it is not the stereotyping of lesbians *per se* that deserves to be attacked, but popular culture's attempts to define lesbians using heterosexual norms; and moreover, to pass these norms off as both necessary and natural. The challenge for lesbians is thus to develop alternative and more positive definitions of themselves.

Lesbian feminists took up this challenge during the 1970s and early 1980s with their attempts to create a more positive woman-identified image of being lesbian. These efforts were criticized by sexual feminists, however. At the heart of this debate was the question of whether being lesbian is an ideological

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<sup>22</sup> Maggiore (1992), for instance, uncovered 300 pertinent social science articles between 1976 and 1986, and during the four years following this period, uncovered a further 200 articles, dissertations and books.



stance and political statement that seeks to defy patriarchy (lesbian feminist stance), or whether sex acts between women are part of a broader smorgasbord of post-modern trendy sexual possibilities available to women in general (sexual feminist stance). Tasker (1994), for instance, criticized the current lesbian feminist dismissal of sexualised lesbian images in film as "cultural snobbery" (p. 173) and a "simultaneous invocation and neglect of the diversity of lesbian identities" (p. 180). A more fundamental problem is that the notion of 'positive images' fixes representations of being lesbian, and ignores that lesbians are also subjects who appropriate the images in popular culture by inserting themselves into narrative texts. According to Whatling (1994), lesbian feminists are out of step with lesbian experience. Lesbians attend not only to the role of the actor, but to extra-textual information about the actor. This allows them to appropriate diverse characters and identities, rather than confine themselves to a single mode of identification.

Despite lesbian feminist attempts to create a positive woman-identified image of being lesbian, and sexual feminist attempts to embrace both masculine and feminine sexual possibilities, the stereotypes most evident in popular culture until the early 1990's was the butch. It would seem that in moving towards the end of the twentieth century however, that the invisibility of lesbian diversity can no longer be taken for granted. Butch as an image has been appropriated by women in general, and more feminine images of women have been appropriated by butch lesbians. This has not only led to an opening up, evolution and explosion of possibilities for lesbian representation, but as Hamer (1994) suggests, it has also shifted the status of lesbians. Lesbians' icons are now public property rather than marginalised. Moreover, the multiplicity of identities associated with being lesbian at this point in Western culture also means that the image of lesbians in popular culture is both contradictory and deeply ambiguous (O'Sullivan, 1994).

### **3.1.1.1 Male-Identified Lesbians: The Evolution of Butch**

Early film theory attended to the most visible lesbian identity in history: The Mannish Lesbian or butch who overtly rejected male dominated notions of femininity<sup>23</sup>. Dyer (1977) suggests that lesbian cinematic images and literary figures prior to and during the 1970s were generally portrayed as older and smarter than other female characters. In terms of their appearance, they were well-turned out women in a feminine version of men's clothing. One of the most enduring and persistent ideas about lesbians is thus reflected in popular culture: Lesbians are not truly women. Instead, the identity is "masculinized and equated with heterosexual male sexuality: Active, predatory, in pursuit of the 'feminine' woman" (Hamer, 1994, p. 63). The masculine body of the lesbian asserts its right to be sexual, as well as its autonomy and physical integrity. It is an identity signified by the image of cropped hair and sexual independence from men. Moreover, by virtue of their rejecting male definitions of female attractiveness, butch lesbians are deemed ugly by conventional standards. This prevailing and dominant image of lesbians not only invited self-hatred among lesbians, but provoked criticism from lesbian feminists: The image mimicked heterosexual roles and butch women were not women-identified.

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<sup>23</sup> While representations of lesbians have the highest profile in the visual media, because reading is an important part of coming out or disclosing oneself as lesbian, fiction also played a critical role in lesbians' identification of themselves and others (Whitlock, 1994). Radclyffe Hall's arguably autobiographical novel *The Well of Loneliness*, first published (and banned) in 1928, captures the anguish of the male-identified lesbian or congenital invert. Here the heroine Stephen is a woman who adopts a contra-indicated gender role. She is the male-identified lesbian, a Mannish Lesbian of the 1920's, and one of the most visible of lesbian identities historically (O'Sullivan, 1994).

Hamer (1994) suggests that the many discourses that arose around the figure of Martina Navratilova, a world class tennis player, imply that the image of butch has not disappeared from view. Martina arguably embodies the image of the masculine-identified lesbian: Lesbian as predator, lesbian as loner, lesbian as other to woman. At the same time, lesbian feminists' more positive image of lesbians, characterised by a butch appearance and more affectionate relationships, is embodied by the popular country singer k.d. lang. Her popularity suggests that it is romance that captures the lesbian imagination and that the erotic surpasses the sexual in significance for lesbians.

### **3.1.1.2 The Sexual Feminist Solution: Transforming Femme**

Film theorists during the 1980s seldom focussed upon femme lesbians and thus she remained a mysterious creature. In early cinema and literature she was imagined to be a heterosexual woman upon whom butch lesbians preyed. As the victim of a pervert, she would inevitably be saved or rescued by a strong man. During the 1980s, on the basis of sexual feminists' questioning and reassessment of lesbianism, the image of femme transformed into that of the bisexual nubile young vixen, or 'Lipstick Lesbian' of the 1990s. Lesbian *chic*, Hamer (1994) suggests, is the sexual feminists' response to lesbian feminists' insistence that only positive, i.e., desexualised images of lesbians, be shown and exposed. It was also a reaction against the exclusive focus on butch lesbians by popular culture.

The rise of and fascination with 'lesbian *chic*', according to Hamer and Budge (1994), indicates the 'main streaming' of lesbianism. This eases the possibility of lesbians' acceptance by the dominant culture. At the same time, its invention as a category creates a dualism between the bad political lesbian who is anti-men, anti-sex and anti-fashion (lesbian feminist) and the new brand of 1990s lesbian: The gorgeous and glamorous contemporary femme (sexual feminist).

The media figure Madonna arguably embodies the image and attitude of the contemporary femme. Andermahr (1994, pp. 29-30) suggests that Madonna's popularity among lesbians is due to her self-determination and autonomy: Her images promotes:

A sexuality that is essentially selfish, an auto-erotic self-pleasuring, which sometimes invites but does not require male assistance ... and her power as an icon resides in her ability to both insist on her femininity and yet transcend narrow gender definitions.

Whilst regarded as a pseudo-dyke and bisexual cop-out by lesbian feminists because she continues to regard men as a sexual possibility, Madonna is a model for lesbians who take pleasure in the feminine masquerade. Madonna, as the archetypal femme lesbian is thus regarded as both the champion of sexual feminism and the pirate of traditional lesbian feminist lifestyles.

### **3.1.1.3 Identifying Lesbians: Some Contemporary Observations**

The foregoing review of the representation of lesbians in popular culture suggests that rather than demonstrating a diversity of identities, public film represents contemporary lesbians almost exclusively as either butch or femme lesbians whose relational dynamics mimic heterosexual patterns of relating. At the same time however, these images have become more sophisticated.

Images of femme lesbians as desexualised all but disappeared from film once women in general gave expression to their more predatory, powerful and active sexual urges. The 1990s femme is not only

attractive to men, but her position has shifted from that of victim. In adopting the male gaze, she is harsher and more active than her early predecessor, the Lady in Lavender. The 1990s butch, on the other hand, is exclusively lesbian, and by virtue of that, is considered doubly deviant for she rejects both men as a sexual possibility and womanhood as defined by patriarchy.

In a broader socio-cultural context that demanded that women integrate their sexuality, lesbian feminists' emphasis upon romance rather than sex compromised lesbians' attempts to integrate their sexuality. Sexual feminists, on the other hand, embraced this challenge by embodying secular versions of woman as Witch and in so doing invented the Lipstick Lesbian. Film theorists suggest thus that popular culture has reframed butch as softer and more passive and femme as harsher and more active. These stereotypes maintain gender polarity and complementarity as necessary for sexual intimacy at the same time as they extend and further refine lesbians' possible roles and identities.

The feminisation of butch and the masculinization of femme as a socio-cultural phenomenon raises questions about the binary paradigm underlying sex and gender. It also suggests that gender appearances and gender functioning require differentiation. The traditional butch, for instance, is masculine in both her appearances and functioning. The feminine butch or dyke however, is masculine in terms of her appearances but feminine in her functioning. Likewise, the masculine femme, or Lipstick lesbian, is feminine in appearance but masculine in her functioning, i.e., she adopts the male gaze in relation to women. Finally, the feminine femme's lesbian desire serves as an apprenticeship for later heterosexual relating.

### 3.2 CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF LESBIANS

Wilton (1995) suggests that the hegemony of the male narrative and male definitions of female sexuality were all but absolute in Western cultures until the 1960s. Traditional psychoanalytic theory proved no exception. Theorists based their understanding of human development upon the Oedipal drama, emphasized the supremacy of the phallus, and thereby "reinforced the phallogocentricity of sexuality by defining women's sexuality in terms of only the penis" (Bleir, 1984, p. 71). Likewise, traditional analytical theory foreclosed upon the possibility of lesbian individuation by defining contra-sexual potentials in terms of genital difference (Hopke, 1989; and, 1993)<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> While not central to the current argument, existential psychologists also maintain heterosexist stance. Boss (1982), for instance, describes lesbian modes of being as a sexual perversion, as a deficient mode of loving, i.e., the human behaviour that is called loving-each-other suffers from limitations on or disturbances in the execution of its total possibilities. Given that human beings, and particularly women, are capable of loving members of their own and the opposite sex (Hite, 1993), being either exclusively heterosexual or homosexual implies perversion as Boss defines perversion, for in each instance the individual's total possible relations are restricted. Boss (1982, p. 92) betrays his prejudice towards lesbians when he quotes the case of a patient who "had been having a homosexual relationship with a much older woman for two years. She behaved towards this woman more or less as an adolescent boy behaves towards his mother, except for the almost daily bodily embraces, which resulted regularly in orgasm through mutual masturbation". Boss notes also that this patient's dreams spoke of women being worthy of her love, whereas men appeared tattered, nauseating, lascivious and filthy. Nine months later, in the context of *daseinsanalytic* treatment, she dreamed of being an adolescent boy, of meeting her feminine *doppelganger*, and of meeting a young man towards whom she noticed intensive sexual desire. From this point on, says Boss, there arose in the patient more feminine behaviour - she was behaving more peacefully and complacently, started to dress in a more feminine fashion, and lost her attachment to her older motherly friend. Moreover, her erotic tendencies changed more and more to towards masculine women until she fell in love with a young, somewhat feminine man.

The rise of feminism during the late 1960s drew attention to the fact that to call someone lesbian was not only a statement of sexual preference or a psychological phenomenon, but also a statement of social positioning, in so much as the category lesbian is a "strategic sign" (Wilton, 1995, p. 47) that lies "on the edge, in the social margin" (Rainer, 1994, p. 13). Feminists such as Stein (1994) therefore define lesbianism as an expression of female sexual autonomy, since lesbians by definition challenge patriarchal assumptions about the supremacy of the phallus. With rare exceptions, psychoanalytic theorists continue to take phallic supremacy for granted. Likewise, analytical theorists maintain genital difference as the basis for contrasexual opposites. It would seem thus that both theoretical positions remain insensitive to the political and ideological implications of their taken for granted essentialist assumptions. In so doing, they exclude being lesbian as a healthy relational possibility.

### 3.2.1 CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOANALYTIC UNDERSTANDINGS OF LESBIANS

Freud (1905/1953, p. 145) initially resisted the attempt to separate lesbians off as a "group of special character". His emphasis on the Oedipal drama as central to sexual development however, restored the phallus to supremacy during the 1920s and effectively pathologised the condition. Homosexuality was thus treated with hypnotherapy (Von Krafft-Ebing, 1896/1965), shock treatment (Owensby, 1940; Thompson, 1949), a single interview (Berg & Allen, 1958), and psychoanalysis (Bieber, Dair, Dince, Drellich, Grand, Gundlach, Kremer, Rifkin, Wilbur & Bieber, 1962).

The American Psychiatric Association (APA), after substantial pressure from gay activists during the late 1960's, collectively conceded that homosexuality was not a disease and voted to remove it from their Diagnostic and Statistical Manual in 1973. In 1975 the APA adopted the official policy that homosexuality *per se* did not necessarily imply any impairment in the judgement, stability, reliability or general social and vocational capability of an individual (Greene, 1994). What happened thereafter was even more instructive – within a few years it was homophobia, or the irrational and persistent fear of homosexuals, that became the sickness.

Contemporary psychoanalytic explanations for being lesbian however, remain grounded upon the assumption that sexual desire is based upon genital difference. McDougall (1980; 1986; 1989a; and, 1989b), for instance, assumes that sexual desire is only possible between a man and a woman. Healthy sexuality is thus by definition heterosexual. Meltzer (1979) implies the same when he suggests that lesbian relationships remain stuck at the level of foreplay – they are polymorphous, perverse, infantile and immature. Sex between women is therefore not sex but symbiosis. Reiss (1974) noted in his empirical research that lesbians have a lesser need for sexual gratification. On this basis he suggested that "the meaning of female-female relationships appears to be different; it depends less on sex than on love and more on warmth,

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Boss (1982) implies therefore, that homosexual make do with a reality which is inferior to male-female unity, but then attempts to rescue himself from being accused of homophobia by suggesting that "it is true that occasionally homosexual people are capable of forming a love relationship with a homosexual partner which, compared with a normal relationship, is only limited in the sense that no children can descend from them" (Boss, 1982, p. 95). It would seem thus that Boss, like traditional psychoanalytic theorists, assumes that only opposites (on a genital level) can and do attract, and thus that being lesbian is a perversion, a restricted mode of loving characterised by the existential mode of a child or adolescent. Boss thus falls prey to psychology's emphasis on the concrete and embodied, i.e., he also assumes that biology is destiny and that genital difference constitutes the foundation for sexual desire.

contact, sense of oneness" (Reiss, 1974, p. 202). Reiss thus understood lesbian relational dynamics in terms of a symbiotic romantic friendship, as affectionate rather than sexual.

On the grounds of this taken for granted assumption – that healthy sex is always heterosexual and thus that lesbian sexuality is immature, psychoanalytic explanations for being lesbian attend to four primary themes: The rejection of conventional sex-role activity; the repudiation of the father; the failure to separate from the hated mother; and, the envious attack on the heterosexual couple.

Saghir and Robins' (1973) research supports the failure of socialisation thesis – two thirds of their lesbian sample were tomboys as children and their cross-gender identification became overtly sexualized with crushes on women teachers during adolescence. Reiss (1974) further confirms this thesis in his list of criteria by which lesbians may be identified. Empirical research<sup>25</sup> that compares lesbians with a so-called 'normal women' however, suggests that in general lesbians are more emotionally sensitive than are heterosexual women, i.e., more reactive, introverted, neurotic and reserved. These findings give rise to questions about whether lesbians reject conventional feminine potentials and roles in favour of masculine potentials and roles for it would seem their feeling or 'inner world' is demonstrably woman-identified.

On this basis of his research Reiss (1974) also doubted psychoanalytic theories which proposed that lesbians' negative feelings towards their fathers were projected onto men as a category of persons. Likewise, O'Connor and Ryan (1993) criticize McDougall for suggesting that being lesbian is a repudiation of the father as a loved object – that being lesbian represents a:

Desire for the total elimination of the father and the creation of an exclusive and enduring mother-daughter relationship in which the mother is maintained as a non-conflictual object (O'Connor & Ryan, 1993, p. 115).

McDougall, suggest O'Connor and Ryan (1993), assumes that lesbians desire other women from the position of a male-identified identity that is fictitious, in so much as this identity is the product of *unconscious* identification with the father. Not only is the possibility for loving women from the position of a woman thereby excluded, but McDougall's conception of being lesbian also excludes the possibility for embodying feminine attributes – being feminine and being lesbian cannot be reconciled on a theoretical level.

A well-documented and related psychoanalytic explanation for lesbian development is that lesbians have failed to establish sufficient separation from the mother. For McDougall (1980; 1986; 1989a; and 1989b) symbiotic enmeshment with the mother was the root of being lesbian, and Meltzer (1979) and Socarides (1968) confirmed this thesis. Socarides suggested that pre-Oedipal lesbians feel rejected by the father because they are female and rejected by the mother because she is both hateful and hated by virtue of being female. Problems of gender identity arise when a lesbian persists in identifying with the hated mother

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<sup>25</sup> Armon (cited in Saghir & Robins, 1973) used projective tests and found that the only differentiating score between heterosexual and homosexual women was with respect to their emotional reactivity. Likewise Freeman (cited in Saghir & Robins, 1973), using personality inventories, found that lesbians were inner-directed and did not accept aggression as easily as heterosexual women. Van Aardweg (cited in Saghir & Robins, 1973) used the Thematic Apperception Test and found that lesbians had a greater tendency towards femininity. On this basis he suggested that lesbians were more neurotic. Hopkins (cited in Saghir & Robins, 1973), with the help of the Rorschach, suggested that lesbian were more reserved and had more disturbed relations with the mother. In their own research, Saghir & Robins (1973) noted that while there were no significant differences in lesbians' functioning as compared to 'normal' women, alcoholism and attempts to seek psychotherapy were more prevalent. Arguably, alcoholism is the result of the bar culture that was characteristic of lesbian communities in Europe and America during the 1960s (Faderman, 1991), while seeking psychotherapy was the product of crippling internalised homophobia.

from whom she cannot separate because she has not been loved enough. In Socarides view, entrapment with the mother due to inadequate mothering provides the basis for substituting a masculine identification over hated feminine identifications. This false Self, as Winnicott (1971) would term it, emerges in order to secure a good mother which, in adult life, becomes the homosexual partner. Like Siegal (1988) therefore, Socarides held that because lesbians could not imagine the good-enough mother, they attempted to heal themselves by taking a lesbian lover. In short, the lover was a mother substitute. This argument implies that lesbians cannot access their feminine potentials except through their feminine lover, and raises questions about lesbians' experiences of their mothers and lovers. By implication, it also raises questions about lesbians' attitudes towards and understanding of their own and their partners' feminine potentials and roles.

Finally, Segal (1986) and Meltzer (1979) suggest that lesbians are caught up in a narcissistic condition dominated by projective identification and envy. In this sense, being lesbian is an envious attack against the heterosexual couple, or a denial of the parental relationship (McDougall, 1980; 1986; and, 1989a). In his research on family relationships however, Reiss (1974) notes that lesbian's attitudes towards men and women did not distinguish them from heterosexual women. This apparent contradiction between empirical findings and psychoanalytic theory raises questions about lesbians attitudes to and understanding of their parents as a heterosexual relational model.

Contemporary psychoanalytic theorists, with rare exceptions such as Chodorow (1992) and Benjamin (1995), regard being lesbian as pathological. They not only assume that sexual desire is based upon genital difference, but also that lesbians: Reject their fathers and by implication men in general; remain symbiotically attached to the hated mother and women in general; and, opt for affectionate rather than sexually exciting relationships. These theoretical assumptions are contradicted by empirical research findings that suggest that lesbians demonstrate conventional feminine traits, and raises questions about the meaning of being masculine-identified, i.e., lesbians may adopt a masculine appearance but at the same time be woman-identified.

### **3.2.1.1 Like Subjects, Love Objects: The Work of Jessica Benjamin**

Jessica Benjamin (1995, p.1) writes from the position of a "psychoanalyst involved from the very beginning with feminist thought". Benjamin, like Chodorow (1992), notes that psychoanalytic theory continues to uncritically idealize heterosexual development and pathologise homosexuality. Even where homosexuality is not directly pathologised, suggests Benjamin (1995, p. 72) "it is presented as a condition that needs to be explained, the object choice whose etiology requires continual and intense investigation". Benjamin's (1988; and, 1995) openness to feminist ideas permits her to take an inclusive position with respect to various psychoanalytic schools of thought, and to "highlight the double-sidedness of intersubjectivity and the intrapsychic, as well as the tension between sameness and difference in gender relations" (p. 7).

Object relations theorists, suggests Benjamin (1995), concern themselves with the psychic internalisation and representation of interactions between self and others. They do not attend to the reality of these relationships to others. In introducing the term 'intersubjectivity', or the field of intersection between self and others, Benjamin (1995, p. 30) includes a relational perspective in order to:

Account both for the pervasive effects of human relationships on psychic development and for the equally ubiquitous effects of internal psychic mechanisms and fantasies in shaping psychological life and interaction.

Benjamin (1988) specifically includes two categories of experience, i.e., the 'intrapsychic' and 'intersubjective'. In so much as the current research recognises the possibility of Husserl's (cited in Durrheim, 1997) 'transcendent self', it reserves the term 'intrapsychic' for archetypes that emerge from psyche, as distinct from patterns of relating that are internalised by an individual. In the context of this research therefore, Benjamin's focus more accurately includes the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of human experience. Benjamin goes on to suggest that what cannot be worked through and dissolved with an outside other is transposed into a drama of internal objects. This shifts the domain from the interpersonal to the domain of the intrapersonal. As such, internalisation is not understood to be a defence. It is an underlying substratum of mental activity, "a constant symbolic digestion process that constitutes an important part of the cycle of exchange between the individual and the outside" (Benjamin, 1995, p. 40).

Benjamin (1995) explores the relationship between recognition (acceptance of an other's independence and unknowability) and identificatory love. She suggests that when viewed from one angle, identification contributes to empathy and the bridging of difference. From another angle however, it stands opposed to recognising the other, in so much as "the self engaged in identification takes the other as fantasy object, not as an equivalent centre of being" (p. 8). In other words, the wish for absolute independence on the level of fantasy conflicts with the need for recognition on the level of reality. To be known or recognised is to immediately experience the other's power. The process of recognition therefore breaks up projective processes and modifies an individual's sense of omnipotence. The problem that often occurs in the process of differentiation however, is that the other retaliates, caves in or withdraws. In these instances, an individual does not experience the other as outside, and instead of surviving and becoming real, the other is subsumed by a persecutory rather than loving fantasy.

Freud distinguished between two types of love. Anaclitic (attachment) love is directed towards a person who is the source of care and protection. Narcissistic (identificatory) love is directed towards persons who represent some part of the self that an individual once was, would like to be, or knows he/she cannot be. Identification is not merely an internal process therefore, it is also a kind of relationship.

For the most part, psychoanalytic theories about lesbians take for granted the impossibility of achieving recognition within a relationship of genital sameness, and such relationships are understood to reflect anaclitic love or attachment, rather than identificatory love. This assumption rests upon the understanding that a mother and child share a relationship of attachment and cannot separate without the psychic presence of the father. By implication, two like-subjects cannot confront each other without merging, i.e., the one party is always subordinated and assimilated by the other. Identificatory love, on the other hand, occurs with someone outside and different from the first love object, i.e., in relationship to someone who is also a subject. For psychoanalytic theorists this subject is the father. Identificatory love therefore recognises an individual's acknowledgement and fascination for difference and novelty.

Benjamin (1995) criticizes psychoanalytic theorists on the grounds that they are largely unable to conceptualize the mother as a separate subject, i.e., to see the mother-child relationship from the viewpoint of both subjects. She suggests that real objects, in contrast to fantasy objects, do not chart their course along the axes of masculinity and femininity in a straight line but in complex patterns. In other words, in our gender polarized world the figures of mother and father are more multiple and mixed up, and less identical with femininity and masculinity. As such, she suggests that the figures 'mother' and 'father' be understood

not as biologically ordained categories but as theoretical ideal types that may be expressed by both men and women. Benjamin suggests, therefore, that each love object embodies multiple possibilities for sameness and difference, of masculinity and femininity, and that one love relationship may serve a multitude of functions.

In considering the role of the mother, Benjamin (1995) comments that the original threat is not castration by the father but narcissistic injury in relation to the mother. More specifically, when the dangers of separation are seen as real rather than fantasized, space is foreclosed and the symbolic equation holds sway. The mother's child 'is' the obstacle to her self-expression, and her self-expression 'is' a threat to her child in attachment love. Benjamin suggests that attachment love for the mother should not be confused with identificatory love for the mother. The latter is expressed in the girl child's effort to identify with the potent, fertile and active mother, and may entail a chauvinistic attempt to repudiate the masculine.

In considering the role of the father, Benjamin (1995) suggests that identificatory love is particularly important if a girl child is to define herself as the subject of desire. Here a girl's identification with 'masculinity' reflects not a reaction to a sense of castration but love and admiration of the father. Moreover, the internal motive for the girl's taking up a position of father love may not be equivalent to an identification with passivity. Rather, it may be an offshoot of her complex effort to identify with his younger self as a boy. In addition, the complex nature of the father-daughter relationship has been obscured by analytic acceptance of the fallacy that all opposite-sex love is heterosexual. The father can also be the object of homoerotic love for the girl who loves the other who is different in order to become more like him.

In summary, Benjamin (1988; and, 1995) suggests that psychoanalytic theory has not been able to liberate itself from a naturalizing tendency in its thinking about gender, or the tendency to view gender differences as more significant than gender likeness. Moreover, she points out that psychoanalytic theory has been unable to think beyond the Oedipal level. This fixation is reflected in prevailing theories that insist on heterosexual complementarity, and which equate perversion with homosexuality and 'genital whole object relations' with heterosexuality. Benjamin's reworking of psychoanalytic theory challenges the notion of unitary gender identities, as well as traditional psychoanalytic theorist's acceptance of gender as a binary system in which mother represents attachment love and father identificatory love. Her more inclusive view suggests that multiple identifications to the mother and father are formative for all sexual relations, and that object choice (or the choice of who an individual desires) and identification are not the inverse of each other. As such, her position is consistent with that of the current research in which the binary paradigm of sex and gender is suspended. Benjamin also questions the superficial distinction made between heterosexual and homosexual choices, i.e., whether a person seeks likeness or difference is not determined simply by the nominal gender of their partner. Rather, the choice of sexual partners appears as a complex pattern that reflects the multiplicity of an individual's gender identities and positions. Gender experience, in other words, is a transitional territory. It is both tenacious and fragile, reified and elusive, and resistant and mutative.

### **3.2.2 CONTEMPORARY ANALYTICAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Contemporary analytical theorists use Jung as a foundation for their understanding psychological reality, and have been more productive with respect to questioning the binary paradigm underlying sex and gender than



have their psychoanalytic counterparts who, almost without exception, posit a masculine identity as the basis for lesbian development (Burch, 1993). Nonetheless, Hopke (1993, p. 74) comments that:

While for Freudians homophobia most frequently takes the form of pathologisation and condemnation, among Jungians, it typically takes the form of neglect.

A review of contemporary analytical literature about being lesbian suggests that traditional analytical theorists raise questions about the very possibility of lesbian individuation. Individuation is a process by which human beings recognise and embrace aspects of themselves not previously known or welcomed into the identity (Samuels, 1985b; and Schwartz-Salant, 1992). Complete individuation is the "union of the conscious mind or ego with the unconscious personified *anima*" (Jung, CW16: par. 474) or *animus*<sup>26</sup>, i.e., the individual's contrasexual opposite. Jung suggested that a woman who is possessed by her *animus* (her image of man) is in danger of losing her adapted feminine persona, since "if one lives out the opposite sex in oneself one is living in one's own background, and one's real individuality suffers" (Jung, CW10, par. 243). Cross-gender identification from his point of view therefore represents an obstruction to wholeness and individuation.

Traditional analytical theorists appear to maintain the binary paradigm of sex and gender. Wolff (1993), for example, proposes that lesbians exist on the Mystic-Hero as opposed to Mother-Whore continuum. This image of being lesbian – the Athene-identified Amazon, corresponds with the *animus*-identified woman. Hall (1980) pays attention to the archetypal figure of Artemis as an enabling archetype, but describes lesbian love as barren because Artemis does not produce off-spring. Perera (1981), in an effort to reframe feminine sexuality as receptive as opposed to passive, suggests that the daughters of patriarchy have lost their connection to the repressed feminine aspects of the Mother. Like Hall therefore, Perera understood being lesbian as being called back into connection with the archetypal mother, and drew upon the myth of Inanna<sup>27</sup> in order to explore this more active Feminine potential.

These images of being lesbian extend the possibilities for being lesbian beyond restricting stereotypes such as butch or femme, and dyke or Lipstick Lesbian. As a vision and symbol of Self however, they remain fundamentally heterosexist. Perera (1981), for instance, implies that eroticism between women is regressive – it is a stage in a woman's journey to wholeness rather than a life long commitment. In her vision being lesbian remains an apprenticeship for the more serious business of heterosexual relating. Hall (1980) betrays her prejudice by suggesting that the only fulfilling role for women is that of mother.

Singer (1977) is an analytical theorist who transcends the heterosexist foundation in her archetypal image of lesbians. She argues against difference being defined and confined to the genital or biological level and considers androgyny, as expressed in the image of the Hermaphrodite, to be a symbol of Self and the principle for wholeness. In Singer's vision, therefore, lesbian individuation offers the possibility for the integration of both masculine and feminine potentials within a single individual, and in that sense individuation is an intrapsychic, rather than interpersonal, phenomenon.

Post-modern analytical theorists such as Schwartz-Salant and Stein (1992) and Stevens

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<sup>26</sup> Stevens (1992) describes how in contemplating the ancient problem of whether women have souls, Jung concluded that women could not possibly have an *anima* (soul) because then there would be no check on a woman from within. Consequently he proposed as inner check the *animus* or spirit.

<sup>27</sup> According to Perera (1981), Inanna's journey into the underworld, into the darkness, reveals her openness to being influenced and is receptive – the feminine way is founded upon an active willingness to receive. Her openness to the pre-verbal, affective-laden and transformative depths of psyche is therefore not passive but active.

(1992) question the very usefulness of *anima* and *animus* for understanding unconscious processes and suggest that each subjectivity, regardless of sex, is engaged with resolving tension between both *anima* and *animus* aspects of his or her experience. This analytical position presents a radical and arguably paradoxical attempt to degenderise archetypes. It also permits contemporary analytical scholars, such as Hopke (1989, and, 1983), Cowan (1993), Carrington (1993), and Downing (1993) to describe a special kind of individuation process for lesbians. Their explanations emphasize that erotic and sexual bonding between women is a refinement of sameness rather than a tension between and differentiation of opposites:

In sexual union between women, the embodied likeness as well as differences are profoundly experienced and often contribute to a woman's reunion with her own body after years of living in an androcentric culture that separates body and soul, matter and spirit, and has often violated, demeaned, and mutilated the body and women's bodies in particular (Hopke, Carrington & Wirth, 1993, p. 3).

Hopke (1993, p. 80) suggest that the inferior status accorded to women under patriarchy inculcates self-hatred from birth and thus that lesbian individuation "winds up being in large part a reclamation of the Self". Carrington (1993, p. 91) argues that being lesbian calls a woman beyond an ideology of "separateness". In her vision, the individuation process for lesbians is:

An alchemical one: they repeat the whole process of creating themselves, return to the original perfection of their true instinctual natures, and redeem themselves and their world through reunion (Carrington, 1993, p. 92).

Besides holding transformative potential, the fundamental femaleness of the loving between lesbians requires, according to Cowan (1993, p. 129):

The most exact differentiation of the myriad subtle shades of nuance that distinguish (their) projections ... Individuation depends on being able to tell the difference between ... projection (what I see of myself in her) and reflection (how I see my Self in her).

Lesbians thus individuate not so much through difference, opposition and disparity, but through differentiating their mutuality, complementarity and sameness. Downing (1993), like Carrington (1993) and Cowan (1993), describes her own turning to women as a returning, rather than regression, to her mother, her sister and her Self. Being lesbian is thus a recircling and homecoming, a choice for emotional closeness, and suggests that the:

Desire to return to one's source, an archetypal desire, not a particularly homosexual one, can be construed as a regression only in a culture like ours, which fears the Mother and elevates the Father as a defence against her. For women, return to the Mother is not necessarily a regression; it is return to what (women) are intended to become (Cowan, 1993, p. 134).

As suggested by these analytical scholars then, lesbians as lovers are not merely living out a complex centred on a rejection of femininity, nor are they exhibiting an aversion to men or unresolved mother issues. Rather, and as suggested above, lesbian relationships are complex – they offer the potential for a deep grappling with the problems of merger and intimacy.

A review of contemporary analytical theory suggests that the debate between analytical theorists who hold a traditional position and those who hold a contemporary position rests upon their maintenance or abandonment of the binary paradigm of sex and gender. More traditional analytical theorists do not question Jung's basic dualistic classification of masculine and feminine. This, as O'Connor and Ryan (1993) suggest,

restricts their thinking since the dictum that opposites attract has come to mean that only opposites can and do attract – as if the opposition of otherness on a biological level is more compelling and numinous than the attraction of likeness. As suggested by Stevens (1994), contemporary analytical theorists challenge the binary paradigm – they distinguish between gender persona as a cultural and historical phenomenon (representations in popular culture) and gender identity as a basic and embodied phenomenon. The former are social constructions of gender that individual lesbians internalise, while the latter concern archetypal patterns as expressed by individual lesbians.

### **3.2.3 UNDERSTANDINGS OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

Psychoanalytic and analytical literature focuses almost exclusively upon the psychogenesis of being lesbian. This view is deterministic in its assumptions. The development of a lesbian identity is deemed to be a confirmation and exacerbation of existing relational difficulties. Human developmental theorists, in contrast, direct their attention toward the process of 'coming out', or the realisation and acknowledgement of being lesbian during a sexual awakening in adolescence. These theorists attend to how lesbians self-label, disclose and integrate a lesbian identity, and imply being lesbian as a choice rather than a pre-determined condition.

'Coming out' is a term derived from the phrase 'coming out of the closet', the closet being a metaphor for the undisclosed aspects of individuals. A review of research about coming out suggests that some scholars (Hooker, 1967; and, Babuscio, 1976) use the term to imply a particular event within the broader process of lesbian identity development, while others (Morin & Miller, 1978; Groves, 1985; Buunk & Van Driel, 1989; and, McDonald & Steinhorn, 1990) extend the definition to include a life-long developmental process that begins before the realisation that a woman is lesbian and which continues long after she has identified herself as lesbian<sup>28</sup>. For the purposes of this research, coming out will be viewed as a developmental process that takes place during adolescence and early adulthood, rather than an event. It is defined as a process by which lesbians recognise their sexual preference and choose to integrate this knowledge into their personal and social life over time (Schultz & De Monteflores, 1978). It is a "process by which a person comes first to consider and later acquire the identity of homosexual as a relevant aspect of self" (Cass, 1979, p. 219). These theorists appear to be more sensitive to the implications of being identified with a marginalised political category, and their writing is characterised by their focus upon lesbians' attempts to master specific developmental tasks in the face of both personal and social obstructions.

#### **3.2.3.1 Coming Out as a Developmental Sequence**

The literature suggests that coming out often takes the form of a delayed adolescence. Vetere (1982), for

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<sup>28</sup> Hooker (1967) for instance, limits coming out to when a woman identifies herself publicly as a lesbian for the first time, while Babuscio (1976) limits to a woman's first homosexual encounter. More specifically, as an event it is a courageous act of self-labelling, an act of defiance, a refusal to be intimidated by a homophobic societal norms and a significant step in a lesbian's process of self-acceptance (Babuscio, 1976). Groves (1985), on the other hand, includes self-acceptance and the sharing of one's lesbian identity with others in her definition of coming out, while McDonald and Steinhorn (1990) define it as a developmental process which can be very painful in so much as it entails the decision to accept the role of deviant in society and thus the possibility of rejection (Buunk & Van Driel, 1989).

instance, suggests not only that friendship is a key factor in the development of lesbians' first same-sex relationships, but that a first homosexual encounter often occurs in the context of an established friendship during adolescence. This is confirmed by Rust (1993, p. 53) who suggests that:

Most lesbians who have ever experienced homosexual arousal recall having such feelings around the age of 12 or 13, but they typically did not become aware of their sexual feelings toward other women until ages fourteen through nineteen. Women begin suspecting that they are lesbian at an average age of 18, but they do not define themselves as lesbian until a few years later at an average age of 21 to 23, with 77 per cent having done so by age 23.

Maggee (1994) also suggests that coming out is a phenomenon that takes place during adolescence and early adulthood. Likewise, D'Augelli (1994, p. 125) suggests that:

The emergence of a sense of lesbian/gay identity occurs for many in early adolescence, despite social barriers to expressing this identity. For far more, a sense of consolidated lesbian/gay identity occurs later in life, that is, in late adolescence or early adulthood.

The majority of models for understanding lesbian development during the 1970s and 1980s were stage models (Plummer, 1975; Schultz & De Montefiores, 1978; and, Coleman, 1982). These models attempted to trace the process that takes place before a woman assumes a lesbian identity and lifestyle. The process was imagined to be goal-orientated and culminated with the acquisition of and stabilization of the person's identity as homosexual.

The pre-coming out stage identified by Schultz and De Montefiores (1978) is generally characterised by the child's awareness that she is different, alienated or alone in the world. According to them, the young lesbian protects herself from rejection by defending against these feelings with a wide variety of defences, including denial, repression, reaction formation, sublimation and rationalisation. This stage of lesbian identity development is frequently associated with low self-esteem and depression.

Lesbians move into the coming out stage when they break through these defences and acknowledge their homosexual feelings. This breakthrough has been termed sensitisation (Plummer, 1975; and, Lee, 1977), awareness (Hencken & O'Dowd, 1977), and identification (Dank, 1971). The confusion evident about what it means to be lesbian during this stage of development led Cass (1979; and, 1984) to refer to it as a stage of identity confusion.

Having identified and labelled her sexual feelings as homosexual, the lesbian must disclose her identity to significant others. Disclosure, or sharing of her self-recognition with an other (Weinberg & Williams, 1974), is motivated by the need for validation. The individual risks disclosing their awareness to others in the hope and faith that they will not be rejected. Where the disclosure is rejected or ridiculed, the lesbian is thrown back upon her habitual defences against labelling herself lesbian. Where the disclosure is accepted, the lesbian moves into the next stage, i.e., socialisation as a lesbian.

Socialisation, or the process by which society moulds an individual's identity in a way that it can perpetuate itself or maintain continuity, emphasizes the importance of exploring the 'new' sexual identity. Plummer (1975) and Lee (1977) refer to this as coming out. Cass (1979; and, 1984) suggests that this stage involves shifting from a position in which the new identity is tolerated to a position in which it is accepted. This stage of lesbian development is associated with several developmental tasks. The first of these tasks requires developing appropriate interpersonal skills in order to be able to socialise with other lesbians. The second requires developing a sense of personal attractiveness and sexual competence. The third task is that of recognising that self-esteem is not dependent upon sexual conquest. This developmental stage is

equivalent of heterosexual adolescence, in so much as relationships are generally immature and promiscuous.

The fourth and final stage of coming out draws attention to the task of learning how to function in a same-sexed relationship. This process appears to be ongoing – it is subject to the emergence of new feelings and labels as well as a lesbian's willingness to explore new relationships and communities.

Contemporary human development theorists criticize stage models. As Sophie (1982, 1986 & 1988) suggests, most lesbians do not progress through the identified stages in an orderly sequence, and she presents empirical research to suggest that lesbians are highly diverse with respect to their sexual and/or affectional history, life-style, and personal identity. Coleman (1982) notes the same when he argues that individual lesbians may become fixated in one or another stage, attend to the developmental tasks of several stages simultaneously, or shift to later tasks before attending to those in the earlier stages of development. Rust's (1993) research also suggests that many lesbians continue to undergo periods of alternative identification or uncertainty about their sexual identities. In order to accommodate these fluctuations in identification, stage theorists have proposed feedback loops that regulate the relationship between a lesbian and her social context.

### **3.2.3.2 Developmental Tasks Associated with the Integration of a Lesbian Identity**

Integrating adult sexuality into the personality within a social context is the crucial task of adolescence. In terms of the model outlined above, lesbians begin this process with their acceptance of same-sex attractions and the process ends with the integration of a lesbian identity. Not all lesbians are able to integrate however, since integration involves challenging heterosexual norms as well as incorporating public and private identities into one self-image. Human developmental theorist's political sensitivity allows them to identify developmental tasks that are specific to the integration of a marginalised social identity.

Schultz and De Montefiores (1978), for instance, note three interrelated aspects of identity formation that contribute to lesbians' acceptance and integration of the direction of their desire. First, the individual lesbian must eliminate or modify the negative connotations associated with being lesbian, or initiate what Jenness (1992) terms a process of detypification.

Jenness (1992, p. 66) suggests that there is abundant theoretical and empirical literature to indicate that there is a difference between adopting lesbian behaviour and actually being lesbian<sup>29</sup>, and inquires about "the nature of the process by which some women come to see themselves as being lesbian". She argues that the difference between being lesbian and exhibiting lesbian behaviour hinges upon a process:

Of redefining and subsequently reassessing the social category 'lesbian' such that it acquires increasingly concrete and precise meanings, positive connotations, and personal applicability.

In true social constructionist style, Jenness (1992) suggests that lesbian as a social identity is a necessary pre-requisite for the adoption of a lesbian identity, and that the process of detypifying the category is prompted by a crisis when typified understandings of being lesbian are demonstrated to be inaccurate, i.e., personal experience contradicts the negative social stereotypes. In the process of this revisioning, the category becomes less general and more specific.

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<sup>29</sup> Healy (1993) also challenges the assumption that verbal self-disclosure is a measure of mental health for lesbians.

Detypification, according to Jenness (1992), is initiated when lesbians come into contact with the gay community. This contact begins a resocialisation process that opens up the meaning of labels and cognitively transforms them from negative to positive. Self-labelling is thus both integrative and instrumental, since on the basis of self-labelling a woman is encouraged to seek opportunities to be with other women and enter into intimacy with these women. Krieger (1982) also reviews the identity-community relationship and suggests that lesbian communities define the identity of their members, and because these communities are vulnerable in the wider society, they demand conformity and commitment to a lesbian identity and intimacy among their members. This demand for conformity may threaten as well as support the development of individual identity.

A second developmental task is that past experience must be reworked in order to animate cognitive transformation. This retrospective making sense of a lesbian identity, or what Plummer (1975) termed 'sensitisation', includes the exploration and processing of previously disowned homosexual feelings. This view holds that there is little that is essential to being lesbian. Rather, past experience is reinterpreted in order to support a lesbian identity.

A third developmental task, Elliott (1985) suggests, is that the acceptance of a lesbian identity involves a number of changes in the ways that women perceive, define and evaluate themselves and their society. Not only must a woman label herself lesbian, but she must acknowledge that to a large extent her emotional needs are satisfied by women, and that the satisfaction of these needs is central. The meaning of love must thus be altered to include same-sexed partners.

### **3.2.3.3 Obstructions to the Integration of a Lesbian Identity**

Human developmental theorists political sensitivity also permits them to identify specific personal, social and ideological obstructions to the integration of a lesbian identity. For instance, the dichotomous thinking about sexuality, i.e., that women are either gay or straight, serves to inhibit the possibility of finding an intermediate position and restricts debate about sexual identity to an either exclusively heterosexual or exclusively lesbian position.

Schultz and De Montefiores (1978) also suggest that an individual lesbian's degree of openness about her identity is obstructed by a variety of social factors. These include the lack of social support networks, isolation from social contacts, and issues associated with relinquishing patriarchal norms and expectations (Groves, 1985; and, Sophie, 1982 & 1988).

Berg-Cross (1988) adds three personal obstacles: escaping the suffocating fusion of early lesbian relationships; parental homophobic reactions; and, 'in-laws' perceptions and reception of the lover. Lesbians, further suggests Coleman (1982), are at a distinct disadvantage with respect to learning how to maintain a relationship, and first relationships are often disastrous due to lingering negative and homophobic attitudes that have been internalised. These attitudes sabotage a lesbian's efforts to establish and maintain intimacy.

Besides social isolation and personal disappointment in relationships, lesbians also lack role models who may be emulated – prior to second wave feminism few lesbians had a source of positive identity (Buunk & Van Driel, 1989). Dank (1971), for instance, argues that self-acceptance is related to access to knowledge and information concerning lesbians and that the traditional silence on the topic prevents many lesbians

from coming out of the closet because the acquisition of a positive philosophy about being lesbian is almost impossible when relational options are restricted to chaste romantic friendships and the image to the Mannish Lesbian or butch of the 1950's.

#### **3.2.3.4 Coming Out as a Problematic Concept**

A review of various models for describing lesbian identity development proves useful for identifying the developmental tasks associated with coming out, as well as the social and personal obstructions to this process. The political sensitivity of these theorists however, proves to be both their strength and their weakness.

Firstly, the positing of feedback loops in order to accommodate the influence of obstruction to coming out raises questions about the definition of lesbian. For instance, many women who love women may prefer to remain in the closet or deny the sexualised nature of their encounters with women due to homophobic attitudes in the wider society and their internalisation of these attitudes. The status of these women as lesbian is problematic since the first stage of coming out involves initial denial, i.e., attempts to suppress or sublimate feelings for the same-sex and express feelings for the opposite sex. Moreover, the second task of coming out involves disclosing a lesbian identity to others. For potential lesbians rejection may retard further disclosure, thus leading to fixation at the first stage.

Secondly, the majority of these models were developed on the basis of gay experience and then generalised to lesbian experience. This remains a tenuous generalisation in view of debates about the centrality of genital contact for lesbians. As Rupp (1989, p. 409) suggests:

There are lesbians who have never had a sexual relationship with another woman and there are women who have had sexual experiences with women but do not identify themselves as lesbian.

Faderman (1984) also contests traditional models of coming out because women who identified as lesbian through the lesbian feminist movement critically evaluated social norms and came to understand that heterosexuality was detrimental to a woman's freedom before they had homosexual genital experience. As such, they viewed themselves as lesbian in the context of a socially supportive group and their self-labelling was a political rather than personal decision. Elliott (1985) suggests therefore that political, as opposed to personal, considerations may be more important for understanding female sexual development.

The possibility that lesbians may become fixated or return to previous developmental stages of the coming out process, or even deny the true nature of their attachment to a female partner, suggests that any exploration of individual lesbians' development needs to remain sensitive to the sequence as it is lived, as well as the political and personal considerations that prompt shifts in their understanding of themselves.

### **3.3 LESBIAN RELATIONAL DYNAMICS**

Lesbian relationships, as imagined during the early twentieth century, were an apprenticeship for heterosexual relating. As such, romantic friendships between women were tolerated. When women no longer disguised the true sexual base of these unions however, the reaction was immediate – "for, if two clitorises could manage happily without even one penis, the assumption of phallic supremacy was cut off at the root" (Miles, 1988, p. 258). Being lesbian thus not only challenged the superior status of the phallus, but

also the grounds for what was considered to be the basis for healthy sexual relating<sup>30</sup>. Feminist discourses attempted to legitimise erotic relationships between women as part of the Lesbian Nation who 'came out' and gave voice to the possibility for female sexual autonomy. Lesbian feminist understandings of sexuality were based upon a particular analysis of the power structure, however. In this view, sex is a primary form of oppression and lesbianism is defined as a political and emotional rather than sexual choice. Paradoxically, this ideological position desexualised lesbian love. Burch (1993), for instance, argues that lesbian feminists were responsible for a new moralism about sexual behaviour which emphasized relationships over sexuality and bonding over eroticised otherness. Burch argues that female homosexuality moves beyond either affirmation or the denial of gender differences – at its foundation being lesbian destabilizes conceptions of gender by questioning the very basis for gender constructions in the first place. Like sexual feminist discourses, therefore, Burch attempts to demonstrate that within contemporary lesbian circles a "tolerance of diversity and affirmation of differences seem to be emerging" (Burch, 1993, p. 137).

In the following section contemporary thinking about lesbian relating is reviewed. The issues raised concern how lesbians construct difference in their relationships (Burch, 1993), and how they negotiate the possibility of intimacy and the problem of merger (Burch, 1993; and, Downing, 1994). It also attends to the relational possibilities that have been identified for lesbians (Carrington, 1994; and, Downing, 1994).

### **3.3.1 BUTCH AND FEMME AND THEIR RELATIONAL HISTORIES**

Burch (1993) argues that with the emergence of women who made a conscious decision to separate themselves from mainstream or 'male stream' (Daly, 1978) society, the question of a woman's love for another woman had to be seen in a new light. On the basis of an object relations understanding of human relationships, her analysis of lesbian desire reaches beyond heterocentric thinking toward a more universal paradigm of attraction and bonding that is based upon the life histories of lesbian partners.

Traditionally, lesbian relationships are assumed to be a replication of heterosexual relating in so much as the butch partner is seen to be getting into or putting on the gender contra-indicated by her sex (Harding, 1994). Butch lesbians are assigned a male point of view and are assumed to objectify women in the same way as men. Femme lesbians, on the other hand, are assumed to be like normal women, i.e., passive in their sexual functioning. The implication here is that all lesbian relationships are basically the same, i.e., butch-femme partnerships that mimic heterosexual relational dynamics. Butch-butth partnerships, in the rare instance where they are considered, are assumed to be asexual, while femme-femme partnerships are described as romantic friendships.

While Burch (1993) can still be criticized for assuming that lesbian desire is based upon difference, she takes a more radical stance and argues that difference in lesbian relationships is based upon lesbians' relational histories rather than their gender identification. As such, she distinguishes between primary and bisexually orientated lesbians. She does so on the grounds that even for those considered heterosexual, a purely masculine or feminine identity reflects a theoretical construct rather than an actuality.

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<sup>30</sup> Psychoanalytic and analytical theory, for instance, assumes that relationships are a means for expanding the self through affiliation with an other who embodies a difference of particular significance to the self (Burch, 1993). In prioritising genital difference these theories judged being lesbian as pathological.



Burch (1993) describes the primary lesbian as a woman who had gone through her adolescence and early adulthood outside of the usual feminine path. In this sense, she has suffered less from the cultural devaluation of women and from restrictions on feminine behaviour. At the same time, she must generally cope with a profound sense of social difference and alienation, and the ability to tolerate being different is a crucial determinant of whether a young primary lesbian will develop a healthy identity or whether she will resort to denial. In some respects therefore, the primary lesbian has a developmental advantage over her bisexual counterpart, for she has been challenged to incorporate differentness within her identity from the outset. She therefore resists the pull of conformity and her capacity for being different leaves her less dependent upon others' social approval, and in that sense, more autonomous.

Bisexual lesbians, on the other hand, have been party to the feminine world, and although they may have felt alienated within it, they have embraced it. Moreover, through their relations with men they have been shaped to some extent by male expectations of feminine behaviour and may have suffered from the cultural limitations imposed on their development simply by virtue of their femaleness. Bisexual lesbians are therefore more susceptible to social approval than are their butch counterparts.

According to Burch (1993), the developmental paths of primary and bisexual lesbians shape these women's lives in rather opposite ways, and when they join paths in an intimate relationship, they find their complement in each other. For the primary lesbian alliance with a partner who is closer to mainstream society eases her sense of alienation. At the same time, her ability to tolerate her differentness is attractive to later-developing bisexual lesbian who questions her own capacity to tolerate difference.

Burch (1993) suggests that the projections and introjections between primary and bisexual lesbian partners serve as powerful bonds in their relationships. As such, the sexual bond is not simply defensive but transformative. Primary lesbians must tolerate their deviance in a culture where conformity is valued and also evaluate social constructions of what is acceptable sexual behaviour. Bisexual lesbian must tolerate the differentness they discover in their female partner, for the primary lesbian is neither a woman like herself nor a man. Each lover therefore seeks the woman rather than man in her partner, but a woman who is different than herself. Burch's research confirms her thesis, i.e., projection of both masculine and feminine potentials is evident in both the primary and bisexual lesbian partner – each woman finds herself moving further in both directions through her perceptions of her lover. Being lesbian thus incorporates an awareness of gender in a different way, and the choice of another woman as a partner expresses a deep desire not to suffer the constrictions of femininity that heterosexuality mandates, as well as a deep desire to find a fuller expression of being female or a femininity within. Gender deviant lesbians may not be seeking to escape into masculinity, or even into androgyny, therefore. Instead, suggests Burch, they may be striving to escape from the limitations of the categories themselves into something more variable and fluid, and "any form of complementarity that oscillates around variations and alterations in gender roles or rules in lesbian relationships permits a degree of this transcendence" (Burch, 1993, p. 122).

Burch's (1993) research raises ontological questions, for she also assumes that desire is based upon difference. Her attempts to move beyond the genitals and gender as the foundation for this difference however, recognises that masculine and feminine roles and potentials are ever-shifting categories that are not only impossible to differentiate fully, but may not be central to lesbian relational dynamics. Her research suggests that erotic attraction between women may be motivated by the desire for more fluid gender

identities and that lesbians' socialisation as primary or bisexual lesbians may prove more helpful for understanding their attraction to particular women.

### **3.3.2 THE PROBLEM OF MERGER IN LESBIAN RELATIONSHIPS**

Concern about the issue of merger in lesbian relationships is based upon the assumption that women in general develop more fully and completely within the matrix of relatedness to others rather than apart from it (Miller, 1986). The fact that lesbian couples share the same genital form invites the illusion that there is a more total sameness between the partners. Burch (1993), for example, notes the tendency for merger in lesbians' attempts to maintain ties to former lovers, an uncommon phenomenon in heterosexual partnerships. The desire for merger is also evident in lesbians' discomfort with separation and their over-valuation of attachment.

Burch (1993) suggests that separateness and differentiation are problematic for female development in general because many women fear difference, and moreover, fear being different from others like themselves. In exploring how difference is constituted in lesbian relationships, Burch distinguishes between merger on an emotional level and complementarity on the basis of lesbians' life histories. Merger, suggests Burch, goes beyond mere closeness or attachment – it is a sense of being the other person rather than being like, connected to or near the other person "With merger, the metaphorical boundary between self and other is changed or dissolved, and a sense of union overtakes the sense of separateness" (Burch, 1993, p 94). When merger is defensive or protracted the relationship induces a sense of loss rather than an enlargement of self. Prolonged or enduring fusion, therefore, is ultimately destructive to both individuals' sense of self and the relationship. At the same time however, the desire for oneness and the fear of its regressive pull create a dynamic tension within relationships between women. In Burch's understanding therefore, the fluidity of ego boundaries between women allows for greater intimacy, and in this sense she considers emotional merger as normative rather than problematic for lesbians who are able to maintain the delicate tension between sameness and difference on the basis of each woman's developmental passage.

### **3.3.3 PATTERNS OF LESBIAN RELATIONSHIP**

Carrington (1993) and Downing (1993), contemporary analytical theorists, also focus upon the dynamics within lesbian relationships, and draw attention to four archetypal patterns that beckon women into loving other women. They thereby extend the possibilities for lesbian relating beyond that of simple merger.

The first pattern Carrington (1993) describes as 'return to the source'. This pattern of relationship is motivated by the need to merge and re-emerge more complete, and allows a woman to reclaim her body and her soul from patriarchal imprisonment – it is a participation mystique that allows a woman to remember the archetypal mother, to reawaken to her Self, and to celebrate life. Downing (1993) suggests that in this pattern of relating the Mother-Daughter archetype is reactivated, and women loving women feel free to acknowledge the longing to nurture and be nurtured, to be both mother and child:

Without being caught in fantasies of giving or being given a fully sufficient mothering, and without falling into a pattern of interaction where one is always the mother, and the other always the child (Downing, 1993, p. 35)

In understanding lesbian individuation, Carrington (1993) suggests that unlike heterosexual women, lesbians do not emphasize separation and compromise, but the original union and reunion. As such, defences against this kind of relational pattern may present as the pull towards heroic separateness and narcissism, and the refusal to embrace the original mother-daughter bond.

The second pattern Carrington (1993) describes as a 'reunion with the lost sister self', and Downing (1993, p. 35) describes as "the archetype of Sister-Sister bonding". Here lesbian lovers challenge one another to be all that they are capable of being, and seek to engage each other in ways that are reciprocal, egalitarian and mutual. The destructive powers of the partner are incorporated rather than destroyed, suggests Carrington, and a woman is brought into touch with what is her and yet at the same time unfamiliar and almost inaccessible. This pattern therefore allows a woman access to that which lies in the shadows of psyche in order to heal the split between her persona and shadow.

The third pattern identified by Carrington (1993), termed 'remembering the whole Self', is characterised by lesbians' "twinning of the Self by another woman who is very much like them" (p. 102). This relationship is based upon deep intuitive understanding, the desire to nurture and be nurtured, and the possibility for mutual creative expression. In the shadows however, the lesbian's psyche is mesmerised by her reflection in her partner. The challenge for these relationships, according to Carrington, is that of overcoming stagnation and boredom on both an intrapersonal and interpersonal level – for wholeness in traditional analytical understanding requires the integration of the *anima*, or a woman's inner vision of her contrasexual potentials.

The final pattern Carrington (1993) describes is 'world as lover, world as Self'. Here lesbians remember their wholeness through reunion with women as the centre of the earth, or Gaia. Transpersonal feminists, such as Starhawk (1989) embody this more spiritual and earth-focussed way of relating that draws upon both ancient and contemporary feminine-friendly wisdom and rituals. The challenge for this lesbian is psyche's potential for inflation with archetypal images of the feminine, and a loss of grounding in the world. The latter manifests as an almost exclusive interest in the non-rational, intuitive and mysterious aspects of psyche at the expense of its more ordinary qualities.

Carrington (1993) suggests that in all four patterns of relationship a lesbian is recreating and reforming both herself and her world through echoing the original mother-daughter bond, healing the virgin/whore split of the feminine in patriarchal culture, remembering her depths, and bringing forth into the world her creative spirit.

### **3.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PROJECT**

The intention of the foregoing review was that of identifying and refining the images of lesbians as portrayed in popular culture, as well as that of achieving deeper psychological insight and understanding into lesbian relational dynamics and the motives for being lesbian. In the course of attempting to achieve these objectives it was noted that popular images of butch and femme have transformed into the dyke and lipstick lesbian, i.e., the more feminine butch and the more masculine femme. The images available to lesbians have therefore become more diverse. This diversity reflects the politicisation of the category as well as shifts in the focus of feminist discourse. Radical and lesbian feminists focussed upon sexuality, and challenged the

power dynamics within heterosexual relationships, i.e., domination and submission. Sexual feminists however, took the power dynamic in sexuality for granted and instead challenged popular constructions of gender identities, i.e., masculine and feminine. For sexual feminists, gender differences are constructed by patriarchy – gender is an invention, a word around which ideas, practices and experiences constellate. As Hopke, *et al* (1993, p. 1) suggest however, the political sensitivity offered by feminist scholars was achieved at the expense of personal meaning. More specifically:

Gay and lesbian movements in their refusal to accept patriarchal separateness and division between the personal and political, have attempted to bridge the separation between mind and body, the outer structures of society and the inner world of the psyche, and between Self and Other.

Paradoxically however:

Political action, while necessary in many cases has resulted in a kind of forced extroversion, leaving...little time, patience, and energy for the equally necessary inner work around what it means to be lesbian or gay (Hopke, *et al*, 1993, p. 6).

While Maggee (1994) and other feminist scholars appropriated psychoanalysis as a language (Epstein, 1992) in order to address this oversight, psychoanalytic theory (with the exception of Benjamin and Chodorow) and analytical theory (Wehr, 1987), remain ignorant of the political and ideological implications of feminist debates for their theoretical foundation. In so much as both Benjamin (1995) and Chodorow (1978; and, 1994) focus upon heterosexual relating, lesbian experience has not been subjected to a non-pejorative analysis of psychological meaning. It is this project that the current research attempts to address.

At the risk of making sweeping generalisations, contemporary psychological theories suggest that lesbians' attitudes to both men and women are the consequence of their early relationships to their mothers, fathers, and the parental dyad. These theories identify sex (male and female) with gender (masculine and feminine). In Benjamin's (1995) terms, these theories naturalise gender. On the basis of this binary paradigm, lesbians are described as masculine- or *animus*-identified women who have not been invited away from symbiotic enmeshment with the mother by the father. In the face of their obstructed attempts to relate to the father, they identify with rather than internalise his presence. In this view, lesbians are fixated at a pre-Oedipal and pre-symbolic level of functioning, and their relational dynamics are characterised by the desire to merge in symbiotic union with a mother substitute. Contemporary psychological theories also assume that sexual desire is based upon genital difference. Women who love women, or lesbians, obviously challenge this assumption. In order to accommodate lesbian desire therefore, these theories understand lesbian relationships to be partnerships between dominant butch lesbians and passive femme lesbians. The heterosexist foundation for these stereotypes ensures homophobia and the internalisation of negative stereotypes as obstacles to the acquisition of a positive lesbian identity, and the challenge for lesbians thus remains that of creating an alternative and more positive identity. Maggee (1994) and Benjamin question the psychoanalytic and analytical tendency to see lesbian identity development as a continuation of primary bonds in the context of increasing relational complexity during adolescence, while human developmental theorists point out a myriad of social and political influences that impact upon the act of labelling and conducting oneself as a lesbian.

Burch (1993), an object relations theorist, attempts to widen contemporary understandings of lesbian desire by posing a theory of complementarity and difference that is based upon lesbians' relational histories

rather than their gender identification as butch or femme, and suggests that lesbians be differentiated according to their primary lesbian and bisexual lesbian status. While difference as the basis for sexual desire remains central to Burch's thinking, her perspective emphasizes a possible benefit of lesbian relationships – intimacy. It also raises a related ontological issue around the definition of gender, for the meaning of gender shifts over time according to contextual needs and demands on both an individual and broader socio-cultural level. Role playing on an individual level, for instance, may be used as a way to establish an identity in the coming out process initially, and thereafter as a means for enhancing sexual play within relationships without necessarily characterizing other aspects of these relationships. On a socio-cultural level, the feminising of butch and masculinizing of femme by popular culture suggests that these stereotypes are themselves a form of social communication – the distinction between these identities became increasingly subjective in response to sexual feminists invitation that women embrace their sexual possibilities, partake of the diversity, and adopt a more masculine gaze.

Contemporary analytical theorists, in their attempts to behave with political sensitivity, have challenged phallogocentric notions about the primacy of the penis, as well as notions about what women want from their relationships (Wehr, 1987). These theorists, in posing questions about Jung's obvious sexualisation of archetypal potentials, revision being lesbian using mythical patterns to illustrate the possibilities and diversities in the ways lesbians may construct themselves and live their relationships. These revisionings extend traditional understandings of being lesbian beyond the projection of feminine potentials and identification with masculine potentials. They suggest that being lesbian is motivated by the desire for mirroring and for an androgynous status. Moreover, lesbian relating can offer women opportunities to integrate their shadow, or the hidden aspects of themselves, reclaim their connection to the archetypal mother, and honour intimacy rather than separateness. In attempting to integrate sexual feminist arguments, contemporary analytical theorists have also argued against identity politics. They reject the notion of a gay or lesbian *identity* because identities inadvertently support the binary logic underlying heterosexual relating. Their suggestion that *anima* and *animus* archetypes are present within individuals of both sexes – that there exists an inner dialogue between masculine and feminine potentials, permits distinctions between a gender persona (signifiers and appearances), gender identity (masculine and feminine roles and social expectations) and gender potentials (masculine and feminine archetypes).

The historical invisibility of women's relationships with each other and between lesbians in particular was one of the greatest barriers to women's untroubled assumption of lesbian identities before the late 1970s. Research on lesbians during the following decade implicitly and explicitly constructed new images of lesbians through the production and dissemination of more affirmative models. Throughout 1980s, therefore, the term lesbian became increasingly expansive, and as a result, increasingly problematic as a definition. Contemporary conceptualisations of gender identity have exploded the possibilities for constructing sexuality (direction of desire) and gender identity (masculine and feminine stereotypes), and the relationship between them. As Harding (1994, p. 129-130) suggests:

An analysis of the representation of lesbians in popular culture must resist assigning a univocal position to a lesbian audience. ... Not all women who have sex with other women call themselves lesbians; and, if they do, they are not necessarily lesbian in the same way. Lesbian may be one of the many identities to which an individual lays claim, and not necessarily the first or most common.

Harding's (1994) concern raises issues around the definition of 'lesbian'. Human development models of

being lesbian, for instance, are restricted to the developmental passage of what Burch (1993) terms 'primary lesbians'. Contemporary analytical theorists, on the other hand, appear to focus upon bisexual lesbians. It would seem also that primary lesbians may become fixated or regress to earlier stages of the developmental process, and in so doing, deny their lesbian identity. Moreover, being lesbian may be a political rather than personal decision and statement. This implies that there may be a difference between women who label themselves lesbian and women who live as lesbians.

The review above raises specific questions about lesbians' attitudes towards and relationship to their own and their partners' feminine potentials. Questions are also raised about lesbians' negative attitudes towards men as a category of persons. On the one hand, lesbians are assumed to have repudiated the father. On the other, they are assumed to identify with the father, albeit unconsciously. Benjamin (1995), in a feminist reworking of psychoanalytic theory, suggests that a woman may both repudiate and identify with the father. Benjamin does not explore lesbian experience in any detail however.

Several ontological and epistemological questions are also raised by the foregoing review. A fundamental question raised is how is sexual desire constituted in lesbian relationships. Attempting to answer this question raises the challenge of finding a language that permits differentiation between a gender persona (masculine and feminine appearances), gender identity (masculine and feminine stereotypes), gender identification (butch or femme) and gender potentials (masculine and feminine archetypes). It also alerts the research to problems associated with the fluidity of gender both individually and socially, and the problem of defining the term lesbian.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## ONTOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

I, Chan Tzu, once dreamed I was a butterfly. I fluttered here and there, all my desires and goals were those of a butterfly. I know only that I was following the whims of a butterfly and was unaware of my human existence. Suddenly I awoke, and there I lay, myself again. But now I do not know whether I was then a man who dreamed he was a butterfly, or am now a butterfly who is dreaming he is a man (Chuang Tzu, cited in Boss, 1977b, p. 27).

The central question motivating this project concerns the psychological meaning of lesbian identity development and its diversity, and the first task addressed was that of understanding what it means to call someone 'lesbian'. Historical sources suggest that lesbian ways of being have existed since Ancient Greece, but like women's history until the advent of feminism in the 1960s, the history of lesbians and their life styles remained hidden.

Feminist sources suggest that being lesbian, as a category and identity, is a modern invention. They note that the label not only applies to women who indulge in genital contact with a same-sexed partner, but also applies to those who practice non-sexual romantic friendships, as well as women who identify themselves as asexual feminists. Moreover, not all women who indulge in same-sexed genital contact necessarily call themselves lesbian. It would seem then that feminists define lesbians as women who challenge the socially constructed role of Woman as Wife and Mother – being lesbian is understood as a political and ideological statement against patriarchal conceptions of what women *should* be. Feminists' focus on being lesbian as a social identity has not been without its consequences. While their understanding highlights much about the social construction of the category, their view obscures the psychological and personal meaning of being lesbian.

### 4.1 THE SEARCH FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL MEANING

The question at the heart of this research is not one of categorization, but of lived meaning. It is a psychological question, and the challenge posed is that of moving beyond social construction of lesbians towards individual lesbian's experience. In so much as the focus of the research is psychological rather than social, the project challenges social constructionist's devaluation of psychological meaning, and attempts to develop a method and a language that will enable the researcher to access and describe lesbian experience from the inside out. Three related ontological issues confound attempts to describe lesbian experience.

First, (with rare exceptions) psychological theories have failed to conceive of being lesbian in terms other than the pathological. Traditional psychoanalytic theory, for instance, takes for granted that being lesbian is a fixation at a pre-Oedipal level of functioning. In so much as the condition is considered

immature, being lesbian as a healthy relational possibility is obscured. Similarly, traditional analytical theorists deny the possibility for lesbian individuation because they imagine that lesbians embody rather than relate to their contrasexual opposite. Contemporary analytical theorists, in coming to question the male-masculine and female-woman-feminine assumption, have begun to explore being lesbian as a different kind of individuation process. Their focus however, is upon bisexual or latent lesbians – lesbians who have been socialised as heterosexual women, and then choose another woman as a sexual partner. It would seem that psychological theory remains bereft of the possibility for imagining a healthy primary lesbian identity.

A second and related issue is that psychological theory, with the exception of Benjamin (1995) and Chodorow (1978; and, 1994) and Wehr (1987), remains oblivious to feminist concerns about its heterosexist assumptions, and the implications of this for understanding lesbian experience. For the most part, psychoanalytic and analytical perspectives take for granted the binary paradigm underlying sex and gender – that men and women are essentially different, and that desire is constituted on the basis of genital difference. Lesbians, by virtue of loving persons with the same genital form as themselves, challenge this kind of maximalist essentialism.

A third and related issue is that different psychological theories offer different points of access to the hermeneutic circle for understanding human experience. Most psychoanalytic theories focus upon how individuals internalise outer reality. In this sense, they attend to the intrapersonal dimension. Benjamin (1995) extends psychoanalytic understandings of human experience to include its intersubjective aspects, or the interpersonal dimension. In other words, she considers an individual's real relationships to lived others to be critical, and explores how these lived relationships are internalised and then used to organise individuals' ideas about themselves. The process of internalisation is therefore fundamental to the construction of identity in psychoanalytic thinking. This is precisely why, according to Epstein (1992), feminists with a social constructionist bent have tended to adopt psychoanalysis as a language – internal reality is regarded as the product of internalising external objects and/or social meanings. Analytical theorists, on the other hand, attend to pre-existing shared patterns or archetypes that express themselves in human conduct. They posit an *a priori* realm of being that is projected in relationship to lived others. As a body of theory, the 'inner' world of psyche is prioritised, and the focus is upon the intrapsychic dimensions of experience. The third ontological issue raised therefore is the distinction between internal and external worlds.

In the current chapter an attempt is made to establish ontological foundations that would permit access to the psychological meaning of being lesbian. It is argued that the dualistic basis for psychological understanding can be transcended by adopting an inclusive and hermetic approach to human experience. This approach suggests that human experience is not constituted by either the intrapsychic world of archetypes, or the external world of social constructions (interpersonal) that have been internalised (intrapersonal), but by the dialectical interchange between these realms of being. This perspective of human experience demands consideration of conscious and unconscious processes, and in terms of this, explores the nature of dreaming as a human modality.

#### **4.1.1 THE HERMETIC SPIRIT**

Hermetic thinking criticizes the more scientific approach or "sense" (Kriele, 1985/1993, p. 48) with its passion



for what is observable, measurable and quantifiable on the grounds that scientific approaches merely summarize the facts of experience on a single plane, i.e., the horizontal axis. This axis concerns worldly connections, material possessions, and social categorizations. It is the world of concrete appearances and is historical, temporal and subject to the laws of time and space. Without denying the importance of the horizontal axis, hermetic thinking insists upon attending to the vertical axis in order to achieve a proper understanding of what it means to be human, and thus calls attention to what Zukov (1989) considers to be traditionally absent, but of essential or intrinsic importance to psychology – the spirit-soul axis<sup>31</sup>. The vertical realm is characterised by unfoldment, by a fundamental openness to that which presents itself. It speaks of essence, and is revealed through attending to the imaginal (or archetypal) aspects of human experience. Critical to understanding the hermetic approach, as described by Kriele, is his insistence that the horizontal and vertical axes do not oppose, compete with, or even complement each other; rather, human experience is the product of the intersecting of these two ontologically different realms. In the absence of an adequate psychological language for understanding lesbian experience, or the dialectical interchange between what is imagined and what is constructed, it would seem prudent to adopt a hermetic spirit for the purposes of the research. In other words, it is argued that lesbian experience can be accessed at the point where internalised and projected images are involved in dialogue.

Ontologically, hermetic thinking holds that experience is the product of a dialectical interchange between what is perceived and what is imagined. In terms of epistemology, dreamed existence provides a point of access to lesbians' imaginal worlds or the vertical axis, while wakened existence provides access to their observable worlds or the horizontal axis. Dialogue between lesbians' dream-series and their relational histories, or amplification of their dream-series, thus promises to provide a point of access to the psychological meaning of being lesbian.

Methodologically, the hermetic process is characterised by inspiration, reflection upon the inspiration, contemplation of the reflection, and finally, the formulation of a vision (Kriele, 1985/1993). The emphasis on inspiration as a starting point suggests that dreamed existence be the starting point for exploration. Moreover, and on a theoretical level, the hermetic spirit encourages the possibility for synthesis. In this instance, synthesis is not intended to imply a liberal eclectic method for integrating diverse theoretical perspectives. Rather, and consistent with the hermetic spirit underlying this research, synthesis implies reading conceptions of psychological reality as metaphors (Jager, 1978; and, 1989), i.e., as mental constructions that attempt to build bridges between what is known and unknown about human existence, (Cox & Theilgaard, 1987) where 'existence' refers to the total ensemble of human concerns (Dillon, 1980).

#### **4.1.2 CONSCIOUS AND UNCONSCIOUS PROCESSES**

The first question that arises with respect to using dreamed existence as a point of access to the imaginal world, or vertical axis of human experience, is whether 'conscious' and 'unconscious' processes are useful

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<sup>31</sup> Zukov (1989) notes that while psychology means knowledge of psyche, or soul, traditionally it has never been that. Instead, it has focussed upon the study of cognition, perception and affect, or the five-sensory personality. As such, it has not been able to recognise the soul, nor the dynamics that underlie the values and behaviours of the personality. This dissertation thus attempts to take up Zukov's challenge – to establish and practice a psychology of psyche.

metaphors. Both Freud and Jung initiated their understanding of human existence using dreams, and both suggested that dream contents revealed 'unconscious' processes. For Freud (1915) the 'unconscious', was made up of repressed material. In other words, dream images were internalised external objects, and represented disguised reflections about external concerns. As such, Freud gave priority to the horizontal axis of human experience. Jung extended psychological understandings of 'the unconscious' to include "components that have not yet reached the threshold of consciousness" (Jung, CW7, par. 204), and suggested that the collective unconscious, or 'objective psyche' (Mattoon, 1984), is the grounds out of which human activity arises. Recognition of a realm of possibility that exists beyond ego-awareness permitted Jung to formulate a theory of archetypal patterns for human existence. Thereafter, Jung set himself the task of studying the phenomenology of the primordial realm out of which these archetypal patterns arose, and in so doing discovered the profound and intimate process that he designated the process of individuation. This process is the "spontaneous realisation of the whole man [sic]" (Jung, CW7, par. 292). Jung's focus was therefore upon Self-awareness, although as suggested by Shelburne (1981), this awareness was still held to be in the service of ego-awareness.

The above observations raise an important issue for the research. More specifically, to assume that dreamed existence, or the imaginal realm, is unconscious and that wakened existence, or involvement in the realm of external objects, is conscious assumes that ego-awareness *is* consciousness, and begs the question: Who then is participating in the dream? Existential theorists challenge the existence of 'the unconscious' and re-frame it as a domain of incomprehensibility. According to these theorists ego-awareness, or the consciousness that human beings have during the approximately sixteen hours of their waking state each day, is only a small fragment of the totality of consciousness. Although the focal point of action – of judgement, of word and of deed, wakened existence is only one cross-section of the whole human experience. Dreaming presents a different expression of consciousness, of consciousness *sans* embodiment. Dreaming, existential theorists suggest, is not a product of 'the unconscious' mind, as conceptualised by Freud and Jung, because consciousness and unconsciousness do not exist in opposition – rather dreamed existence obscures the horizontal axis of time and space while wakened existence obscures the vertical or spirit-soul axis. In other words, there are aspects of both wakened and dreamed existence that are conscious, and aspects of wakened and dreamed existence that are unconscious.

#### **4.1.3 DREAMING AS A HUMAN MODALITY**

Existential psychologists, such as Binswanger (1930/1986), Boss (1957; 1977a; and, 1977b), and Kruger (1982) regard dreaming as a mode of existence, as a way human beings exist in the world, as a way human beings are present to the world in a non-waking state. Thus, while they distinguish between dreamed and wakened existence, dreaming is considered just as valid an ontological reality as waking life. Their efforts to explore the ontological significance of dreams as a realm of possibility are useful in so much as they point out the difference between dreamed and wakened existence.

First, says Kruger (1982), individuals do not take up their dreams where they left off dreaming the night before. Thus, while an individual awakens to the same world they left upon going to sleep, upon going to sleep the individual does not necessarily find herself returning to the dream world she left the morning beforehand. Dreamed existence therefore lacks continuity. Moreover, temporality, in so much as it

reflects the time it takes to transverse space (Arcaya, 1979), also takes a different form. Temporality in dreamed existence is discontinuous and not a creation or function of ego-awareness. Likewise, the historicity of human being alters in dreamed existence in so much as dreams are characterised by what Kruger terms a 'temporal foreshortening'. This allows the dreamer to be older or younger than her chronological age in wakened existence, or move between current and earlier developmental contexts within the same dream. Dreamed existence is thus not constituted in terms of time and space, and in this sense, it constitutes a radical departure from the horizontal axis.

Dreams, suggests Binswanger (1930/1986), concern ascent and fall, or the vertical axis, rather than near or far. Likewise Romanyshyn (1977), in his anthropological considerations of dreamed existence, suggests that to dream is to be able to surrender and let go of the body. In dreaming it is the body that is unconscious, for it is a disembodied ego that participates in the dream, an awareness that is not subject to factual limits. The dream's verticality, according to Boss (1977b), means that dreamed existence is relatively limited and restricted when compared to the freedom of thought and movement associated with wakened existence, in so much as dreamed existence "happens" to us. It is not a realm characterised by intention. Likewise Boss (1977b, p. 27) suggests that the dream:

Lets us hear that it is not I who produce something out of myself and give it forth when I dream, but rather something that is given and sent to me...(the dream) is the event of Being as such...(and) this Being as such can bring forth and release from itself into its unhidden presence that which is given to the dreaming person.

Dreams, in this sense, are the product of a realm that emerges rather than is constructed.

Third, dreaming takes the form of "immediate sensually perceptible presence" (Boss, 1977b, p. 28) which is usually visual and which presents itself in a more changeable structure than that of wakened existence. These givens present themselves in a more changeable structure than those associated with wakened consciousness, and in that sense dream consciousness is less predictable.

Fourth, the significance which constitutes dreamed existence speaks predominantly from external entities that are not the individual herself. In so doing, dream images and their relationships to the dreamer disclose existential possibilities in a non-personally owned manner.

Finally, says Boss (1977b, p. 29), "seldom in dreaming do we concern ourselves with self-reflection", or with the effort of gaining insight into our existential condition while dreaming. Dreamed existence is thus primarily pre-reflective, rather than reflexive. The relative absence of self-reflexivity in dreamed existence confirms its radical departure from wakened existence.

The attempt to describe the ontology of dreamed existence suggests that dreaming reflects activity on the vertical axis of being, a realm that exists beyond the limits of time and space, and being in a body in a shared world. Dreaming is thus by its very nature essentially and originally a subjective phenomenon. To cite Holbeche (1991, p. 172) a "dream is a secret conversation, an intimate communication from the soul...an encoded message unique to the dreamer". It is this very subjectivity of the dream that offers the research a point of access to being lesbian as an intrapsychic possibility.

Dreaming, as pointed out by Derekson (1991) however, is a particular type of experience, whereas the dream is a text. The dream as experienced and the dream as told are not, therefore, one and the same phenomenon. More specifically, in dreaming the dreamer is confronted with objects of consciousness about which she has no freedom of discretion. In dreaming the dreamer becomes the beholder of appearances (Garcia-Gomez, 1990). In recollecting the dream however, the dreamer places herself outside the world in

which she was absorbed. The dream as told, or voiced, is thus already several stages past its spontaneous emergence, or revelation. Its images have been committed to memory in a way that they can be recalled by the dreamer, and are thus already contemplated. These recollections, if taken seriously, are later given to another with language or remembered. In entering into language the dreamer enters into dialogue with the horizontal realm of time and space, and is again engaged with the shared world of relationships to her own and others thingness. As Derekson (1991) suggests therefore, dreaming as reported is already interpreted to some extent by virtue of its narrative form. This form gives an irreversible direction and pattern to dreams, a pattern that is bound up with the dreamer's sense of continuity or identity. As Berry (1972) suggests, in telling the dream the dreamer is telling a story and is therefore already engaged in a heroic quest or 'ego trip'. The dream, as a text, therefore, involves language, is related to thinking, and belongs to the rational rather than non-rational.

It would seem therefore that dreaming, as a meaningful realm of intrapsychic activity, is not directly accessible to the methods of either traditional or existential psychology. This presents a prickly problem with respect to using dream reports to access lesbians' imaginal worlds. More specifically, the dream as experienced is not accessible; rather, access is gained through its telling. In telling the dream however, the dreamer can make up parts, forget parts, or have difficulty articulating scenes due to the sometimes bizarre events experienced within this imaginal modality (Derekson, 1991). In this sense, the dream as told is a secondary revision of the dream as experienced (Schwartz, 1990). As Freud (1915, p. 35) observed, "we know the dream only by recalling it after awakening", and its recall is dependent upon the intensity and meaningfulness of the images. In other words, weak and feeble images are most often forgotten and "the dream which we recollect upon awakening would thus be only a remnant of the total dream-work" (p. 262) and is "not an accurate translation or a projection point by point of the dream thoughts, but a very incomplete and defective reproduction of them" (p. 263). The problem therefore "is that we cannot know whether the report is accurate or not, because we can't compare the dream with its report" (Derekson, 1991, p. 135).

In using dreams as a point of departure for understanding lesbian experience, therefore, the researcher is cautioned by the fact that the dream in its telling is already reflected. The intended empirical foundation for this research is already once removed from the vertical axis or intrapsychic world of the individual. At the same time, access to dreamed existence through self-reports are given in at least as much detail as those about wakened existence, at least within the therapeutic and research context. In other words, unless a therapist is working directly with the transference in the therapeutic situation, she is invariably accessing wakened, rather than waking existence. There is therefore no reason to regard the dream report as any less true or significant than participants' self-reports of their relationships to lived others. In either instance the data constitutes reports of events rather than the immediacy of the phenomenon.

On the basis of the above observations about dreaming it would seem that individuals are conscious while dreaming, in so much as they participate in and recall their dreams. Consciousness must therefore be available to the dreamer while dreaming. Existential approaches to human existence are cautious with respect to imposing any particular theoretical perspective for understanding either dreamed or wakened existence, and suggest that different theoretical perspectives provide different points of access to the hermeneutic circle of understanding. The intention of the following section, therefore, is to explore these points of access.

Human fascination for sleep, dreams and altered states of consciousness has a long history, and dreams have been variously viewed as: a source of spiritual inspiration and wisdom by shamans and ancients (Holbreche, 1991; Castenada, 1993); the royal road to the unconscious (Freud, 1915); a barometer for the individuation process (Jung, 1963); a particular way of being in the world (Binswanger, 1930/1986; Boss, 1977b) and, as facilitating and enriching the process of personal growth (Gendlin, 1986). Hillman (1979) arguably takes a more radical stance when he suggests that it is not the lived world that colours the dream world, but the dream world that colours the lived world.

Freud and Jung's attempts to explore human experience posit a radical split between internal and external reality, inner and outer worlds, conscious and unconscious processes, and dreamed and wakened existence. Attempts to resolve or transcend this dualism by existential phenomenologists such as Binswanger (1930/1986), Boss (1977b) and Kruger (1982) suggest that dreamed existence has a different ontological status to wakened existence. Moreover, Boss criticizes both Jung and Freud because each interpreted the meaning of the dream through a particular theoretical lens.

For Freud (1915) the dream, congruent with his mechanistic metaphor, was the result of certain events in energy mechanics. More specifically, partial somatic discharges of *libido* were frustrated and turned inwards. This gave rise to images, or dream contents. For Freud the 'inner world' and thus the dream, consisted of internalised objects from outer reality. Jung extended the meaning of *libido*, and used it to describe psychic energy in general, rather than specifically sexual energy (Whitmont, 1978; and, Storr, 1973), and his psychological theory of dreams centres around his concept of individuation, or the process of development by which a person becomes individuated, i.e., whole and integrated, as well as unique (Mattoon, 1984). Archetypes however, are not a specific image, they are "an inherited tendency in the human mind to form representations of mythological motifs - representations that vary a great deal without losing their basic pattern" (Jung, CW18, par. 523). They present as possibilities, that is, as potentials or predispositions. As such, archetypes cannot themselves be experienced, but are "typical modes of apprehension" (Jung, CW8, par. 280), as opposed to instincts which present as "typical modes of action" (Jung, CW8, par. 273). Archetypal figures, according to Mattoon (1984) include the shadow, the wise old man, the child-hero, the mother, the maiden, and the *anima* in man and the *animus* in women<sup>32</sup>. Mattoon (1984, p. xv) suggests that Jung's theory of dreams "relates dreamers to their origins", and thus to the primordial ground of Being or vertical axis. Boss (1977b) saw only the wakened life of the dreamer beyond her dreamed existence, and therefore refused to reduce human experience, dreamed or wakened, to theoretical constructs. He attended instead to the vital significance that presented, and in so doing, freed this research from the necessity of translating dreams with spurious and sophisticated theoretical concepts (Gendlin, 1977).

#### **4.2.1. PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVES OF DREAMING**

According to Freud (1915), the essence of the dream is the fulfilment of an unconscious wish originating in

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<sup>32</sup> It is interesting to note that the Father is absent from Mattoon's (1984, p. 67) list of "the chief" archetypes, as is the wise old woman or Crone.

childhood that has been repressed. Freud assumed the sexual impulse as the most suppressed since childhood, and thus suggested that many of the symbols within the dream disguised this fundamental motivation. He pointed towards the undeniable sexual content of adult dreams when he claimed that:

Many dreams which may appear indifferent, and which would never be suspected of any particular significance, can be traced back, after analysis, to unmistakably sexual wish-feelings, which are often of an unexpected nature (Freud, 1915, p. 241).

At the same time as Freud admitted that "the significance of sexual complexes must never be forgotten, nor must they of course, be exaggerated to the point of being considered exclusive", he reduced the majority of dream images to representations of the genitalia. Even the image of landscapes and complicated machines, he suggested, "can readily be recognised as descriptions of the genitals" (Freud, 1915, p. 247). It would seem safe to assume thus that the majority of dreams involve the possibility of human loving-being-with and its embodiment, i.e., sexuality. Dreams therefore promise to provide a rich and fertile ground for accessing how lesbians' construct their sexual and gender preferences.

Freud (1915) treated the dream from the beginning as a symptom, as a conglomeration of psychic images. Moreover, he always prefaced his and his patients' dreams with a preliminary statement. In this sense, the dream and the dreamer were not separated but seen in relationship to each other, or contextualised. Freud's underlying forestructure for understanding dreams appeared to be his attendance to relational issues, and he suggested that dreams revealed hidden emotional conflicts. In order to bring these to light, Freud focussed upon what the dream concealed, and distinguished between the manifest and latent content of dreams. The former concerned images or dream contents that required translation, while the latter concerned the initial disguised impulse and thus the meaning of that translation. Moreover, he suggested that the dream takes advantage of symbolism in order to give disguised representation to its manifest thoughts. However, because the dream is inevitably a subjective event, its emergence is not subject to verification by another, and because the dream speaks in images rather than the spoken word, it must first be translated through the processes of free association. These associations, defined as actual parts of one's previous experience, include actions, spoken words, thoughts, fantasies, and affects that belong to the individual's preconscious (or descriptive rather than repressed unconscious).

Freud (1915) takes an indisputable truth that all the material composing the content of the dream originates in lived experience, and that this material is reproduced, or recalled, in the dream. The connection however, is not readily disclosed. Freud named the peculiarity that dreams need explanation "the fact of the distortion of dreams" (Freud, 1915, p. 115) and suggested that this was the result of human beings' need to "suppress" (p. 119) the wish for fear of "censure" (p. 120). Interpretation of dreams is therefore necessary.

To suggest that a dream can be interpreted is to declare that it has meaning, *albeit* a hidden one. Interpretation is thus a question of revealing substitute thought processes correctly in order to reach the hidden significance of the dream. Displacement suggested that indifferent material was substituted for that having psychic significance through the process of identification. Condensation suggested that two or more experiences capable of making an impression were united into one image, and the more intense the elements the more abundant the condensation activity that occurred.

Psychoanalytically speaking, sleep is a retreat from the unpleasant aspects of external reality that demand constant readjustment. More specifically, "in sleep one regresses to the Nirvana of the mother's

womb, to a state of narcissism where one is protected from the demands of reality" (Sloane, 1979, p. 149). Thus while the dream reflects the current lived experience of the individual, it is also regressive. The meaning of the dream once understood is revealed to be: A demand on ego-awareness for the satisfaction of an instinct if the dream originates in the 'unconscious'; or, a demand for the resolution of a conflict, the removal of doubt, and/or the forming of intention, if the dream originates in waking existence.

#### 4.2.2 ANALYTIC PERSPECTIVES OF DREAMING

In Jung's perception a relatively small portion of psyche is conscious, and the unconscious portion is made up of two kinds of contents. The personal unconscious is that portion that holds what the individual has repressed and forgotten, and is thus equivalent to Freud's idea of the 'unconscious'. The second portion is the collective unconscious or the 'objective psyche' (as Jung termed it in his later works), which is the universal heritage of humanity - its "evolutionary history" (Mattoon, 1984, p. 22). The dream, for Jung, was an expression or product of the collective unconscious or archetypal patterns of engaging and relating to the world of objects and things. Jung, like Freud, considered dreams to be of central importance in psychotherapeutic *praxis*. Unlike Freud, however, Jung never pulled his thoughts on dreaming together (Wheelwright, 1984). Instead, Mattoon undertook the labour of collecting from "every nook and cranny virtually everything that Jung has ever said about dreams" (p. ix), and it is to her that Wheelwright suggests we owe our understanding of Jung's "insights into dreams and their uses and meanings" (p.x).

Jung believed that dreams were a vital part of psyche's balancing system or a means for coming to terms with the whole human being. Jung therefore did not assign a fixed meaning to a dream image since for him the image or symbol was "the best formulation for still unknown or unconscious (psychic) facts (Jung, CW14, par. 772) and could not be reduced to anything else (Jung, Let-1). The dream is not disguised therefore, but "expresses exactly what it means" (Jung, CW13, par. 469), a psychic fact that arises from 'the unconscious' and is not inhibited by the dreamer's conscious attitudes. The keystone to Jung's theory of dream interpretation is his suggestion that dreams play a compensatory function. Dreams offer to provide what is missing in consciousness, what is needed for wholeness. Dreams therefore supply whatever is necessary to restore psychic balance. The effect of the dream was to pull the dreamer backwards to an awareness of whatever parts he or she had rejected, and to integrate these aspects. The successive integration of these unconscious contents was, according to Jung, far more important than curing the symptom itself since it led to "the complete actualization of the whole human being, that is, individuation" (Jung, CW16, par. 352). To access lesbians' dreamed existences thus provides a means for observing the process and patterns of lesbian individuation.

In so much as Jung proposed that dreams offer insights and guidance to the dreamer in her process of individuation, or healing the splits within herself, wholeness required connecting conscious and unconscious aspects of psyche, or bringing the patient's dreams to consciousness. This process, termed amplification, widened the horizons of the individual and awakened her dormant qualities. For the most part Jung used intuition and mental imagery in order to come to an interpretation of a dream. He suggested that whatever the problematical conscious situation, the situation constellates in the unconscious certain contents, or symbols, that then appear as the dream. Exposition of the dream includes a statement of place, a statement about the protagonists, the initial situation within which the dreamer finds herself, the development of a plot or sequence, and finally, the culmination of the dream. This is generally marked by a

decisive change. The images or symbols recalled in the telling are then subjected to the process of amplification.

The process of amplification involves collecting the dreamer's personal associations to the dream so that a store of information about the image is created, and involves both an elaboration and circumambulation of the image. In so much as it implies "looking at the image from all sides" it is a hermeneutic endeavour, "a metaphorical circle, the content of which suggests the meaning of that image" (Mattoon, 1984, p. 56). The initial process takes into account "the dreamer's philosophical, religious and moral convictions" (Jung, CW16, par. 339), and only after interconnecting the various themes found in the amplifications to various images in the dream, is the dream subjected to archetypal amplifications.

Unlike a non-archetypal dream which focuses on the dreamer's immediate situation, the archetypal dream is concerned with the fate of the dreamer. Known to preliterate people as 'big dreams', they require transpersonal amplification due to their numinous quality. Purely archetypal dreams are rare however, and dreams containing archetypal content nearly always also contain personal content.

Jung (Mattoon, 1984) emphasized the importance of interpreting dreams as a series, as a succession of images through which a connection is found, in order to provide a context for the dream. Rather than stipulating what quantity of dreams constitute a series, he suggested that it consisted of the number of individual dreams it took to put a specific factor of the dreamer's life into perspective. His method is thus one that is devoted to remembering the individual dreamer's dream history.

Once amplification of the dream is complete and its context established, the next major step is to establish the objectivity or subjectivity of the dream images. While Jung (CW7, par. 130) considered all the "figures in the dream (as) personified features of the dreamer's personality", according to Samuels (1985b) and Mattoon (1984, p. 111):

A figure is characterised as objective when it appears in the dream as an actual person in an actual relationship with the dreamer. The figure is characterised as subjective when it appears in the dream as portraying part of the dreamer's personality.

In other words, whether others in the dream reflect the individual's lived or imagined experience must be distinguished. Jung's observations about the process of amplification have important methodological implications for the proposed research.

#### **4.2.3 EXISTENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE DREAM**

Existential understandings (Binswanger, 1930/1986; Boss, 1977; and, Kruger (1982) of dreamed existence draw upon the work of Heidegger (1928/1962), and are unitary in so much dreams are awarded an equal ontological status to wakened existence. Binswanger was the first scholar to attempt to found a psychology upon Heidegger's (1928/1962) philosophy. In order to do so, he concentrated on the dream as a definite mode of being and suggested that:

The individual's images, his [sic] feelings, his [sic] mood belong to him [sic] alone, he [sic] lives completely in his [sic] own world; and being completely alone means, psychologically speaking, dreaming (Binswanger, 1930/1986, p. 97).

Binswanger (1930/1986) thus draws attention to the dreaming as an experience that occurs beyond the limits of worldly relatedness, for dreaming is suspension in the private world while waking is suspension in the common world. To dream, he suggests, means not knowing what is happening, since dreams emerge rather than are constructed.



#### **4.2.3.1 Medard Boss: Lifting Out Significances**

Medard Boss's (1957; 1977a; and, 1977b) work represents a profound appropriation of and departure from the most serious work on dreaming as a human modality in the West in the twentieth century (Scott, 1977). Boss criticized Freud's theory of instincts and as well as the possibility of totally transcendent entities (archetypes) because they do not contribute to an understanding of the meaning of being human. The essential problem noted by Boss is the dualism inherent to Jung and Freud, i.e., the postulation of inner and outer worlds, and then the problem of explaining the relationship between these. In order to circumvent dualism, Boss began with the events of human life and gave accounts of their meaning, or how they occur in given, concrete situations. The basis of Boss's work is thus the eventfulness of human existence, in both its concealing and disclosing dimensions, and dreaming for Boss is a way of being related to things – it is a way of being in the world.

Boss (1977b) notes that both Freud and Jung speak of the dream as something one has had, and in so doing, treat dreaming as an object. He posits instead a primordial Being-in-the-world that gives rise to both waking and sleeping experience. The differences between dreaming and waking consciousness allows Boss to suggest that it is the continuity of being awake that provides human beings with a greater world openness and freedom. Dreamed existence, according to Boss, rather than being the suspension of ego-awareness, is a constriction of ego awareness.

In terms of interpretation Boss (1977a; and, 1977b) suggests that if only the waking life of the individual is beyond the dream then a way of putting the dream into contact with waking life must be found. He understood waking life as a complex of implicit possibilities that through the dream are made explicit, or stand out. Dreaming invites the dreamer to attend to possibilities that are implicit in her waking consciousness. Boss does not want to add something therefore, but find what is there but not yet seen, and the dream as told is a lifting out of something that leads further, to aspects that could not be inferred from what was lifted out alone. When dreaming and waking reality come together in this way, suggested Boss, there is a distinct and impactful emergence. Boss, like Jung, alerts the research to the necessity of dialogue with the dreamer. He also draws attention to dreams as a realm in which what is implicit to consciousness is made explicit, and thus that dreams may potentially reveal the hidden significance of being lesbian.

#### **4.3 EPISTEMOLOGICAL ISSUES**

Epistemological issues concern "what we know and how do we know what we know" (Brooke, 1991, p. xvii), and answering this question shapes the methodology by which we approach a particular phenomenon. The phenomenon explored with this particular research is the psychological meaning of lesbian identity development and its diversity.

Being lesbian is clearly an embodied phenomenon, in so much as the label 'lesbian' implies that a woman is sexually attracted to other women, i.e., it implies a particular kind of sexual (and therefore worldly) relatedness. Moreover, whether heterosexual or homosexual, human beings can only exist in their world in the way that they factually do because human existence is originally seeing and perceiving, i.e., embodied, and it is this ability to perceive something as something, and respond to that perception, that makes up the

selfhood or identity of each human existence (Boss, 1977b). Rather than asking what is being lesbian as a social identity and thus assuming that it is a socio-historical artifact of sexualised discourses, the current research asks: How do women who categorize themselves lesbian approach loving-being-with, and what is of vital significance to this mode of being? The challenge posed by this research is thus that of exploring the dialectical interchange between dreamed (imagined) and wakened (lived) existence, and how this dialectical interchange influences lesbian identity development, or the ongoing quality of being that is made visible to and in women who call themselves lesbian.

Lesbians' dreamed existence would seem to constitute a useful point of entry for understanding being lesbian from the inside out, since dreamed existence reflects a situation in which the body as an intentional phenomenon is suspended. The hermetic spirit adopted for the purposes of this research permits the question of lesbian experience to be approached from the point of view of dreaming, i.e., from a point of view beyond worldly relatedness. In so doing, the research attempts to gain access to what Binswanger (1930/1986) termed the vertical axis of human existence.

#### **4.3.1            ACCESSING THE VERTICAL AXIS**

Hermetic approaches recognise, like Binswanger (1930/1986), the methodological difficulties involved in accessing the vertical axis. Like mystical experience, dreaming is an originally subjective or intrapsychic phenomenon, and in that sense is unavailable to direct psychological enquiry. As recalled and told, the dream is already subject to the processes of contemplation and conceptualisation, or the horizontal axis. Dreaming, in order to be communicated must already be translated into the language of a shared world. As such, the dream is already formulated. At the same time however, the dream text constitutes that space where the vertical and horizontal axis intersect, i.e., where the dialectical interchange between human potential (imaginal possibilities) and human conduct (lived possibilities) is revealed.

In using dreams as an empirical foundation for research into lesbian identity development, it is important to note that different dream theories give dreaming differing ontological status. Freud (1915) regarded dreams as the product of repressed conscious experience, and in so doing focussed upon the horizontal axis and its internalisation by the dreamer. Jung (1974/1982; and, Mattoon, 1984) extended this understanding to include the emergence of archetypal content, thus at least acknowledging the presence of a vertical or intrapsychic axis. It would seem thus that Freud interpreted dreaming as the dialectical interchange between ego-awareness and the horizontal axis, while Jung amplified the dialectical interchange between ego-awareness and the vertical axis. Their perspectives converge with their emphasis upon ego-awareness.

Existential scholars such as Binswanger (1930/1986), Boss (1957; 1977a; and 1977b) and Kruger (1982) attempted to describe and understand dreaming as a radically different experience. Like Freud and Jung, *daseinsanalysis* contends "that dreams (have) meaning in the same sense as parapraxes or neurotic symptoms" (Kruger, 1982, p. 162). Their understanding differs however, in so much as they challenge the very idea of 'the unconscious' and moreover, reject both dualism and Freud's need to translate the language of dreams into the language of energetics and instincts. While Jung restored human being to its spiritual possibilities, and was in that sense less reductionist, he is criticized because he appeals to things beyond

the dreamer, like archetypal patterns, for establishing meaning. In existential approaches nothing outside the dream is brought in and that which is explicated should be the dream itself and nothing else. As such, existential perspectives suggest that the dream discloses un-lived possibilities for the dreamer, and that the dream can only be interpreted against the background of the dreamer's own wakened existence (Boss, 1977b). Interpreting the dream therefore means maintaining dialogue between lived and un-lived possibilities for being. Despite Boss's criticism of Jung and Freud, Purchase (1981) notes the affinity between existential, psychoanalytic and analytical approaches to dreams in so much as all of these approaches emphasize exploring the content of dreams in dialogue with the dreamer, and the importance of situating the dream within the dreamer's context. In addition, Jung makes a useful distinction between objective and subjective dream images, and emphasizes the importance of using a dream-series for exploring individuation.

#### 4.3.2 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It was existential phenomenology that first issued the cry "back to things themselves" (Husserl, 1970, p. 252), 'things' being understood as the objects that appear to consciousness. Knowledge of things themselves entails two processes, however. First, it involves sympathy or identification with that which is revealed, and second, it involves a sustained and profound deepening in that with which the sympathetic relationship was established. The former, according to Kriele (1985/1993), implies an attitude of receptivity, or emptiness, while the latter requires an attitude of contemplation, or of bringing existing understandings to bear upon that which has been received. Attaining knowledge about any particular phenomenon therefore requires an attitude of initial receptivity followed by the systematic contemplation of that which has been received. More specifically, in attempting to make sense of the world, conscious awareness listens to the voices, or vital significances, that present to experience.

As Kriele (1985/1993) points out however, there is an essential difference between receptive listening through which the researcher exists as an openness to that which presents itself, and contemplative listening in which the researcher attempts to recall concepts that might assist in the understanding of any particular phenomenon. The first act of listening, i.e., receptivity, implies access to the vertical axis, or soul-spirit, height and depth, above and below. The latter act of listening, i.e., reflection, includes the horizontal axis, or access to the world of others and their inevitable thingness and situatedness, space and time, breadth and width, explanations and concepts. Receptivity thus recognises internal reality, or a world within, whereas reflection takes on the character of a dialogue between the revelation and the concepts used to make sense of what is revealed.

Hermetic approaches also stipulate methodological and moral conditions for establishing knowledge. First, Kriele (1985/1993) makes a distinction between objectivity and 'objectivity'. The former is impartial in so much as it takes everything equally into account. The latter is 'impartial' in so much as it assumes an attitude of equal indifference to everything. The former thus manifests itself as an attitude that Kriele termed 'conscience' and Heidegger (1928/1962) called Care, while the latter manifests in what may take to be the 'scientific spirit' and which, "truth to tell, is only the propensity towards cynicism" (Kriele, 1985/1993, p. 258). It is the former attitude of objectivity that I intend to adopt. Congruent with the hermetic spirit adopted for the purposes of the investigation therefore, lesbians' dream-series are approached with an attitude of

conscience, i.e., dream images were explored in terms of their psychological meaning.

Second, and by no means exclusive to hermetic approaches, is the willingness to reflect upon the process of reflection. In pragmatic terms this means acknowledging and accounting for the inevitable perspectivity of attempts to make sense of human experience, or the theoretical forestructures that inform investigation. It also means maintaining dialogue with alternative explanations. Existential perspectives, in attempting to transcend the dualistic opposition between that which is real and that which is imagined, as well as whether external reality or internal reality is more real, point out that human beings always stand in relationship to both inner and outer objects. Moreover, consciousness is intentional and thus the world of things and images (including others) cannot exist except as relatedness. In other words, objects and consciousness are co-constituted. Likewise, Kriele (1985/1993) argues that rather than existing in opposition, the vertical and horizontal axes intersect. In attempting to understand what it means to be lesbian, therefore, I adopt the hermetic commitment to an attitude of receptivity to that which presents in lesbians' dreamed existence, contemplation of that which is revealed in dialogue with the dreamer, and conscience with respect to interpreting that which presents.

In addition, and despite disagreement between psychoanalytical and analytic approaches about the ontological status of dreamed existence, their methods for working with dreams are seen to be complementary, i.e., they offer different points of access into the hermeneutic circle, or present different ways of working with dream texts. Psychoanalytic theory invites me to attend to the lived relationships that are internalised by the dreamer in order to form an identity. Analytical theory points towards the means for tracking lesbian individuation, i.e., the dream-series, and invites me to distinguish between objective and subjective others that appeared in dreams. It also provides a method for approaching the data, i.e., amplification. Finally, existential theory not only cautioned me about the pitfalls of theoretical interpretation as opposed to dialogue, but invited me to link dream contents with the lived context of women who call themselves lesbian. As such, the approach to dreams included the wisdom offered by all three approaches to dreaming.

Finally, a fundamental thesis of any hermetic project is that "each object of knowledge demands a method of knowledge that is proper to it" (Kriele, 1985/1993, p. 42). A prerequisite for understanding truth is thus knowing how to ask, knowing how to seek, and knowing how to put into practice the appropriate means in order to succeed. The next task that presents is therefore that of establishing an appropriate epistemology, or theory of the method for accessing knowledge. This task demands the development of a suitable methodology for approaching the psychological meaning of lesbians' gender identity development from the point of view of lesbian experience. Congruent with these concerns, the methodology proposed in the following chapter is hermeneutic.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### METHODOLOGY: AN EVOLVING PROCESS

Truly good research means that one allows the investigation to be guided by the experience of the investigation. And this cannot be predicted. If it can be predicted, then there is little information to be obtained from the research; and considerably less reason to do the research (Bakan, cited in Packer, 1989, p. 119).

Qualitative research projects seek to understand rather than measure the phenomenon under investigation, and their methods develop as a dialogue that evolves in response to new questions that arise with deeper understandings of the phenomenon. Unlike quantitative methods that depend upon established statistical formulae and rules, qualitative methods develop in dialogue with their research matter (De Koning, 1979). Qualitative research, or research endeavours that seek to reveal and interpret phenomena as subjectively experienced therefore have a responsibility to bring to light the decision-making processes that guide the research process (Lundin, Thiselton & Walhout, 1985). This enables readers to judge whether the decisions and understandings disclosed are reasonable or not (Ely, Ansul, Friedman, Garner & McCormack Steinmetz, 1989), and to assess the validity of the understandings gained by means of these methods. From a feminist perspective, qualitative research is also an excruciatingly self-conscious (Stacey, 1988) and self-reflexive (Hollway, 1989) task. Qualitative research thus asks that the research exercise what Lundin, *et al*, term 'hermeneutic responsibility'. This involves revealing the motivation for concern with the phenomenon, disclosing the forestructures that informed questions about the phenomenon, and articulating the means or methods by which understanding of the phenomenon was sought.

The intention of this chapter is to develop a methodology for exploring and making sense of the psychological meaning of lesbian gender identity development from the point of view of women who call themselves lesbian. In Chapters Two and Three stereotypes associated with the category lesbian were identified. The intention here was to situate the category within its historical context, shed light upon the meaning of the category from a socio-historical point of view, and raise questions that would provide a point of entry into the experience of women who call themselves lesbian. These questions informed the construction of interview and reading guides, and therefore the process of explication.

Several ontological and epistemological concerns were also raised with respect to current conceptualisations of the category, as well as questions concerning the extent to which these conceptualisations reflect and are reflected in the experience of individual lesbians. These ontological concerns were addressed in Chapter Four which argued that lesbians' dreamed existence offers an empirical basis for accessing lesbian experience. This ontological foundation described human experience as a point of dialectical interchange between two realms of being: the time-space or horizontal axis; and, the spirit-soul or vertical axis. It was argued that wakened experience is organised according to the principles of time and space, being in a body, and being related to others in a world that is shared and organised with and by these

others. Dreaming and mystical experience however, are ontologically different manifestations of Being that happen upon us. In other words, dreams are spontaneous acts or revelations that occur when awareness of the body is surrendered. In dreams an individual participates in a world that exists apart from the limits of time and space (Boss, 1977a; Boss, 1977b; and, Kruger, 1982), and the shared world of others (Binswanger, 1930/1986). The value of using dreams as an empirical basis for further investigation is that dreams provide a point of entry to the vertical axis, to a realm of experience that is subjective rather than socially constructed. Moreover, dreams reflect spontaneous statements about an individual's inner conflicts (Sloane, 1979), individuation process (Mattoon, 1984), and un-lived possibilities (Boss, 1977b).

The ontological foundation proposed in Chapter Four suggested that the question of what it means to be lesbian be approached hermetically. Congruent with this decision, dreamed rather than wakened existence provided the point of departure for further exploration. This point of departure and its amplification generated further questions about lesbian experience. It also posed a challenge for developing a methodology that would access psychological meaning and a theoretical language that would articulate experience and in this instance, lesbian experience.

## **5.1 APPROACHING THE QUESTION**

The approach adopted in any research inquiry is always dependent upon the question that the researcher asks before the project begins (De Koning, 1979). Traditional scientific methods are directed towards appearances, and therefore towards counting and measuring the embodied or manifest contents that are associated with a particular phenomenon. These 'facts' are used to infer constructions on the basis of observation. Phenomenological and hermeneutic methods however, are directed towards truth or essence, towards uncovering that which lies hidden beyond appearances. These methods intend to qualify, i.e., identify and describe, human experience and then distill the meanings, or vital significances, that arise with experience.

The broad question guiding this inquiry is a question of psychological meaning, i.e., what does it mean, from the inside out, to identify as a lesbian, and how does this identification develop? As such, a phenomenological-hermeneutic approach would seem appropriate.

### **5.1.1 THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL-HERMENEUTIC APPROACH**

Phenomenology "is the disciplined attempt to clarify the manner in which the object of experience appears to consciousness... it is concerned with how we are aware of the world and the manner in which we discover meaning in the world" (Arcaya, 1979, p. 166). As an approach, phenomenology holds that that which appears to consciousness is a product of perception. Furthermore, what is perceived by the individual is already interpreted in so much as perception is intentional, i.e., perception involves a meaning giving and receiving function. In order to access meaning therefore, phenomenologists elucidate that which appears, the manner in which it appears, and the overall structure which relates 'that which appears' with its mode or manner (Giorgi, 1975). In this sense, phenomenology attends to the relationships between appearances, rather than appearances *per se*, and gives primacy to the lived world (Kruger, 1979).

In paying attention to the primacy of the lived or experienced world, phenomenology is characterised by an attitude of openness to whatever is significant for a proper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Giorgi, 1970a; 1970b; 1975; 1976; and 1986), and aims to exclude nothing that can appear, and include only that which in fact appears precisely as it presents itself. In remaining true to the phenomenon as it reveals itself, it seeks to distill original experience in its essence. It attempts to access the ground of possibilities out of which human experience arises in the first place.

The minimum condition for phenomenological research is that the phenomenon in question is present to someone's consciousness as a visible thought form (Hora, 1977). In so much as human beings label themselves and/or others 'lesbian', being lesbian is a social phenomenon, a pattern of thinking that has been brought into visible form. In so much as it is a form that is embodied by particular women who call themselves lesbian, it is a psychological phenomenon. By virtue of the fact that these women dream, lesbians' gender images, and the relationships between these images and their lived experience, can be accessed and explored.

Phenomenologists agree that dreaming is a human modality and is thus a realm of possibilities. The dream is not an object that is made by the dreamer, nor can it be possessed by the dreamer. Rather, the dreamer participates in a dream world that is already given and into which she is thrown (Boss, 1977a; 1977b; and, Kruger, 1982). Unlike fantasy, therefore, the dream image is a spontaneous rather than a creative image, an emergence rather than a product of intention. At the same time, there is a lived correlation between dreamed existence and wakeful, working life. More specifically, if desire is at the heart of both dreaming and being awake, and the former aims after a fashion to meet the unfulfilled or frustrated desires of the latter, then there must be a kernel of meaning at work in both dreamed and wakened existence which ties them one to another (Berry, 1974). Dreaming and waking experiences are thus ontologically different but related realms of human existence.

Using dreams as a point of departure poses problems for the phenomenological method proposed, since phenomenology attends to experience rather than the manner in which an experience is reconstructed in its telling. The ontological difference between the dream as an experience and the dream as text therefore calls for the application of hermeneutic principles, where hermeneutics is understood as "the theory of the operations for understanding in their relation to the interpretation of texts" (Ricoeur, 1981).

### **5.1.2 FORESTRUCTURES FOR UNDERSTANDING**

Hermeneutics points out that a researcher arrives with particular forestructures through which she views that which is disclosed (Packer & Addison, 1989). Phenomenological purists ask that researchers bracket or suspend these preconceptions so that the phenomenon can be revealed for itself. On a pragmatic level however, the bracketing of preconceptions proves impossible, since knowledge of any phenomenon is always perspectival (Kruger, 1979). Knowledge of a phenomenon is therefore always grounded upon a previously languaged understanding of the phenomenon. Rather than suspend ideas about what is important for understanding lesbian experience, hermeneutic principles encourage researchers to bring their preexisting understandings or forestructures to the light of consciousness. In common with social constructionist approaches, hermeneutic endeavours therefore recognise the ontological truth that facts are always already

interpreted (Berger, 1975) by virtue of their being languaged. Moreover, hermeneutic principles ask that the researcher remain sensitive to the possibility that the emergence of essence is limited by the point of view adopted.

In attempting to establish the truth or essence of lesbian experience the current research intends to maintain the phenomenological attitude of openness to that which reveals itself, while at the same time remaining sensitive to the fact that entering into the hermeneutic circle or spiral requires forestructures or a language through which vital significances are lifted out and examined. These vital significances, in turn, generate new questions and deeper understandings. The forestructures for lifting out initial significances must therefore also be critically examined and further developed in terms of the new questions that arise.

Any theory is a metaphor (Jager, 1989), and metaphors obscure some aspects of a phenomenon in order to bring other aspects of the phenomenon to light (Cox & Theilgaard, 1987). The forestructure adopted for the purpose of this research is inclusive, eclectic and arguably a post-modern approach to the question of lesbian gender identity development. Rather than setting psychoanalytic and analytical theory up in opposition, therefore, I suggest that each of these understandings of human being reveal aspects of the truth, i.e., I use both lenses to explore the psychological meaning of being lesbian. More specifically, and consistent with Ulanov (1981), I assume that the origins of masculine and feminine symbols cannot be traced solely to objects introjected or implanted from without the individual. Masculine and feminine potentials are not only social constructions that are internalised, but also exist as archetypal patterns or blueprints that are projected<sup>33</sup> onto lived others. In so much as analytical theory permits the archetypal patterns and images that emerge within participants' dreamed existences to be identified, it is seen to provide a lens through which participants' intrapsychic dynamics can be revealed. Psychoanalytic theory, as reworked by Benjamin (1995) who also adopts an inclusive, eclectic and post-modern psychoanalytic approach to gender, attends to participants' intersubjective realm, or their real relations with lived others, as well as the manner in which these patterns of relating are internalised, or become object relations. Benjamin thus highlights the intrapersonal and interpersonal realms of human experience. This theoretical lens permits me to identify the relationships that lesbians internalise<sup>34</sup> in order to construct their identity. In the previous chapter, I argued that it is the dialogue between archetypal patterns and lived relationships that constitutes identity. In other words, identity is located within the intrapersonal dimension in so much as this realm holds the tension or dialectic between the grounds for constructing a personal gender identity (intrapsychic) and being personally constructed in terms of one's gender through worldly relations (interpersonal).

## **5.2 METHODOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT**

The question guiding methodological development for this research is not about the definitions, conceptual understandings, or empirical contradictions that arise out of a quest for facts about being lesbian. Rather,

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<sup>33</sup> In the context of this research, projection implied that a participant was unable or unwilling to own an un-lived possibility or relational pattern of which she had become aware through her dreamed existence. Instead, she perceived that an other in her wakened existence carried or enacted this possibility.

<sup>34</sup> In the context of this research, 'internalise' implied that a participant was able to recall and anticipate the relationship in its absence.



the research is directed towards establishing if there is anything essential about lesbians' psychological experiences, i.e., the way lesbians construct their gender identities, and/or live out lesbian relational possibilities. It takes the point of view of the experiencing subject, and against this background, attempts to understand how some women choose to be women who love women.

Dreaming is a subjective and personal experience that offers the least contaminated point of access to the vertical (or spirit-soul) axis of women who call themselves lesbian. A phenomenological explication offers a unique capacity for illuminating the structures of this existence, in so much as the dream-series is a narrative text that reflects an individual's emerging potentials. The dream-series, as reported, therefore permits access to participants' intrapersonal dialogue, or the dialogue between the archetypal patterns which they project onto others (intrapsychic) and the social relationships (interpersonal) that they internalise (intrapersonal). Amplification of the dream-series was a shared and cooperative experience, the purpose of which was to provide a context and language for disclosing and translating relationships between lived and imagined others. Amplification therefore implied identifying, exploring and linking what Jung (CW7; and, Mattoon, 1984) termed 'subjective' and 'objective' images in participants' dream-series. In the context of this research, others who were also part of an individual's wakened existence were termed 'lived' others. Dreamed existence is also characterised by the presence of others who do not necessarily constitute part of the dreamer's wakened existence however. In the context of this project, these others were called 'imagined' others.

The hermeneutic endeavour, in recognising that disclosing the truth about a phenomenon is a spiral of ever deepening understanding (Packer & Addison, 1989), offered a unique opportunity for revealing participants' intrapersonal realms. In other words, in exploring the structure of the dialectic between waking and dreamed existence, the amplificatory interview revealed the constructions that a participant used to make sense of her gender identity, its development, and its relational possibilities.

### **5.2.1                    METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURE**

Methodologies are neither appropriate nor inappropriate until applied to a specific research problem (Downey & Ierland, 1983). The first requirement with respect to implementing the approach outlined above was that of adopting a hermetic spirit. Adopting a hermetic spirit implied understanding that human experience is the product of a dialectical interchange between what is perceived and what is imagined, and that dreamed existence provides a point of access to what is imagined. As such, lesbians' dream-series provided the inspiration for further reflection and contemplation.

The second requirement involves a phenomenological attitude in so much as amplification of each dream image was attended to within the context of the dream and the dream-series as a whole. Explication of the amplificatory interview was hermeneutic in so much as questions arising from the literature review were used to develop a reading guide (cf. Section 5.2.1.3.1). Through the process of explication, the reading guide was further refined, and this provided a framework for lifting out the vital concerns of lesbians and for organising case synopses. Case synopses were then subjected to systematic inter-case thematic inquiry in order to establish whether participants held meanings in common with each other, as well where they

differed from each other. This was a synthetic step in so much as it brought the theoretical forestructures adopted to bear upon the narratives, took the data to a higher level of abstraction, and potentially opened up new understandings of what it means to be lesbian.

### **5.2.1.1 Selection of Participants**

The questions posed by the research, i.e., the psychological meaning of lesbian gender identity development and its diversity, as well as the means for exploring this, i.e., identifying constructions of gender through participants' dreamed existence, suggested that there were certain constraints to be considered with respect to selecting a sample.

From the outset, defining the parameters of the category lesbian proved problematic. The literature review suggested that whether a woman identifies herself as lesbian or not is both a personal and political issue because the identity is symbolically located in a wide variety of forms. For the purposes of this project the following criteria for labelling participants' lesbian were adopted: The participant labelled herself lesbian; the participant had had several sexually intimate relationships with women in the past; and, the participant had disclosed her orientation to friends, family and/or work associates. These criteria served to guard against the premature labelling and inadvertent 'outing' of women who were unsure of or confused about their sexual orientation, or who preferred to hide their 'deviant' sexual orientation for personal and/or professional reasons. As suggested by Buunk and Van Driel (1989), the rewards of being considered a 'normal' woman should not be underestimated, and I did not intend to compromise potential participants on this score<sup>35</sup>. Moreover, Rust (1993), Maggee (1994) and D'Augelli (1994) observe that lesbians seldom commit to a lesbian identity until late adolescence or early adulthood. Given the focus upon lesbian gender identity development, it was considered important to access participants between 20 and 26 years of age. This would ensure that empirical data captured the cutting edge of the coming out process.

Second, while traditional quantitative methods of research emphasize the importance of a representative sample of participants so that generalisations about a phenomenon, and the factors affecting that phenomenon, can be made with relative confidence, phenomenological and hermeneutic methods (or qualitative endeavours that are devoted to the search for meaning) emphasize the importance of accessing participants who are able to speak at length, and in depth, about their experiences. Moreover, dream-series are intensely personal narratives, as is their amplification. Generally, amplification of dream-series would be undertaken in a therapeutic context. As a researcher I was not offering therapeutic intervention however. It was imperative therefore to select participants with whom I could establish both a high level of trust and ongoing rapport. In addition, participants would also need to exhibit a high degree of motivation and commitment to the project since the project was not based on a once-off questionnaire, but upon a series of highly personal events in their lives. Participants' willingness to trust me with their dream-series, and ability to talk in depth about the dream-series and their experiences of being lesbian, were therefore taken as

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<sup>35</sup> Kitzinger (1995) notes that even among those who are sufficiently open about their homosexuality to risk taking part as subjects as research, it is consistently found that about three-quarters engage in various forms of subterfuge in their social and vocational contexts.

the overriding criteria for selecting participants.

Finally, the intention of the project was to access the psychological meaning of individual lesbians' gender constructions and how they lived this forth in their intimate relationships, rather than to comment upon the social and political implications of being lesbian. The logistical and pragmatic constraints associated with accessing lesbians who could fulfill the first two selection criteria, and the complexity of the method adopted for accessing psychological meaning, suggested that an as homogeneous sample as possible be selected.

In order to recruit potential participants, I approached the university-based local gay and lesbian organisation, and explained my research intention to them. In the course of revealing my topic to several of the core members, I observed that their focus upon social and political issues deflected from and obscured their access to the psychological experience of being lesbian. This observation confirmed a paradox pointed out by Hopcke, *et al*, (1993) who deplore the absence of introspection and self-criticism inherent to lesbian studies. More specifically, they note that politicised lesbians focus upon the political aspects of their orientation, but appear to have little time, patience and energy for inner work associated with what it means to be lesbian. It would seem that for core members of the organisation, the politicization of being lesbian acted as an opiate for their anger and anxiety, and this tended to obscure their willingness to access being lesbian as a psychological experience. This phenomenon is in part a product of feminism's lack of a psychological language. Where feminism has tried to include a psychological language (for instance, Mitchell, 1974; Chodorow, 1981 and 1994; and, Benjamin, 1995) these texts are steeped in the complex theoretical constructs of psychoanalysis, and as such, remain beyond the grasp of many ordinary lesbians. Moreover, I also observed that core members of the local gay and lesbian organisation defended against their psychological experiences of being lesbian with feminist frameworks and rhetoric, i.e., they blamed patriarchy for their discontent. This confirmed Ulanov's (1981) observation about feminist understandings, i.e., in so much as they encourage women to blame patriarchy for their problems, feminist understandings rob women (and by virtue of that lesbians) of their authority. Potential participants who held an exclusively feminist understanding of what being lesbian means were therefore excluded from the project. Again, it was not that I considered their perspectives to be invalid, but that I wanted to access the psychological meaning of being lesbian as opposed to rewrite and rework individual feminists' social and political perspectives.

On the basis of disclosing the topic of my research to the local gay and lesbian organisation however, a snowballing effect occurred, and several women offered to become involved in the research and/or alerted me to lesbians who would be interested in becoming a part of the research. Each of these volunteers was approached on an individual basis and asked to complete a screening questionnaire (Appendix 1). This questionnaire attended to potential participants' basic biographical details. In addition, participants were asked how they would personally define being lesbian, whether they considered themselves to have 'come out' and why, the length and quality of their longest lasting intimate relationship with a woman, and whether they had ever been sexually involved with a man. Finally, participants were asked how often they remembered their dreams and whether they would be prepared to record their dreams for a period of six months and/or until they had recorded thirty dreams. This number of dreams was deemed both a manageable number of dreams to amplify, as well as sufficient to track participants' individuation

process.

At this point several potential participants were excluded because they either did not recall their dreams, or could not be labelled lesbian in terms of the definition above. The remaining participants were asked to complete an informed consent form and to begin recording their dreams. Of these seven participants, a further three excluded themselves.

Three of the four remaining participants were students who had read psychology for at least one year. Although all three had approached me for assistance with academic and/or lesbian issues in previous years (by virtue of my being a lecturer in the Psychology Department and the only 'lesbian psychotherapist' in town), they were not students of mine at the time of the research. Nor were they part of my intimate social circle, patients, or ex-patients. These three participants continued to maintain involvement in the project. Their commitment to the project and their willingness to acknowledge and explore their disappointment about my lack of involvement in the lesbian community as a whole, and in their individuation process in particular (cf. Section 6.2), attests to the level of trust and honesty that existed between myself and participants, and thus to the validity of their disclosures.

The remaining participant had been my lover some five years previously, and during the course of the project she independently met and became involved with one of my patients. This posed an ethical dilemma, for while feminist methodologies do not discourage researchers from exploring in their own backyard (Hollway, 1989; and, Kitzinger, 1987), more conventional methodologists would find her inclusion objectionable. On the basis of these objections, I chose to amplify this participant's dream-series only once her lover (my patient) terminated her therapy, and then later excluded this participant from the final write-up of the research. Explication of the participant's amplificatory interview and its initial integration into the dissertation proved extremely useful, however. More specifically, in so much as I understood both the participant and her lovers' individual dynamics, I was able to guard against the temptation to assume that the manner in which lived others appeared in a participant's dreamed existence was the manner in which these lived others would appear to a third party. It also demonstrated that participants' dreamed existences exaggerated certain aspects of lived others' personalities in order to alert the participant to particular personal concerns and issues. Initial inclusion of this participant was a constant reminder that dreamed existence presents possibilities rather than facts.

All three participants included in the final write-up, as well as the participant who was excluded for ethical reasons, were requested to continue recording their dreams and to pay particular attention to their feelings upon awakening from their dreams, significant images in the dream, and any possible connections between their dreamed and wakened existence.

After receiving a completed dream-series from a participant, the **first step** involved reading and rereading the dream-series in order to identify contexts in which these dreams occurred, and the actors present within each dream. These features were highlighted in the dream text and constituted an interviewing guide for the purposes of the amplificatory interview. What is called 'identity' is constructed in terms of social contexts and historical influences, as well as a person's past or sense of continuity (Kruger, 1979). Buber (1958), for instance, emphasized that the question 'Who am I?' may be answered only by asking another

question, 'With whom?' In other words, the most complete development of the self or personality is the development of the self in relationship to another person or persons. Identity, in Buber's sense, is an interpersonal phenomenon in so much as identity manifests in relationship to others with whom the individual shares her world. Exploring the psychological meaning of lesbian gender identity development therefore required that questions about significant others and lovers are asked. As such, questions concerning participants' relational histories, as well as how they came to disclose their lesbian identity, were included in the interview guide.

#### **5.2.1.2 Amplificatory Interviews**

Amplification provided a point of entry for understanding how each participant made sense of their dream images and the relationships between these images, and was the product of at least two face-to-face interviews that lasted between two and four hours for each for each participant. The basic premise adopted about dreamed existence was existential, i.e., the dream is something in and of itself. It is an imaginal product in its own right. As Berry (1974) suggests, regardless of what we do with the dream, it is an image. At the same time, dreams are subjective and intensely personal experiences. This implies that the dream does not stand on its own but belongs to a particular person whose subjectivity is the main interest.

The vast majority of dream analyses take place within the framework of a therapy relationship, and the majority of books written in this area address dream analysis as psychotherapeutic *praxis* rather than a research tool. Given the exploratory nature of this research, established *praxis* served to inform the approach. In other words, the intention of the amplificatory interview was to explore, link and make sense of participants' dreamed images. It was devoted to accessing and widening opportunities for understanding participants' dreamed and wakened existence, and the relationship between these realms of experience. The approach was therefore informed by analytical concerns with respect to the actors in participants' dream-series, psychoanalytic concerns with respect to the conflicts revealed by participants' dream-series, and existential concerns with respect to the un-lived possibilities that dream images held for the dreamer.

The attitude adopted was invitational in so much as the dreamer was invited to comment upon the possibilities that each highlighted image presented for her. As such, the intention of the **second step** was to appreciate (Gendlin, 1977; and, 1986) rather than interpret dream images, and to bring participants' pre-reflected constellations of gender to reflective awareness. This emphasized the importance of dialogue for understanding dream images, as well as decisions concerning who constitutes the authority with respect to interpreting participants' dream images. Given that dreams are highly subjective and intensely personal (Freud, 1915; and, Binswanger, 1930/1886), the dreamer's interpretation was considered to be authoritative at this point, and my interpretations speculative. Congruent with the existential perspective offered by existential scholars such as Gendlin therefore, the dreamer maintained control of the interpretative process.

The aim of the amplificatory interview was to differentiate between imagined and lived others within the dream-series, and explore the quality of the relationships between a participant and these lived and imagined others. In Jung's (Mattoon, 1984; and, Samuels, 1985b) terms, this implied identifying and distinguishing between 'subjective' and 'objective' images, and exploring whether a participant identified with,

differentiated from, and/or idealised<sup>36</sup> these images. In the context of this research, others who were also part of an individual's wakened existence were termed 'lived' others, whereas others who did not necessarily constitute a part of the dreamer's wakened existence were termed 'imagined' others. Amplificatory interviews were initiated with questions about how each participant felt about sharing their dreamed existence, and an explanation of what would follow. In order to facilitate amplification, the researcher attended to highlighted images in the order that each image arose within the dream-series. Additional questions concerning a participant's relational history and coming out process served as a catalyst for deepening discussion about the actors in her dreamed existence. Interviews were brought to closure with questions about how a participant experienced the interview process.

### **5.2.1.3 Data Explication**

Interviews with participants were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. While this **third step** proved a tedious and time-consuming task, the advantage was that of coming to know each participant's world more intimately. The transcribed interview was read and reread with an attitude of openness to that which presented. This **fourth** step enabled me to enter into each participant's experiential world and achieve a deeper understanding of the relationship between her dreamed and wakened existence. The complexity of the data suggested that explication of amplificatory interviews required the development of a reading guide for lifting out themes of significance to participants' being lesbian.

#### **5.2.1.3.1 Developing a Reading Guide**

The motivating concern for the project was to bring to light the vital concerns of women who call themselves lesbian. For a woman to label herself lesbian involves taking up, according to both popular culture and theoretical speculation, an identity that has been variously viewed through the ages. Initially lesbians were conceived of as women who wanted to be like men, then they were women who desired women to the virtual exclusion of men, and then they were women who belonged to a marginal political category. When women as a whole began to question and release the meaning of being a woman from patriarchal constructions of the category as a whole, lesbians were also freed to explore what constituted their identity.

On the basis of the literature review in the previous chapters, three main areas for exploration were identified. These concerned being lesbian as a gender identity, being lesbian as a particular way of relating to others, and being lesbian as a particular kind of gender development. As a **fifth step**, and in order to maintain the focus during explication, a reading guide was developed.

The literature reviewed in the previous chapters suggested that being lesbian as a gender identity involves both a sexual orientation, i.e., being a woman who loves women, as well as a sexual role or gender identification, i.e., being butch or femme. The review also suggested that conceptualising gender identity is complex. For this reason it was considered important to suspend the binary paradigm of sex and gender, i.e., remain open to the possibility that sexual desire as embodied by lesbians (sex, sexual identity, sexual

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<sup>36</sup> In the context of this research, 'identification' implied that an individual saw herself as similar or the same as the lived or imagined other. 'Idealisation' implied that the individual desired or wished to be like the lived or imagined other. 'Differentiation' implied that the individual regarded herself, or certain aspects of herself, as different or unlike the lived or imagined other. Identification and idealisation thus implied the potential for merger, whereas differentiation implied separateness.

identification and sexual preference/orientation) and sexual desire as constructed by lesbians and others (gender, gender identity, gender identification and gender preference/orientation) are not necessarily related in lesbians' experience. More specifically, being lesbian challenges the assumption that being female (sex) necessarily implies being a woman (sexual identity), being passive (sexual identification), and being attracted to men (sexual preference/orientation). What is less clear, and the subject of this research, is how lesbians challenge conventional understandings of gender and their relationship to gender, i.e., being lesbian (gender), may not necessarily imply being masculine (gender identity), being butch (gender identification), and being attracted to women who are considered femme (gender preference). In constructing a reading guide therefore, each participant's amplifications of lived and imagined others who appeared in her dream-series were explored in terms of the sexual categories (male or female, and hetero-, homo- or bisexual) and gender categories (masculine or feminine, and butch, femme or dyke) into which they fell, as well as the quality of relationship (idealisation, identification, differentiation) that a participant shared with them.

The literature reviewed also drew attention to the developmental issues associated with the psychogenesis and disclosure of a lesbian identity, as well as the possibility of lesbian individuation. In the first instance, psychological theory assumes that the dynamics of later sexual relationships mirror earlier relationships to the mother and father (Samuels, 1985a). The focus of attention with respect to lesbians has remained with the relationship to their mothers, i.e., psychological theory presumes that lesbians have not separated from their mothers by virtue of their identification with, rather than relationship to, their fathers. Clearly, if lesbians are fixated with the mother-figure and/or identified with the father-figure, their loving is symbiotic rather than mature, and the possibility for sexual and relational autonomy is foreclosed. If, on the other hand, being lesbian is about reclaiming wholeness, then evidence of intrapsychic integration in relationship to their lovers should be evident. In order to explore how these earlier relational experiences impacted upon a participant's subsequent relationships, the reading guide remained sensitive to the possibility of correspondences in relational dynamics<sup>37</sup> between lived and imagined others, transferences in relational dynamics<sup>38</sup> between lived others, and a participant's identification with lived others. Moreover, being lesbian, in so much as it is a relational category, presumes that a woman's sexual partners are almost always exclusively women. Explication also attended to the qualities of a participant's love relationships therefore, and the issues that brought her relationships to termination.

A second developmental focus to which the literature attends is that, unlike heterosexuals, being lesbian is exposed in terms of its 'deviance'. According to the literature review, most lesbians disclose their identity during late adolescence, and disclosure is associated with particular challenges and consequences. As such, the literature provided a hermeneutic key for tracking a participant's coming out process, as well as alerted me to the social and personal obstacles that stood in the way of a participant expressing her orientation. Construction and application of the reading guide therefore remained sensitive to issues associated with 'coming out', and what this meant for a participant.

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<sup>37</sup> In the context of this research, 'correspondences in relational dynamics' describes an imagined other who reminds a participant of the quality of their relationship to a lived other or others. These lived and imagined others can be said to be identified with each other.

<sup>38</sup> In the context of this research, 'transferences in relational dynamics' described lived others who demonstrated a similar quality of relationship to the participant. These lived others are understood to be identified with each other.

Finally, while traditional analytical theory forecloses upon the possibility for lesbian individuation, I refused to grant the concept of individuation a moral imperative, i.e., to assume that lesbians do not individuate by virtue of their refusal to sexually engage with their contra-sexual opposite. Instead, the possibility for lesbian individuation was taken for granted, and the explication focussed upon how a participant individuated, i.e., faced the challenges and consequences of integrating masculine and feminine potentials in relationship to her lovers, and in so doing, moved towards a sense of psychological wholeness in relationship to others. Application of the reading guide thus remained sensitive to a participant's relationships to masculine and feminine potentials, and to the relationships between these potentials.

#### **5.2.2.3.2 Application of the Reading Guide**

Having developed the reading guide, each amplificatory interview was read and reread with the intention of writing a case synopsis for each participant. The original intention was to stick and paste the clusters of themes identified together. This method not only proved highly ineffectual, but also threatened to wrench the themes from the complex meanings into which they were woven. I therefore opted for another tried and tested method - coloured pencils and a photocopy machine. Each participant's amplificatory interview was photocopied several times, themes listed with the final reading guide were each allocated a colour, and each copy of the amplificatory interview was read and reread for each theme in order to highlight the relevant sections.

In the course of applying the reading guide (**sixth step**), lived others were categorized in terms of their formal relationship to the participant (family, lover, friend, associate, authority-figure and imagined other) their sexual identity (male or female), their sexual orientation (heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual), their gender identity (masculine, feminine or androgynous) and their gender identification (butch, femme or dyke). Imagined others were categorized in terms of their sexual identity, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender identification. At this point it became clear that imagined others carried or expressed the unexpressed aspects of a participant's relationship to others, i.e., they carried potentials or unlived possibilities for relating to the world. Where the potentials carried by an imagined other were projected onto a lived other, the imagined and lived other were said to exist in a relationship of correspondence. It also became clear that different lived others carried, or expressed similar relational dynamics regardless of their formal relationships to participants. These lived others were said to exist in a transferential relationship. The identification of correspondence and transferential relationships in a participant's dream-series permitted the quality relationship between lived and imagined others to be identified.<sup>39</sup>

A second application of the reading guide sought to identify and differentiate between stages in each participants' disclosure of their identity as a lesbian. This exercise revealed that several phases in lesbian identity development could be distinguished. These constituted an age of innocence, being called towards lesbian relating, being initiated into lesbian relating, self-labelling as lesbian, and then living as a lesbian.

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<sup>39</sup> For instance, Sarah noted that an imagined other whom she named *Snake Woman* (#1) reminded her of her mother and her sister, i.e., a relationship of correspondence existed between *Snake Woman* and certain lived others. At the same time, her mother and sister existed in a transferential relationship, i.e., were identified with each other. Likewise, *Sherlock Holmes* (#H) corresponded with her male therapist. He, in turn, existed in a transferential relationship with her brother. In Sarah's instance, *Snake Woman* expressed wounding potentials, while *Sherlock Holmes* expressed healing potentials.



Application of the reading guide also suggested that lesbian identity development could be tracked in dialogue with a participant's relational history. Dialogue about lovers who were identified in the first reading of the amplificatory interview was therefore reread with a view to establishing whether a participant idealised the lover, identified with the lover, and/or differentiated from the lover. In addition, issues that brought the relationship with a lover to termination were highlighted.

In the course of repeated rereading for lived and imagined others, and the process of disclosing a lesbian identity, several spontaneous themes emerged. For instance, dialogue concerning a participant's self-understanding and her understanding of others were highlighted, as well as those passages relating to her attempts to clarify the forestructures and discourses (spiritual, psychological and feminist) she used to disclose her dreamed existence. It was also clear that critical analysis of the interview would be necessary, not only because any interviewing process by virtue of being a human interaction is subject to limitations, but because participants dreamed about me and also commented upon the interviewing process itself. Amplification of these dreams and each participant's comments about the interview process itself were also highlighted therefore.

#### **5.2.1.4 Case Synopsis**

Constructing a case synopsis for each participant (**seventh step**) involved gathering data that pertained to each cluster of themes identified with the help of the reading guide, and organising this information into the form of a narrative text that gave voice to each participant's world. Where possible therefore, a participant's own language was used. In the course of constructing this narrative, dialogue between a participant's dreamed and wakened existences was maintained. In other words, participants' conscious and constructed views of their own and others' gender identities were constantly taken back to those understandings that emerged from their dreamed existences.

The construction of case synopses for each participant proved problematic in so much as the point of entry into their worlds was, by definition, highly individual, and themes that were of vital significance for some participants were less obvious for others. Moreover, organisation of the information involved interpretation, or the application of theoretical constructs and understandings for lifting out, and distilling particular essences. In order to remain true to the data as revealed, priority was given to the empirical basis. In other words, where theoretical concepts threatened to mystify understanding of a participant's experience, the dream-series was permitted to speak for itself. Priority was also given to participants' understanding of the meaning that lived and imagined others held for them. As such, case synopses described, rather than explained, the dialogue between participants' dreamed and wakened existences.

The following framework for organising each case synopsis was applied, and where necessary, adapted in dialogue with what did and did not present in the amplificatory interview. Jung (Mattoon, 1984) emphasizes the importance of contextual considerations for understanding dreams, and this was the first principle applied. In order to establish each participant's psychological context, each interview was read and reread for primary dream themes and the evolution of these themes. A second and a related task involved qualifying each participant's motivations for initiating their dream-series. A systematic explication of these themes provided insight into a participant's dream themes, her primary engagements in the world, and her individual forestructures for understanding herself and her world.

A second organisational criterion described a participant's relationships to both lived and imagined others who presented in the dream-series. Both psychoanalytic and analytical theories assume that the infant is invited into relationship by the mother or mother-figure, and then into an ever widening circle of familial relationships. These early experiences to the mother, father and siblings then provide the ground for subsequent relationships to lovers, friends and associates, including authority figures. A systematic explication of the themes revealed transference relationships between members of a participant's family and her lovers, friends and associates. Explication also revealed correspondences between imagined others and lived others. Relationships of correspondence appeared to provide insight into the archetypal patterns that a participant projected onto lived others. Finally, explication revealed imagined others who bore no relationship to lived others. These images revealed the emergence of potentials. Distinguishing between correspondence, transference and potential<sup>40</sup> relationships enabled the research to move beyond a participant's formal relationships to others, and to classify relationships in terms of the relational qualities evoked by these images.

A third organisational criterion applied to each interview described participants' ongoing appropriation and enactment of a lesbian identity. A systematic explication of participants' experiences of disclosing their lesbian identity to others provided insight into the challenges with which a participant was presented in developing her lesbian identity and living this identity forth in relationship to others.

A fourth organisational criterion applied attempted to distill each participant's gender constructions. Here the understandings gleaned during the foregoing explication informed explication of specific gender constructions, including a participant's attitudes towards homosexual, heterosexual and bisexual men and women, as well as different lesbian identities. It also provided insight into the way in which a participant made sense of her own and others' sexual identities, sexual orientations, gender identities, gender identifications and gender orientations, as well as the factors that mediated this.

Finally, participants' observations about the amplificatory interview itself provided the grounds for reflexive analysis of the quality of dialogue between researcher and participant. A systematic explication of these themes informed me about the limitations of the methodology developed.

## 5.2.2 CONSULTATION WITH PARTICIPANTS

One of the responsibilities of making a story about another's experience of her world is that the written presentation should both accurately reflect and go beyond a participant's understanding of herself (Ely, *et al.*, 1981). The **eighth step** therefore involved taking each case synopsis back to the participant in order to check specific details, verify the validity of my understanding, and enquire further about particular themes and understandings.

Consulting with participants proved illuminating for them. For **Sarah** and **Traci**, reading their case synopsis was accompanied by 'aha' experiences, and the recall of dreams subsequent to the dream-series

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<sup>40</sup> In the context of this research, 'potentials' described the quality of relationship evoked by an imagined other. The quality evoked is projected onto a lived other for the purposes of differentiating from the evoked quality or for the purposes of integrating the evoked quality into the personality.

that confirmed that they had integrated several of the possibilities presented by their original dream-series. Lisa's case synopses permitted her to appreciate the courage with which she had faced and moved through her disclosure, and the extent to which her competitive drive threatened to immobilise her. It would seem that involvement in the project deepened participants' understanding of what being lesbian meant for them.

Once I was sure that each case synopses faithfully represented each participant's experience in its uniqueness, and moreover, that case synopses could be revealed to my supervisor, the possibility of synthesis across cases could be approached. The eighth step in the explication process thus not only honoured the confidentiality and voice of participants, but also reduced the overwhelming amount of data gathered to manageable proportions. This permitted me to seek supervision in the course of bringing the case synopses towards synthesis.

### **5.3 METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION**

Any inquiry that attempts to recapture the Socratic spirit that underlies hermeneutic research should begin with a just assessment of the limitations of its vision, and is thus both a reflective and recursive process (Ely, *et al*, 1984). The current research began with the explication of each participant's dream-series, and an amplificatory interview on the basis of this dream-series. Through explication of the amplificatory interview, a case synopsis for each participant was constructed, taken back to each participant for comment, and then read and reread for the purposes of distilling common inter-case concerns with respect to lesbian gender development, lesbian relational dynamics and lesbian identity disclosure. Before exploring and documenting the process by which these common concerns were distilled, and the synthesis that arose out of this process, it would be useful to consider the limitations of the methodological procedure adopted. These limitations highlight certain methodological and ethical constraints that affected the reliability and validity of the inter-case concerns identified in the following chapter.

#### **5.3.1 COMPROMISING BREADTH FOR THE SAKE OF DEPTH**

Participants were selected on the basis of: their having labelled, enacted and disclosed their lesbian identity; their willingness to record a dream-series for six months or until they had thirty dreams; their ability to speak at length, and in depth, about their dream-series as well as their experience of being lesbian from the point of view of psychological meaning; and, their degree of motivation and commitment to the project. Moreover, in so much as lesbians who were steeped in feminist understandings of lesbianism as well as black and so-called coloured lesbians did not participate in the project, the selection criteria ensured the sample as both homogeneous (white middle class lesbians between the ages of 22 and 26) and undeniably Euro-centric.

Secondly, existential discourses describe dreaming as a modality of being, i.e., dreaming is an experience in its own right. This attitude opened the way to acknowledging dreaming as a particular kind of consciousness that is neither superior nor inferior to waking consciousness, and subsequent methodological steps were based upon participants' dream-series. The foundation of the research therefore depended upon participants' honesty with respect to recording their dreams accurately, as well as their willingness to explore their dreams for psychological meaning. This emphasized the importance of selecting participants with whom

a relationship of trust could be established. Participants included in the final write-up had all been students of mine, and in the course interacting with me in my formal role as a lecturer, had voiced their concerns about being lesbian. In so much as their concerns were heard and taken seriously, previous contact facilitated the level of trust and rapport necessary for in-depth exploration of their dreamed and wakened existences. Previous contact with participants proved to be a strength rather than weakness for methodology adopted, therefore. At the same time, I was alerted to the possibility that participants might idealise me during the amplificatory interview, by virtue of the fact that I was present as a lived other in two participants' dreamed existences, generally in the role of mentor and observer (cf. Section 6.2).

### 5.3.2 PRAGMATIC CONSTRAINTS

Several methodological compromises were made in the course of bringing the data collected to the point of synthesis. These pertained to: The point of entry for the research, and the implications of this for the presence of forestructures on the part of both myself and participants; possible contamination of the dream-series by the research question; the order in which participants were interviewed; and, the time lapse between recording the dream-series and its amplification.

Given that dreaming is an intensely personal experience, the first limitation noted is that the point of entry into the dialogue between dreamed and wakened existence was from the perspective of waking consciousness, i.e., from the point of view of the reflected rather than inspired images of lived and imagined others. This implied that both my own and participants' access to psychological meaning was limited by the forestructures we adopted for making sense of the dream-series. Thus, while a phenomenological *praxis* calls for an attitude of openness to the phenomenon as it reveals itself, a hermeneutic *praxis* recognises that all responses to a text are interactions between a reader and a text. I could not pretend to enter my reading of the dream-series or the amplificatory interviews as a 'blank slate', therefore. Nor indeed would I want to, given the hermeneutic framework adopted.

From the outset, my reading of the text was guided by my interest in gender identity and its diversity. Thus, while the binary paradigm of sex and gender was suspended, the focus on gender and the assumption that gender construction affects the manner in which lesbians develop and conduct their relationships constituted the reading guide (cf. Section 5.2.1.3.1). The reading guide contributed towards the perspectival nature of the research, in so much as I focused upon lived and imagined others in terms of their sexual and gender identities, identifications and orientations. In other words, there were many images in participants' dream-series that could have been explored through alternative lenses, and explication of the dream-series was therefore not exhaustive except with respect to the gender images identified. Moreover, questions that arose on the basis of the interview guide were limited by the assumption that being lesbian is a relational phenomenon, that lesbians do individuate, and that human beings' possibilities for intimacy are grounded in early relationships to family members.

In addition, certain psychological discourses appeared to be more useful for organising participants' case synopses. For instance, **Traci's** amplificatory interview lent itself to a more analytical understanding by virtue of the large number of imagined others present in her dream-series. In contrast, **Sarah and Lisa's** amplificatory interviews, by virtue of the presence of their mothers and the quality of their relationships to

their mothers, invited a more psychoanalytic lens. As the thematic analysis deepened, it was impossible not to bring these psychological understandings, and thus their limitations for disclosing human being, into the explication process. It would otherwise be impossible to ensure the data as manageable. In that sense, the forestructures adopted must be considered an inevitable product of attempting to craft the texts towards synthesis.

Second, participants were asked to record their dream-series prior to serious discussion about gender and its development. This was in order to ensure that their dreams did not reflect the focus of exploration. More specifically, given that Freudian analysts dream Freudian dreams, and Jungian analysts dream Jungian dreams (Mattoon, 1984), it was possible that participants, if alerted to the precise focus of the investigation, would dream exclusively about gender issues. To some extent this tendency was reflected by that participant who began recording her dreams for the purposes of the research, i.e., **Lisa's** dreams concerned the disclosure of her lesbian identity to her mother. The remaining two participants, **Traci** and **Sarah**, initiated their dream-series independent of the research, i.e., for the purposes of their personal development. Their dream-series appeared to be less contaminated by the research question.

Third, the case synopsis for the first participant was completed prior to interviewing subsequent participants. This implied that themes identified with respect to the first participant informed both the interview and the reading guide for subsequent participants. In addition, adaptation of the initial interview guide proposed was necessary because two participants (**Traci** and **Lisa**) formally recorded their 'coming out' process. This necessitated more pointed clarification with respect to the temporal unfolding of her lesbian identity for **Sarah**. Her interview guide therefore included a developmental forestructure based upon both the literature review and the information highlighted by those participants who did formally record their coming out process. These developments threatened to exaggerate the similarities between participants, as well as strengthen conformity with the literature about coming out. In creating synthesis then, I remained particularly sensitive to the differences between participants.

Finally, the time lapse between recording and amplifying the dream-series with participants also proved problematic. More specifically, the lived context out of which specific dreams arose was somewhat obscured by the passage of time, and both **Lisa** and **Sarah** wished that they might have amplified their dreams earlier in order to facilitate their understanding of the developmental process in which they were involved. To have amplified each dream as it was dreamed however, would have implied creating a therapeutic rather than a research relationship in which I was a participant rather than an observer of participants' individuation. It would also mean subverting the research question, in so much as the data would reflect the efficacy of therapeutic intervention for lesbians, rather than explore the possibilities for lesbian individuation. Given that the question was research orientated rather than therapeutic, and that the dream-series was collected for research rather than for therapeutic purposes, their disappointment was inevitable. At the same time, participants' expectations that I assist them in their passage rather than that I examine their passage highlighted an ethical issue. This is discussed in more detail below.

### **5.3.3 ETHICAL CONSTRAINTS**

The search for the psychological meaning of being lesbian involved in-depth and ongoing interaction with

participants. The amplificatory interview conducted was not only the product of interaction between a researcher, the initial questions posed, and a participant, but constituted a dialogue between a participant who desired to understand the links between her wakened and dreamed existence and researcher with a particular agenda, i.e., the desire to understand lesbian gender development and its diversity. Moreover, in so much as I accessed participants' intensely personal experiences, i.e., their dream-series, I was privy to their intimate relationships and disclosure as lesbians. This raised certain ethical concerns and constraints.

In line with feminist scholars, such as Bewley (cited in Bannister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994), I held myself and my research accountable to the participants involved in the research. Here accountability was defined in terms of ensuring that participants not only recognised that their case synopsis accurately reflected their understanding of their world, but that they learned something of psychological value to themselves through being involved in the research process. Two participants expressed confusion about the relationship between their dreamed and wakened existences initially, and were perplexed by contradictions between their dreamed and wakened existences. As the interview progressed however, they began to express surprise as they discovered links on the level of meaning between their dreamed and wakened existences. Many of these spontaneous insights concerned correspondences between imagined and lived others, and arose as flashes of understanding rather than as the product of disciplined self-reflection or interpretation. Moreover, all participants, when reflecting upon the initial interview, and when later presented with their case synopsis, commented that the process had been helpful for their personal growth. Ullman (1999) suggests that dreaming consciousness is a natural healing mechanism that confronts individuals with information about the personal and social realities that have shaped their lives. It would seem that in recording their dream-series and in engaging in the amplificatory interview, participants increased their awareness of themselves by bringing unconscious relational dynamics to consciousness, began to make sense of their existence and the issues with which they were dealing, and initiated a commitment to take their dreamed existence more seriously. Moreover, it would seem their involvement in the research process not only supported my attempts to collect a valid empirical basis, but also supported their attempts to monitor and gain insight into their individuation processes. In short, their involvement facilitated a process that feminism tends to ignore: introspective contemplation of the psychological meaning of being lesbian.

Secondly, and in spite of choosing participants who demonstrated trust in me as a researcher, participants appeared to approach the interview with both curiosity and trepidation. There were obvious concerns about confidentiality, given that dreams are intensely personal phenomena. Moreover, the amplificatory interview exposed not only the participant's dreamed existence, but also their feelings about significant others who appeared in their dream-series, some of whom I was acquainted personally and/or professionally. In order to address the issue of confidentiality, participants were asked to choose a pseudonym for themselves as well as for the lived others who appeared in their dream-series. In addition, once the nature of the relationship between a participant and specific lived others had been identified and explored, these lived others were grouped together in terms of the quality of their relationship to the participant, rather than in terms of their formal relationship to a participant. In order to protect participants' confidentiality still further, only the dream-series for each participant was included in the final write-up (Appendices 2, 3 and 4).

The need to protect participants' confidentiality compromised my attempts to triangulate with other

researchers during the early stages of data explication. From participants' point of view, it would have meant exposing their intensely private worlds to persons whom they perceived as hostile to their sexuality, or with whom they already enjoyed a therapeutic relationship. From my point of view it would mean finding colleagues who were as intensely interested in exploring the psychological (rather than social and political) meaning of being lesbian. Chauncey, Duberman and Vicinus (1989) observe that many researchers in the past have been reluctant to publish in the field of lesbian studies due the possible consequences for their careers. Moreover, many sympathetic academics still caution graduate students about linking themselves to so controversial a research area. To ask colleagues to wade through in excess of 300 single spaced pages of transcribed interviews, and then face possible academic alienation on the basis of this involvement, was asking too much. In addition, it would mean finding colleagues who were not therapeutically involved with participants (and who would not become therapeutically involved with participants during the two years it took to collect and amplify participants' dream-series). As such, the intersubjective validity of each participant's case synopsis was initially restricted to member group validation. Subsequent steps in the methodological process, i.e., the categorization and interpretation of particular dream images, were checked against those identified by my supervisor.

To some extent, giving participants the authority for initial interpretation of their dream images was limiting, in so much as I (on the strength of having taught dream appreciation to post-graduate students) could suggest various alternatives. At the same time however, if dreams are intensely personal experiences and the project intended to focus upon the diversity of individual lesbians' experiences of being lesbian, then it was important that these alternative interpretations not be imposed upon participants.

Finally, one participant was excluded from the final write-up on ethical grounds, i.e., because she had been my lover some five years beforehand, and then independent of our friendship, became involved with one of my patients. Her exclusion proved unfortunate. Like Traci she was feminine-identified. She was also the only participant who was involved in an intimate relationship at the time of the research, and was the only participant who had been sexually intimate with a man. While her exclusion did not substantially alter the meanings identified (cf. Section 7.7.1). It did imply the loss of some intriguing diversities with respect to the coming out process, as well as exploration of the possibility for lesbians' transforming and integrating their masculine potentials.

#### **5.4 WEAVING THE TAPESTRY TOWARDS SYNTHESIS**

As Ely (1981) suggests, qualitative research is a vast and never-ending process that is rich with possibilities for interpretation, and as hermeneutic theory suggests, the interpretation of a text is always dependent upon a researcher's prior knowledge of the organisational devices she used for making sense of that which emerged in the first place (Addison, 1989).

The method applied explored images of lived and imagined others that appeared in each participants' dream-series. These images were the subject of an amplificatory interview that attended to the sexual and gender categories to which these images belonged, and the quality of participants' relationships to these images, both formally and emotionally. After transcribing each amplificatory interview, the interview was read and reread with the help of a reading guide developed on the basis of the questions arising out of the literature review. These questions concerned the psychogenesis and development of a lesbian identity,

the manner in which lesbians disclose their identity, and the nature of lesbian relationships.

To analyse is to find ways to tease out what is considered essential to a phenomenon and to reduce, reorganise and combine these insights in the most economical and interesting fashion. This was the intention of the case synopsis, and each case synopsis attended to each participant's dream themes, vocational engagements, forestructures of understanding, relational history, identity development, and understanding of gender. From the outset certain methodological limitations were acknowledged. These limitations involved sacrificing the possibility of generalisation for the sake of an in-depth understanding of the psychological meaning of being lesbian, pragmatic constraints that emerged in the course of applying the method developed, and ethical concerns that also stood in the way of triangulation at the early stages of the data analysis.

The **final step** in applying the method was that of gathering together the themes held in common by more than one participant. In order to facilitate the process of inter-case synthesis, case synopses were read and reread section by section in order to identify common areas of concern for participants. Through a process of further distillation, these areas of concern were further refined. The process by which themes were distilled, listed and synthesized is explored and recorded in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER SIX

### A SYNTHESIS OF SAPPHIC EXPERIENCE

Meaning is always in a particular context and based upon a background of shared cultural practices; meaning it is not a fundamentally unique, privatised property of individuals nor is it independent from the practical situations of social interaction; meaning is negotiated in our ongoing, everyday interactions with others in the world (Addison, 1989, p. 52).

The question motivating this project concerns Sapphic experience, and the aim of the project is that of attempting to identify the vitally significant lived aspects of lesbian loving-being-with from the point of view of women who call themselves lesbian. Chapters Two and Three suggested that the manner in which this mode of loving-being-with is constructed socially and politically limits the possibilities for understanding being lesbian as a psychological phenomenon. Moreover, the psychological lenses through which being lesbian is understood were shown to be inadequate, in so much as psychological theory views being lesbian as pathological. Chapter Four argued that understanding lesbian interiority, or being lesbian from the inside out, could be gained by exploring lesbians' dreamed existences, and that amplification of lesbians' dream-series would highlight how lesbians develop a gender identity.

In an attempt to capture the meaning of Sapphic experience, or being lesbian as a psychological (rather than social and/or political) phenomenon, four participants submitted a dream-series of at least thirty dreams. Subsequent amplificatory interviews focussed upon the actors that appeared in each participant's dream-series, participants' relational histories and the process by which participants disclosed their identity as lesbians. Interviews were transcribed and systematically explicated with the help of a reading guide that maintained the focus on questions that arose from the literature review, as well as reflected upon the explication process itself. Themes elicited with the help of the reading guide were then used to create a case synopsis for each participant. Finally, synopses were read and reread for the purposes of highlighting common inter-case concerns for three of the participants, the fourth having been excluded for ethical reasons. To picture the process, one has to imagine hermeneutic spirals within hermeneutic spirals. The direction of these spirals is guided by the focus upon how individual lesbians construct their gender and the implications of this for their identity development.

In the current chapter common inter-case concerns identified are subjected to a process of progressive distillation. In order to achieve this end, concerns expressed by participants were gathered into clusters. These clusters were crafted as a dialogue between participants' dream-series and their amplification of that which appeared in their dreamed existence. This permitted the factors that mediate lesbian experience to emerge, and forms the basis for discussion and dialogue with the literature about lesbians in the following chapter.

Exploring the wealth of common inter-case themes generated through the distillation process proved to be a highly complex and problematic exercise. The overriding difficulty concerned how to minimise the repetition of information about particular participants, particular dreams and particular themes, while at the same time remaining true to the phenomenon as it presented itself, and maintaining respect for each participant in their uniqueness. The intention of the research was to give lesbian psychological meaning a voice however, rather than reduce it to theoretical constructs. As such, the synthesis was written, reorganised and rewritten several times.

In order to alert the reader to some further difficulties, the nature of the interpretative process is examined below for its strengths and weaknesses. These sections focus upon the limits of interpretation, the implications of this for the methodology, and the possibility of transference relations between the researcher and her participants. Thereafter, the three participants included are introduced along with their motivation for writing their dream-series, and their primary dream themes. In moving beyond the similarities and divergences disclosed by this exercise, common inter-case themes that were associated with participants' relational worlds and possibilities were addressed. This laid the foundation for exploring participants' constructions of gender, their perceptions of sexual and gender categories and identities, and the passage by which participants came to disclose their identities as lesbian. A summary of the meanings explicated is presented at the end of each section, and this summary is used to construct a synthesis of what it means, from a psychological perspective, to be lesbian.

### **6.1.1 THE LIMITS OF INTERPRETATION**

In assessing the validity of the synthesis and the processes used to create this, the following issues with respect to the interpretative process need to be born in mind.

First, congruent with existential perspectives of human experience, dreamed and wakened existence were considered to be of an equal but different ontological status. In other words, the vertical and horizontal realms of being were deemed to express and reflect equally important aspects of human experience. Consistent with existential views, dreaming was understood to express the vertical realm of being, in so much as dreaming is a purely personal phenomenon in which time, space, bodilyness and the world as a shared and organised totality is suspended. Dreams as told however, express the intersecting of the vertical and horizontal realms of being, in so much as the experience of dreaming is translated into language. The dream-series, and the empirical grounds for this investigation, reflected participants' perceptions of their encounters with the vertical axis therefore, rather than the vertical axis *per se*. As such, participants also demonstrated forestructures for understanding their experiences.

Second, the amplificatory interview for each participant was devoted to exploring and linking participants' perceptions of their dreamed and wakened existences, and making sense of these through the lens of gender identity and its construction. In order to achieve this aim actors who appeared in participants' dreamed existences were identified as either 'imagined' or 'lived' others, and the quality of relationships between these actors and participants' was explored. As such, explication of the amplificatory interview

demanding a theoretical language would differentiate between images on the vertical and horizontal axes. More specifically, the my focus reflected my hermetic interest in the dialogue between the vertical and horizontal axis of being, and the inclusive theoretical framework I adopted in order to understand this dialectical interchange.

Imagined others, or what Jung (Samuels, 1958b; and, Mattoon, 1984) terms 'subjective images', were those actors that participants did not recognise as involved in their wakened existence. These actors were defined as spontaneous emergences that alerted the research to participants' archetypal patterns, or the possibilities that presented on the vertical axis. Lived others, or what Jung terms 'objective images', were recognised by participants as others who also inhabited their wakened existence. These actors were understood to be the internalisation of participants' relationships to others, or possibilities that presented on the horizontal axis. Understanding these latter relationships called for more psychoanalytic language.

Imagined others appeared to carry or express the unexpressed aspects of participants' relationships to the world, i.e., they carried potentials or unlived possibilities for relating to the world. Where the potentials carried by an imagined other were projected onto a lived other, the imagined and lived other were said to exist in a relationship of correspondence. In some instances participants' appeared to project these potentials onto lived others for the purposes of differentiating these potentials from their personalities. In other instances, participants appeared to project these potentials onto lived others for the purposes of integrating these potentials into their personalities. It also became clear that different lived others carried, or expressed, similar relational dynamics regardless of their formal relationship to participants. These lived others were said to exist in a transference relationship. The interpretative stance outlined above enabled the actors who inhabited participants' dreamed existences to be reduced to categories of others based upon their psychological, as opposed to formal, relationships to participants.

In order to illustrate the complexity of interpretative stance outline above, examples from Traci and Sarah's dream-series are given below. In order to remain true to the manner in which dreamed and wakened existences were linked and interpreted, illustrative examples taken from the dream-series are recorded in italics, direct quotes from the amplificatory interview are placed between quotation marks, and references to dreams are noted with a hash in parenthesis. Moreover, in order to separate and explore observations about each participant in terms of the themes identified, participants' names are written in bold.

In her dream-series **Traci** is initially accompanied by a friend *Mystic*, and confronted by *Cat Woman* (#4) who persecutes her. Traci projected her fears of being persecuted by *Cat Woman* onto a lived other *who was dressed in a black cat suit* (#15). It would seem that rather than integrating the wounding potentials expressed by *Cat Woman*, Traci projected these wounding potentials onto a lived other, and then differentiated this potential from her personality. This enabled her to relate to, rather than identify with, lived others who carried *Cat Woman*, or wounding, potentials (#24). Traci also encountered *Wise Woman* (#16) who encouraged her to choose a way forward. In exercising her choice, Traci encountered *Mystic's* spiritual guide by whom she was initiated (#25 & #26). *Mystic* and Traci's dreamed relationship thereafter became more ordinary - *Mystic* reassured Traci (#28), they shared their spiritual wonder and nourishment (#30), and they worked, socialized and flirted with each other (#31, #32, #35 & #37). When *Mystic* died, Traci inhabited her home, and offered a place to the homeless and *beautiful woman sleeping on one of the beds*. She also discovered an *ancient medallion which was made from beautiful heavy silver* (#38), a medallion that was

reminiscent of that worn by *Wise Woman*. It would seem thus that Mystic and *Wise Woman* existed in a relationship of correspondence, i.e., Traci projected her *Wise Woman* potentials onto Mystic, and Mystic therefore carried *Wise Woman* potentials for Traci. Moreover, rather than differentiating from her projection onto Mystic, Traci appeared to integrate Mystic's *Wise Woman* potentials. In the next dream in which Mystic appeared she was interviewing Traci's friend, a potential lesbian. While Traci and Mystic still flirted, and Traci attempted to mislead others about the nature of their relationship, the presence of an ambulance and Mystic's limp reminded Traci of her relational mother<sup>41</sup> (#44). It would seem thus that Mystic and Traci's mother existed in a transference relationship, i.e., they were identified with each other. Finally, the presence of three snakes in Mystic's garden (#46) confirmed for Traci both the importance of separating from Mystic and the extent to which she was healed in relationship to her. It would seem that Traci integrated the potentials carried by *Wise Woman* by projecting these potentials onto Mystic, and differentiated from the potentials carried by *Cat Woman* by projecting these potentials onto women to whom she related. Moreover, in identifying Mystic with her relational mother from whom she had already separated she was able to identify with Mystic's strengths and differentiate from her weaknesses.

Sarah's dream-series also illustrated the processes of projection and identification, and differentiation and integration. The evolution of images associated with a particular platonic friend suggested that Sarah initially identified with her friend, in so much as she attempted to adopt her friend's appearance (#11). Thereafter, they embraced and clasped hand in a victory salute (#19). This image demonstrated their identification with each other, but also provided the grounds for their separation, i.e., Sarah left her friend in order to commune with *Killer Whale*. This latter image was symbolic of the space her second therapist offered. It would seem however, that while Sarah was able to access a space that held her within her therapy, differentiation of her identity was worked through in relationship to her platonic friend. More specifically, Sarah's increased independence appeared to provide the grounds for her friend's identification with her, i.e., Sarah was surprised and impressed when her friend bought boots that Sarah would wear (#26). This image invited Sarah to recognise the mutuality of their influence upon each other. In the same dream however, she recognised their need to be separate, i.e., she not only ignored her friend's suggestion, but criticized her friend for being "retentive". Amplification suggested that Sarah's friend expressed those potentials that Sarah chose not to express. More specifically, while they were both passionate and intuitive, her friend was "light and playful rather than dark and serious" and tackled things "head on" rather than "retreated to check it out". In addition, it would seem that Sarah's platonic friend carried the contrasting potentials of *Dark Woman* (#D) with whom Sarah identified. In summary: Sarah initially identified with *Dark Woman*'s woundedness and projected the contrasting possibility for being onto a platonic friend. In the course of reclaiming what she had projected, she identified with her platonic friend in her dreamed existence, integrated the potential, and then differentiated from her platonic friend.

The above examples illustrate how analytic and psychoanalytic language was used to make sense of the relationship between imagined and lived others, a choice that enabled the research to move beyond simply repeating participants' understandings of their relationships to others and themselves. The examples also emphasized the importance of maintaining constant dialogue between participants' dreamed and wakened existences.

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<sup>41</sup> Given the high incidence of divorce, the prevalence of single parent families, and the number of children born out of wedlock, it was thought more fitting to term the biological mother the relational mother.

### **6.1.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE METHODOLOGY ADOPTED**

The hermetic foundation for the research, and the analytic and psychoanalytic language used in order to make sense of and understand the relationship between dreamed and wakened existence for participants, had implications for the validity of the synthesis distilled.

First, the focus on the psychological meaning of lesbian gender identity development and its diversity, and the reading guide developed in order to explore this phenomenon, was maintained in a systematic and methodical manner throughout the research process. While consistent with the aims of the research, gender was not the only lens through which lesbian experience could be described and explored. In this sense, the lens of gender opened particular horizons at the same time as it appeared to close others. As a result, some individual diversities in psychological meaning may have been lost.

Second, the assumption that human experience is the product of interaction between the horizontal and vertical realms of being, and the focus on dream images for initiating exploration of this interaction, emphasized the primarily intrapsychic focus of the research. Differentiating between vertical and horizontal realms of being also implied differentiating between imagined and lived others, however. Here the focus was more interpersonal, and directed towards identifying transference relationships between lived others, and correspondence relationships between categories of lived others and imagined others. The effort to describe the intrapersonal world of lesbians, or the dance between their intrapsychic and interpersonal worlds, drew upon both analytical and psychoanalytic language, and the synthesis distilled is therefore vulnerable to the same limitations as these two bodies of theory pose for understanding human being in its meaning giving and receiving capacities.

Finally, the process of linking imagined others with lived others was guided by participants' understandings of what particular images meant for them, as well as the quality of the relationships they ascribed to these images. Furthermore, participants were given authority with respect to verifying the researcher's post-interview interpretations. This attitude was consistent with the view that dreams are purely subjective phenomena (Binswanger, 1930/1986). As such, the images were explored and appreciated (Gendlin, 1986) rather than interpreted. At the same time, this decision limited possibilities for exploring those aspects of participants' experience that they either evaded or denied.

### **6.1.3 TRANSFERENCE RELATIONSHIPS TO THE RESEARCHER**

Given the highly personal nature of the foundation for the research, i.e., individual lesbian's dream-series, participants were selected on the basis of their willingness to entrust their reports about events in an intensely personal realm for the purposes of research, as well as their willingness to engage in in-depth and ongoing discussion of these events in relationship to their interpersonal worlds. As it turned out, all three participants had been students of mine. Two of the participants began recording their dream-series before they heard about the research. As such, their dreams are less contaminated or influenced by the research question. It is possible that the research question did influence the third participant's dream-series. None were, had ever been, nor ever will be patients of mine, nor were any of them in a formal academic

relationship to me at the time of the amplificatory interview. Nonetheless, it was also true that by virtue of our history, i.e., each participant had consulted me about a personal choice they were making at the time, there was the possibility of a power-dynamic developing, and accompanying transference implications. Moreover, my presence was directly acknowledged in two participants' dream-series. It is possible that participants' conscious and unconscious expectations of me influenced the quality of the amplificatory interview. It is therefore necessary to explicate how participants' came to know and recognise me.

I first met **Traci** after she was elected class representative. This meant that we met in the presence of other class representatives four times a year in order to discuss problems with the curriculum and possible adjustments to it for the following year. Towards the end of her first year (and over the period during which she was independently recording her dream-series), **Traci** informally consulted me about her vocational options after deciding that she would terminate her formal studies. She had also heard about my research project from core members of the local gay and lesbian organisation, and despite her intention to return to her home town, she expressed interest in the project because she had already begun recording her dreams. The dreams used for the purposes of this project were recorded prior to her decision to participate in the project, and as such, I did not appear directly within her dream-series. There was one particular dream that suggested my presence in her dreamed existence as an imagined other. When I tentatively explored the possibility of a correspondence between the *Wise Woman* and I, **Traci** denied this and suggested that *Wise Woman* was more like a woman who led a transpersonal workshop and/or her friend *Mystic*<sup>42</sup>.

**Lisa** initially approached me in my capacity as a lecturer who was also a lesbian for advice about coming out to her parents. Given that she was not seeking therapy, I alerted her to her options (being true to her Self or true to others), and offered her courage. **Lisa** returned at odd intervals to inform me of her progress, and when she heard about the project through members of the local gay and lesbian organisation, she volunteered to participate in the research. I appeared undisguised in two of **Lisa's** dreams. In the first dream, after fighting with her sister to maintain possession of a *packet of notes that document my life* (#3), **Lisa** is sitting with other students listening to a lecture about gay rights. In a subsequent dream, I am too busy to attend to her immediate concerns (#5). It would seem that **Lisa** desired a mentor who would guide her through her coming out process, and that she expected me to fulfill this role. **Lisa** confirmed this interpretation, in so much as she said she would have liked to discuss the dreams soon after they were dreamed, rather than wait several months before reflecting upon them with me. **Lisa's** involvement in the project did not assist her in coming out, as she had wished, and in that sense I disappointed her. Her involvement in the research did however, enable her to come to terms with issues around coming out.

I first came to know **Sarah** when she appeared in my office distressed about a personal problem

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<sup>42</sup> I was alerted to this possibility with **Traci's** description of *Wise Woman's* eyes (which looked like blue crystals), as well as **Traci's** sense that *Wise Woman* was *from another world*, and reminded her of a natural healer that she knew. Moreover, in the dream *Wise Woman* asks her to choose one of three books that she must read, and gives her a booklist. This image mimicked the encounter between her and I about her vocational options, i.e., I encouraged her to explore her vocational options and let her heart inform her choices. What concerned me was the construction of desire within the dream. More specifically, **Traci's** dream of *Wise Woman* (#16) also suggested that she thought *Wise Woman* found her attractive and was following her around. In the end, *Wise Woman* was revealed as **Traci's** desire to be desired, to be seen and recognised by a woman who could heal her. **Traci** lived this desire out in relationship to her friend *Mystic*, although it is also true that **Traci's** involvement in the research did allow her to be seen by me, by virtue of my attempts to understand her world through the amplificatory interview.

of which she could not speak. Like **Lisa**, she was not requesting psychotherapy. Two years later she entered into psychotherapy with a trainee under my supervision. Sarah became aware that I was supervising her therapy when she requested that I supervise her project in the area of lesbian studies, and supervision of her therapy was therefore handed over to a female colleague. My presence in **Sarah's** dream-series was also undisguised. In one dream I and the colleague who was now supervising her therapy, are *sitting in chairs watching her* (#I). This suggested that **Sarah** saw me as an observer rather than participant in her world, and to some extent, already felt seen by me prior to her decision to participate in the project. In the following dream **Sarah** revealed her disappointment about being in a therapeutic encounter with a *little boy* rather than with me (#J). In her amplificatory interview, **Sarah** emphasized that she would have preferred to have been in therapy with me rather than a male psychologist in training, but that she was pleased that at least I was supervising her therapy, since in those terms she stood a good chance of getting a fair deal as a lesbian. She felt disappointed however, when I withdrew from this supervisory role in order to supervise her research project. Sarah admitted that she was not confident that any of my colleagues would supervise either her research project or her therapy with the same sensitivity, but realised that I had to withdraw from one of these roles for professional reasons. She suggested it was an unfortunate but inevitable decision. That she imagines me lying sick in *her* bed when she was the one who retreated to illness as a child lends support to her idea of me as a 'wounded healer' whom she hoped would "look after" her. It also suggested the possibility of identification. In the course of her dream-series and its amplification, I was revealed as a supportive authority figure, by virtue of having addressed her concerns about being lesbian without labelling her, having supervised her therapy initially, and having supervised her research project. I also emerged as a role model with respect of relationships. More specifically, my lover and I, at the time, were seen to maintain a committed relationship without sacrificing our separate interests. We were the "ideal lesbian couple" (#F) by virtue of the fact that we managed to escape getting caught up in the "vortex of younger gays".

Clearly, the women who demonstrated sufficient commitment to this project had all had previous contact with me in my capacity as a 35-year-old lesbian lecturer who lived in the same small university town as them at the time of the research. It was a unique context in which to conduct a unique piece of research about a unique category of people. Participants were also aware that I was a registered clinical psychologist, although none had ever been in therapy with me. Prior to the research, interaction was (for the most part) restricted to that of lecturer-student, and at least two participants' dream-series commented upon my not being available to them as a healing presence and friend. It was also evident that participants understood and respected the boundaries I had drawn in order to survive my context, and arguably, participation in the research fulfilled their need to be seen by me. Not from the point of view of an intimate friend and/or lover, nor from the point of view of a therapist, but from the point of view of someone who was genuinely interested in finding out about how lesbians imagine and live forth their gender.

In the course of my academic duties I had lectured all three participants. At the time of the research however, none of the participants included were involved in any of the courses I taught. Their disclosures could therefore not directly affect their academic progress. Moreover, I had earned the reputation of being an active listener because I maintained people's confidence regardless of whether or not they were in therapy with me. Perhaps because of this, all three participants had approached me about their academic

and/or personal difficulties prior to their involvement in the research. In this sense, participants had already tested the waters with respect to my integrity and willingness to support their best interests as women who defined themselves as lesbian.

Nonetheless, being a lesbian who was permitted to grace the corridors of a male-dominated (and arguably patriarchal) institution despite being demonstrably 'out', and participants' expectations that I share my knowledge about how to get this right, were potentially problematic features for the research. Explication of participants' dreams about me revealed that I was an idealized, and potentially healing, presence for them. It was also apparent that my reluctance to become involved in their personal worlds, even if understood to be appropriate, was a disappointment for them. In many senses, they felt the professional ethics governing relationships between lecturers and students, while understandable, had deprived them of a role model and confidant. They also suggested that it had deprived me of a social circle within which to play in relationships. Arguably, participants conscious and unconscious expectations of my role in their world influenced the quality of their amplificatory interviews, in so much as their wish to be seen by me was fulfilled to some degree, i.e., I became available as a subject rather than object relation in Benjamin's (1995) terms. In Section 5.3.3. it was argued that the fulfilment of this need was helpful to participants, in so much as they became more conscious of the issues to which they needed to attend in order to individuate. Moreover, keeping a dream-series is healing in and of itself (Ullman, 1999), and amplificatory interviews and participants' access to their case synopses appeared to clarify some of the issues with which they struggled. Here it is argued that the multiple roles and encounters between participants and I deepened rather than detracted from the rapport during amplificatory interviews, as well as aided the interpretative process. Participants were aware, on the basis of their experience, that they could invest their trust and confidence in me. As such, they could speak openly about what being lesbian meant for them, as well as about their relationships to those lived others who appeared in their dreamed existence. Perhaps more important however, is that it was difficult for me to make sweeping generalisations about participants and/or those lived others who inhabited their dreamed existence. I was constantly aware that I was dealing with participants' perceptions of their relationships, rather than facts about their relationships, and that what participants imagined and dreamed was not always what they lived forth in relationship to others.

## **6.2 BETWEEN THE DIVERGENCES**

All three participants included in the project were what Burch (1993) terms 'primary lesbians'. Despite this common status, participants' revealed a great many superficial differences between them. These concerned their appearances, their definitions of being lesbian, and their primary dream themes. In the following sections, participants are first introduced in their uniqueness. Thereafter, their primary dream themes are explicated for the purposes establishing the common inter-case concerns between them.

### **6.2.1 INTRODUCING PARTICIPANTS**

**Traci** was an articulate 24 year old who defined being lesbian as "a preference for having intimate relationships with womyn (*sic*)". At her interviews, **Traci** wore her blonde hair just short of shoulder length



and her style of dress could be termed an 'arty African ethnic', i.e., wraparound skirt, sandals, and a variety of crystals and charms. Her eye contact was good, if dreamy, and her speech coherent if metaphoric. At times she appeared to struggle with articulating her more mystical experiences. She was estimated to be of above average intelligence. **Traci** submitted in excess of 200 dreams initially. From these dreams a series of 52 consecutive dreams were chosen<sup>43</sup>. A prolific and fundamental theme within **Traci's** dream-series was her spiritual awakening and initiation in the presence of her friend and mentor, **Mystic**<sup>44</sup>.

**Lisa** was 24 years of age at the time of the interview. **Lisa** preferred to be called 'gay', which she defined as "being physically and emotionally attracted to women". She had come out, in so much as she accepted herself as lesbian, had told people who were important to her that she was lesbian, and no longer felt the need to hide her orientation. **Lisa** provided a series of 30 dreams which she began recording after hearing about the project. In the interview **Lisa** was casually dressed in denim jeans, a checked shirt and Doc Martin boots. Whilst nervous about the interview initially, she appeared honest and relaxed, and developed insights into her own and her family's dynamics through the interviewing process. Of note was her ability to look beyond appearances within her dream-series, i.e., to recognise corresponding relational dynamics between imagined others and lived others. **Lisa's** dream-series was played out against the background of her professional squash interests, and the relational dynamics that this evoked between herself and her mother and sister. Weaving between these scenes were agonised images of her attempts to come out to her mother, and the extent to which her fear of being disclosed immobilised both her professional and personal worlds.

**Sarah** was 22 year old. Sarah defined being lesbian as "being attracted both physically and emotionally to women" and as "having some sort of personal and collective lesbian identity and consciousness". At the interview **Sarah** was casually dressed in jeans and black boots, and sported a short and modern hair style. Her eye contact was good, although her speech was hesitant, it was both reflective and coherent. **Sarah** began recording her dreams when she entered into therapy for the first time, and she submitted a total of 45 dreams. The first 15 dreams were recorded prior to her decision to participate in the research, and all 45 dreams were amplified for the purposes of the research. **Sarah's** dream themes were played out against the background of her therapeutic journey, her attempts to disengage from a co-dependent relationship to her mother and first lover, and her attempts to work through a second relationship that evoked the dissolution of her ego-boundaries. These themes wove between her attempts to differentiate from a platonic friend.

## 6.2.2 PRIMARY DREAM THEMES

In the course of attending to each participants' dream-series, several overriding themes were noted for each participant. Further reading revealed that these themes, although not the focus of attention for all three

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<sup>43</sup> These dreams were chosen on the basis of what was technically possible at the time. More specifically, between translating the disks provided from one word processing package to another, a great many of her dreams were lost.

<sup>44</sup> Lived others within each participants' dream-series have also been given pseudonyms in order to protect the confidentiality of participants, as well as their social networks.

participants, were not unique. In other words, participants' motivations for initiating their dream-series, the influence of their vocational context on their identity development, and the presence of a psycho-spiritual awakening, were shared events. Moreover, participants' psycho-spiritual awakening assumed the status of a personal forestructure for making sense of their worlds, and was closely linked to their disillusionment with contemporary Christianity. These themes provided the background against which lived and imagined others emerged within the dream-series.

#### **6.2.2.1 Motivations for Initiating the Dream-Series**

Participants began recording their dreams for different reasons, and these reasons were reflected in the evolution of themes in their individual dream-series. Two participants began recording their dreams prior to hearing about the project. **Traci**, for instance, began recording her dreams following a transpersonal breathing workshop, and **Sarah** upon entering psychotherapy for the first time. Their intention supported what Armstrong (1986) describes as the contemporary Woman as Mystic path, in so much as **Traci** adopted a feminine-friendly mystical tradition, while **Sarah's** contemporary Woman as Mystic potentials expressed "faith in the secular enlightenment of psychoanalysis" (Armstrong, 1986, p. 248).

**Lisa** began recording their dreams for the sake of the project itself. Her images were more clearly related to the issues that the research question brought to her awareness, i.e., the disclosure of a lesbian identity. This theme is central to the question of lesbian identity development, and is therefore described in detail in the relevant section.

#### **6.2.2.2 The Influence of Participants' Vocational Contexts**

Participants' vocational contexts were reflected within their dream-series. At the time of recording her dream-series **Traci** defined herself as a "student" and her dream-series were peppered with visits to the English Department, anxieties about her studies, and anxieties about her relationship to several of her English tutors. It was clear that **Traci** experienced her vocational context as restrictive and un nourishing.

**Lisa's** dreams were peppered with references to her professional involvement in the squash court, her teammates and her competitors, as well as her formal involvement as a student, at university. Amplification revealed that both contexts provided **Lisa** with the opportunity to separate from her family of origin, although the masculine instincts with which she identified in order to compete on the squash circuit threatened to immobilise her.

**Sarah** reported that being at university allowed her to escape her mother's sphere of influence, and enter a space of play. In short, university offered **Sarah** "a good way to become independent". In her third year however, **Sarah** began to experience her studies as restrictive and limiting, and at the time of recording her dream-series she was disillusioned with the Psychology Department.

#### **6.2.2.3 Participants' Psycho-Spiritual Awakening**

Participants' dream-series, as an evolving process, reflected their psycho-spiritual awakening. A prolific and fundamental theme within **Traci's** dream-series was her spiritual awakening and initiation in the presence of her friend and mentor, Mystic. The evolution of this theme within her dream-series is explored in detail in Section 6.1.1. This exploration revealed how **Traci** differentiated from the persecutory potentials of *Cat*

Woman and integrated the healing presence of *Wise Woman*.

Lisa's psychological awakening was associated with her accepting and expressing her lesbian identity. This meant taking responsibility for having murdered a girl. Amplification revealed *Murdered Girl* to be an aspect of Lisa herself. More specifically, Lisa's friend was initially accused of having murdered someone (#7), and Lisa's family thought she had murdered someone (#8). Later in the dream-series, it is Lisa who is being shot at and killed (#20) by a woman whom Lisa recognised to be a correspondence image of her envious sister, i.e., Lisa regarded this dream as an accurate reflection of how her sister responded to her declaration that she was gay - her sister criticised her friends, and persecuted her. Thereafter, Lisa took responsibility for having caused the death of a girl because: *I kept insisting we needed more tomato which I chopped up and added to whatever we were making. Then while we were eating this girl choked and died on a cube of tomato (#25)*. Lisa felt horrified and guilty. In the following dream Lisa's identification with *Murdered Girl* becomes clear. After attending the funeral Lisa was stirring a tomato sauce and:

*Was about to add another tomato when I went into a state of shock. I just stared at nothing with this blank look on my face...This girl was talking to me and she realised I was out of it. I felt myself retreating further and further into a void, a nothingness where nothing existed.*

This dream spoke of Lisa's identification with *Murdered Girl*, and suggested that Lisa initially identified with the victims of her envious sister, and then came to realise that she identified with her envious sister in relationship to herself. At this point in her dream-series her mother's religious objections to her being gay were raised, suggesting that Lisa was killing herself with internalised homophobia. The strength of her identity as a lesbian was demonstrated when Lisa refused to read a book that her mother hoped would turn her 'straight' again and told her mother that while she *respected other people's opinions and views* she did not expect her mother to:

*Accept things...she must not try to change and cure me. She was really angry and said she could not believe that I did not believe in God and had turned against him. That (Lover1) had really got her evil claws into me. She said I did not want to heal myself (#28).*

Lisa's final dream (#30) confirmed the growing integration of and confidence in her lesbian identity, in so much as she arrived at her sister's wedding looking *really androgynous in a tailored tux and wearing a black hat*. Her solution appeared to be that of merging masculine and feminine potentials.

Sarah's dream-series was played out against the background of her therapeutic journey. The therapeutic alliance between Sarah and her first therapist provided the grounds for her becoming aware of men as a relational possibility. Her second therapist provided the grounds for transforming her identification with her mother and her half-sister, both of whom appeared to carry wounding potentials. Sarah's dream-series pointed towards an ongoing struggle to achieve autonomy in relationship to her mother and various authority figures who challenged her. Mentors were unreceptive to her, she felt pressurized into betraying an anorexic young girl with whom she identified (#10), and she was mocked (#14, #16 & #17). Challenging these authority figures appeared to facilitate Sarah's sense of autonomy, in so much as she became more assertive in relationship to women (#6, #8, #9, #12, #13, #17 & #25). Her growing ability to assert her boundaries was also illustrated in relationship to a heterosexual female friend with whom she initially desired to identify, and from whom she eventually differentiated (#1, #11, #14, #19 & #26).

#### 6.2.2.4 Participants' Personal Pre-Understandings

Participants appeared to adopt a personal pre-understanding, or forestructure, for making sense of their worlds, and these forestructures differed in their focus, their complexity, and their importance.

Fundamental for making sense of Traci's understanding of her world was her underlying transpersonal discourse. She made frequent references to feminine friendly shamanic traditions and rituals such as Wicca (a woman-centred mystical tradition involving Goddess worship), as well as to astral travel and meeting her guide (her late paternal great-grandfather) through spirit mediums. She also described various members of her matrilineal lineage as psychic, a gay community meeting in terms of "ritual", and lesbian sexual intimacy as "magic". When further interrogated about the basis of this discourse Traci suggested that her shamanic interests were "the same as being lesbian. But for me, I've only now begun to realise the connection between the two". Traci found support for her own spiritual path among those who participated in transpersonal workshops, and her spiritual focus was clearly reflected in her dream-series. References to yoga and the possibilities for transformation and magic in the presence of images who expressed the feminine potential for healing were frequent. Mystic was most closely associated with Traci's spiritual unfolding, and the integration of healing potentials allowed Traci to transcend her fear of death - *for my thoughts suddenly crystallised and I realised what death meant to me and was really happy because now I understood about life (#38)*. Dreams in which birds appeared also spoke of Traci's spiritual passage (#5, #6 & #30), and suggested that Traci's feminine spirituality was met with male hostility. Traci's final dream spoke of her rejection of masculine spirituality - a gay friend was *wearing a black cloak and headdress made from black and red feathers (#52)*. Traci criticized this friend on the grounds of his involvement in dubious occult practices.

Sarah admitted that psychology shaped her ideas. Sarah withdrew from Transpersonal Psychology and opted to read Forensic Psychology because, although she did not have a problem with higher states of consciousness and appreciated cycles and rituals and the symbolism of nature, she was "very fixated on her ego" and could not really relate to her spiritual experiences. Moreover, she felt that she was trying to get from A to C without going through B. Sarah described the period over which she made this decision as "horrible" in so much as she did not "know what was up or down". It would seem that Transpersonal Psychology served to dissolve Sarah's broader identity, whereas Forensic Psychology permitted her to re-establish her identity.

Lisa's forestructures were unclear, although her competitive relationship with women was fundamental for her understanding of her world. Her primary concern appeared to be that of establishing her lesbian identity in the face of her mother and sisters' opposition. In other words, she appeared to be attempting to achieve a sense of autonomy in relationship to her mother.

#### 6.2.2.5 Disillusionment with Contemporary Christianity

A prevalent and related theme was that all participants were disillusioned with contemporary Christianity. Tatia, for instance, was critical of popular religion. With respect to the Christian Church she said its truth "had picked up fertilizer and chemicals along the way". She also experienced the ideology as unnecessarily controlling. For this reason she opted to follow more feminine-friendly shamanic and transpersonal traditions.

Lisa's first lover issued a spiritual invitation away from her mother's conventional religious beliefs

towards Catholicism and Eastern philosophy, and particularly the latter because it de-emphasized the ego, spoke out against hate, showed her that there was good and bad in everything, and encouraged her to be true to herself. It also encouraged her to live in the moment rather than for the future. Presently **Lisa** defined herself as a non-practising Anglican who did not follow a fixed religion but rather an Eastern way of life. She was critical of Christianity because of its rigidity, sexism, and emphasis on jealousy, separateness and irreconcilable opposites. At the same time however, **Lisa** regarded the Bible as a good guide for living. It was nonetheless clear from her dream-series that **Lisa** imagined that her mother regarded her lesbian identity and lifestyle as evil on the basis of Christian principles.

**Sarah** was curious about religion as a child. When her Grandmother took to 'Bible-bashing' however, she drifted away from the Church and its hypocrisy. During adolescence **Sarah** turned towards the Church again in order to socialise with other adolescents, and particularly a girl friend to whom she was attracted. At the same time, she became interested in the occult, and the possibility of reincarnation. During a period of crisis and confusion when her parents separated, her family met up with a very religious family, and the older daughter took **Sarah** "under her wing". **Sarah** subsequently became very religious, and described herself as the "ultimate convert". This caused a schism between her and her mother, for she regarded her friend as the "ideal role model" and grew very close to her. At the same time, she refused to talk to her mother because her mother was not a Christian. Subsequently, **Sarah** felt betrayed by the Church. Firstly, her love for her role model was not reciprocated, and **Sarah** realised that there was "no room for that in the Church". Secondly, **Sarah** felt abandoned when she went to a hospital for a major back operation and the Church was not supportive. As a result, **Sarah** was not confirmed and her religious fervour "went down the tubes". **Sarah** was still shocked by the intensity of her religious fervour, and what she had been able to accomplish while "the power of the Spirit was upon (her)". Currently **Sarah** considered herself spiritual, rather than religious, and agnostic. She still found the "very symbolic denominations" like the Catholic Church attractive, for even if they were hypocritical, they appreciated ritual.

Amplification of **Sarah's** dream-series revealed themes of self-betrayal and masculine wounding around Christian images. For instance, she felt like she had *committed a transgression* and was *not happy about the idea* of entering a Cathedral with boys in order to participate in an initiation ceremony. The dream ended with a man being wounded (#F). Then, after introducing her mother to an artist who decorated the interior of her home *for our religious thing*, she was pressed into betraying an anorexic young girl with whom she identified (#10). This image confirmed her view of psychotherapy as a secular religion. Finally, a Cathedral was barricaded against a serial killer who murdered men (#11). The number three also brought to light **Sarah's** spiritual issues. She suggested that her earliest encounter with this symbol involved "the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit". More latterly, through her interest in Transpersonal Psychology, she had been exposed to the Goddess triangle. Her dream-series also revealed a shift from couples, for instance two jester-like men and two domestic women (#D) to groups of three, i.e., three little boys (#2), three drums (#4), three dead men (#11) and three men wearing jester costumes (#30). These images suggested that **Sarah** had shifted from a position of attempting to merge opposites to a transcendent position of potential dialogue between opposites.

### 6.2.3 Summary of Themes

Despite the uniqueness of each participant, several themes could be distilled in the attempt to introduce

participants and explore their dream themes, in so much as participants' motivations for initiating their dream-series, their vocational contexts and the nature of their psycho-spiritual awakening were reflected in their dream-series. Moreover, whilst not central to the question of gender identity development, the distillation of participants' personal pre-understandings highlighted important methodological issues, as well as important differentiations between participants.

First, appearances are deceptive with respect to categorizing primary lesbians in terms of their gender identification. Second, being lesbian is defined as an attraction to women on both a physical and emotional level. Third, the personal pre-understandings that emerged were consistent with each participant's intention for recording their dream-series. More specifically, the participant who recorded her dream-series for the project itself focussed upon gender identity development, i.e., identity disclosure (Lisa). The remaining two recorded their dream-series for reasons other than the research project, and demonstrated more psycho-spiritual pre-understandings (Traci and Sarah). Regardless of their intention for recording their dream-series, participants' psycho-spiritual awakening involved their becoming aware that they identified with persecuted, wounded and victimised others, and the evolution of this theme within their dream-series demonstrated their attempts to differentiate from these potentials. Moreover, participants rejected contemporary Christianity on the grounds that it promoted male interests and understandings of the world. These ideologies were understood to wound women, and particularly lesbians. Consequently, participants tended to adopt alternative and more feminine-friendly spiritual understandings, such as Wicca, Gaia-friendly, Transpersonal and Oriental understandings. Participants also demonstrated a strong interest and affinity to more ritualistic spiritual practices.

Fourth, while the vocational contexts in which participants were involved potentially freed them from the restrictions presented by their families of origin, and particularly their mothers, these same contexts were considered un nourishing, restricting and limiting for their ongoing development. Finally, for at least two participants (Lisa and Sarah) their initial invitation away from the mother was a spiritual invitation.

### **6.3 ACTORS IN THE DRAMA**

Having introduced each of the participants, explored their dream themes, and methodically and systematically explicated their psycho-spiritual development, the focus of attention turned towards the systematic identification of the actors in each participant's dream-series. Reading of individual synopses thus remained sensitive to imagined others that emerged within the dream-series, as well as the lived others whom participants had internalised.

It was apparent from the outset that lived others in participants' dream-series could be differentiated and categorized according to their formal relationship to each participant, and that amplification of these images permitted deeper exploration of each participant's relational world. This included participants' relationships to family members, lovers, friends and teachers/mentors (in the broader sense of the word). In the process of gathering lived others into groups or categories on the basis of the formal relationship between them and participants, it became clear that several lived others who were assigned to different formal categories demonstrated relational dynamics in common. In other words, they evoked similar

responses from participants. These were understood to be transferential relationships. Amplification of participants' imagined others suggested that some of these lived others corresponded to and/or were confused with imagined others. These were understood to signify correspondence relationships. Where an imagined other demonstrated no obvious correspondence to a lived other or others, the image was considered to be a potential, and was described in terms of the invitation that the actor issued.

In the course of classifying lived and imagined others on the grounds of the quality of response they evoked from participants, three qualities of relationship emerged. In most instances both lived and imagined others, by virtue of the correspondence relationships identified, could be grouped in terms of whether they expressed wounding, wounded or healing qualities in relationship to participants. Due to the focus on the psychological meaning of gender identity development for the research, these others were further differentiated in terms of whether they appeared as masculine or feminine within a participant's dream-series. Images that carried **wounding masculine** potentials were described as sadistic and sexually controlling, and images that carried **wounding feminine** potentials were described as cunning, deceptive and destructive to participants. Images that expressed **wounded masculine** potentials appeared to be controlled and persecuted by images that carried wounding feminine potentials, and images that expressed **wounded feminine** potentials appeared to be controlled and persecuted by both wounding masculine and feminine potentials. As such, wounding and wounded potentials existed in a relationship of opposition, or tension. Images that expressed **healing masculine** potentials were described as playful and facilitative, and those that expressed **healing feminine** potentials were described as holding and containing. It is important to note that a lived other could express or carry several of these potentials in relationship to participants.

### 6.3.1 FAMILIAL RELATIONS AND THE GROUNDS FOR RELATIONSHIP

Psychoanalytic and analytical literature (Samuels, 1985b) emphasises the primary importance of the infant's relationship to the mother, and the child's relationship to the father for later relational development. Psychoanalytic literature suggests that these early patterns of relationship are internalised by the individual, and moreover, that fixation upon infantile and childish ways of relating jeopardizes the possibility of mature intimacy in adulthood. In other words, early blueprints for relating influence later relationships. Synopses of the amplificatory interviews were therefore read with a view to disclosing significant relational concerns that arose out of participants' family contexts, and making these early relational influences explicit.

Participants' family constellations, and their position within these constellations, were remarkably different. Only **Sarah** emerged from what is conventionally termed a 'broken' home. Deeper exploration however, suggested the absence of an adequate heterosexual model for all participants. **Lisa** suggested that her father "preferred to play with his buddies rather than his wife", and for **Traci** her father was physically absent due to his involvement in an army at war.

Reading of participants' synopses revealed that all participants' expressed the desire for a sense of (family) belonging. **Sarah** sought to find a sense of family in the presence of a platonic friend and her family. The desire for a sense of family belonging was an implicit theme for both **Traci** and **Lisa**. For instance, **Traci** consciously sought out a family within the gay community when she first came out, while **Lisa** sought a sense of family belonging in the presence of an ex-lover's family.

Participants' dreamed existence also suggested that the fulfilment of this need could not be taken for granted where their lovers' families were concerned. More specifically, **Traci** and **Sarah** were resented by their lovers' families. While **Lisa** felt accepted by her ex-lover's mother in her wakened existence, her dreamed existence suggested that she felt insecure about her acceptance (#23).

#### 6.3.1.1 Mothers from Heaven, Mothers from Hell

Implicit in the exploration of participants' constructions of their family was their construction of the mother as both a correspondence and transferential relationship, even in that case (for instance **Traci**) where the relational mother was all but absent from their dream-series.

**Traci's** mother was all but absent from her dream-series. Where she did present she was *quiet throughout the dream except when she was alone with my dad* (#6), asked about her studies without really wanting to know (#39), or attended a lecture with **Traci** (#41). These images were consistent with **Traci's** experience of her mother, i.e., her mother tended to avoid conflict, and did not participate in **Traci's** interactions with her father. Thereafter, **Traci's** mother appeared only by implication. More specifically, the presence of an ambulance (#44) reminded **Traci** of the time her mother had a stroke and **Traci** had to "mother (her) mother for a long time". **Traci** said that she experienced her mother as nurturing, but also regarded her as "quite masculine", business-like, and assertive. Moreover, she suggested that her mother was not confident of her intuitive capacities. It would seem thus that **Traci** was the product of a masculine-identified mother, and that **Traci's** more intuitive feminine capacities could not be called forth and differentiated in relationship to her mother. **Traci's** *Cat Woman* corresponded to her mother's unexpressed sexual potentials, while *Wise Woman* corresponded to her mother's unexpressed intuitive potentials. **Traci** projected this potential onto *Mystic*, a friend in relationship to whom she integrated her spiritual potentials. This confirmed the transferential relationship that existed between **Traci's** mother and *Mystic*.

For both **Lisa** and **Sarah** their mothers were central actors in their dream-series. In common to both was the presence of a mother-sister collusion against them, the mother's desire to live through their children, relational dynamics based upon possession and manipulation, and their mother's tendency to blame her children for her pain. Both were therefore products of the over-involved, or narcissistic, mother who persecutes, manipulates and obstructs her child's individuation process. Both participants' dream-series were characterised by attempts to achieve a sense of autonomy in relationship to their mothers, and amplification confirmed that both became more assertive and autonomous over the period during which they recorded their dream-series. With respect to transferential and correspondence relationships, *Envious Girl* (#3) corresponded to **Lisa's** middle sister. By virtue of the collusion between **Lisa's** middle sister and her mother, these actors also existed in a transferential relationship. For **Sarah**, *Snake Woman* and *Serial Killer* corresponded to her relational mother, and by virtue of the collusion between her mother and her half-sister, these actors existed in a transferential relationship.

Superficially there appeared to be little consistency in participants' images of their mothers. Explication of **Traci's** dream-series suggested the presence of a masculine-identified mother, and both **Lisa** and **Sarah** described a mother who was narcissistically invested in her children. A systematic explication however, revealed several deeper themes.

Firstly, and regardless of the quality of her image, the mother presented as an obstruction to



participants' individuation process. The masculine-identified mother inhibited the integration of intuitive potentials (**Traci**), and the narcissistically invested mother inhibited the possibility for an autonomous identity (**Sarah** and **Lisa**).

A second theme evident was that, despite the mother being an obstruction to participants' individuation process, participants continued to take responsibility for their mothers' psychological welfare. This involved conscious self-sacrifice on their parts. **Traci**, for instance, mothered her mother after her stroke, **Sarah** rescued her mother from financial ruin, and **Lisa** continued to compromise her own well-being in order to help her mother cope with her loneliness and middle sister's psychological problems.

A third theme evident was the link between death and images of the mother. Both **Traci** and **Sarah** were confronted with this possibility in a lived sense, and their dream-series called them to remember this as a possibility. **Lisa** had not yet confronted this possibility in her wakened existence. Her dreamed existence however, called her to acknowledge her mother's death as a possibility (#24), as well as her response to this. It would seem however that participants did not desire the physical death of their mothers, but rather the death of that aspect of their mothers that obstructed them in their attempts to separate from the mother and develop an autonomous identity.

A final theme concerned participants' degree of identification with their mothers. **Sarah** identified with her mother on the grounds of their common need for co-dependent relationships, stubbornness, and tendency to look towards the wrong people to meet her needs. **Traci** said that she was closer to her mother than to her father, and she appeared to relate to rather than identify with her mother. **Lisa** did not appear to identify with her mother at all.

### 6.3.1.2 Absent Fathers and Fathers who Persecute

Fathers were conspicuously absent from participants' dream-series. **Sarah's** father appeared only in terms of his correspondence with imagined others. **Traci's** father appeared more prolifically than did images of her mother, while the opposite was true for **Lisa**. Several themes emerged in the attempt to make sense of and distill participants' constructions of their fathers.

Firstly, all participants appeared to identify with their fathers rather than relate to him. **Sarah** and **Lisa** identified with the weak and ineffectual father who was unable to invite them away from their mothers' narcissistic investment in them. They differed in terms of whether their fathers appeared as imagined or lived images, however. This appeared to depend upon the extent to which their fathers were physically absent (**Sarah**) or present (**Lisa**) in each of their lived worlds. As a correspondence relationship **Sarah's** father was present as *Old Man* (#H), as *Grey Suited Businessman* (#3), and as the man who said he had photographs of her from her matric dance and/or a mental institution (#15). In addition, all of the participants appeared to identify with and enact their fathers' means for dealing with conflict. **Sarah**, for instance, regarded her own and her father's temperaments as similar, in so much as they were slow to lose their tempers but became "very fiery" once they did so. **Lisa** noted several similarities between her father and herself. Not only were they similar in physical appearance, but he was also "silent about most issues even if he had his own view of things". Moreover, he disliked conflict, and dealt with both inner and outer conflict through competitive physical exertion. **Traci** also appeared to identify with rather than relate to her father, if her interest in her patrilineal lineage was considered.

Secondly, it was clear that participants were at different stages of their attempts to relate to their fathers. **Sarah's** father remained inaccessible due to his physical absence in her world, and was disclosed in her dream-series as a projected rather than internalised image. In contrast, **Traci** and **Lisa** experienced and imagined their fathers as supportive of their attempts to individuate. Thus, while **Traci** was struggling to separate from her father's support and involvement in her world, and used being lesbian and her spiritual understanding to alienate him, she nonetheless imagined that he accepted her orientation. **Lisa**, it would seem, was further advanced in her attempts to establish a relationship with her father, i.e., she consciously attempted to connect with her father during young adulthood after her attempts to free herself from the demands of being "daddy's little girl" during adolescence. Moreover, and in contrast to **Traci** who attempted to alienate her father, **Lisa** attempted to create a relationship through sharing her spirituality.

Thirdly, participants were reluctant to reveal their orientation to their fathers. **Traci** and **Sarah** considered their fathers to be homophobic, and suggested that their fathers would not cope with the disclosure. **Traci** suggested that her father felt threatened, intimidated and guilty because he could not understand her preference. On the basis of her dream-series however, it emerged that her father was sensitive to her issues with her bisexual lovers (#1)<sup>45</sup>. **Lisa** assumed that because her imagined father's mother accepted her lesbian status that her father also accepted her choice, but refrained from offering explicit support for fear of alienating his wife.

A final theme was that participants took upon themselves their fathers' responsibilities for caring for dependants. **Sarah** sacrificed her life blood in order to save a projected image of her father (*Old Man*) from a projected image of her mother (*Dracula*). **Traci** cared for her mother after she had a stroke, and **Lisa** compromised her own needs in order to ensure that her mother would not be lonely. It would seem that in the face of the fathers' limitations participants' took up their father's responsibilities in relationship to family members.

### 6.3.1.3 Sibling Support and Rivalry

Sibling relationships as the ground for later relational dynamics is not a well-researched area of human development. Given participants' differing family constellations, this lack of clarity will not be resolved with this research. Nonetheless, it is important to note that in all instances participants' experienced and/or imagined a sibling in a supportive role, even if this sibling subsequently disappointed them. In families characterised by three children, the remaining sibling played the role of rival for their mother's attention. Where the mother was narcissistically invested in her children, participants were the targets of a sibling's murderous rage and envy.

Several themes emerged in the attempt to synthesize and make sense of participants' relationships to supportive siblings, regardless of their sex. All of the participants disclosed to a supportive sibling before coming out their mothers. **Lisa** and **Sarah** experienced their siblings' responses to their declaration as empathic and helpful, and intrigued and curious, rather than shocked and disturbed. This more facilitative stance enabled participants to language their experience of being lesbian. The supportive sibling thus played

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<sup>45</sup> It is interesting to note that **Traci** dreamed her father was *weeping quietly to himself* after she completed her dream-series. She interpreted this to mean that he "knew what was happening" for her. This image was associated with relief, since his crying indicated that he trusted her and was letting her go.

the role of mediator in each participant's attempts to come out. At the same time, these siblings also demanded that participants remain silent about their sexual preference.

A second theme that emerged was that the supportive sibling was considered different - as more feminine in appearance and interests in the case of **Lisa** and **Traci**, and as more obviously different in terms of personality in **Sarah's** instance. Despite the latter's disappointment when her brother rejected her lesbian identity, he was nonetheless present as an internalised image who witnessed her wounding during childhood, and who invited her to relate to his masculine potentials. It would seem in the absence of a father-figure, **Sarah's** brother issued this invitation when he presented as a transferential relationship to her first therapist who also invited her to relate to rather than identify with her more masculine potentials.

A third theme concerned participants' identification with their competitive sibling. **Lisa** idealised and identified with her middle sister during her childhood and adolescence. In so doing, she enacted her competitive drive, compromised her previously innocent and playful mode of being, and risked burnout. **Sarah's** situation was more complex. Initially **Sarah** suspected that her half sister was her biological mother. **Sarah** suggested that they enjoyed a "strong bond" and were "very, very close" until her mother had a heart attack. Her half sister's failure to respond to her mother's illness left **Sarah's** idealisation of her shattered. *Snake Woman* appeared as a correspondence image of her half-sister, and **Sarah's** difficulty deciding whether *Snake Woman* was her sister, her mother or herself suggested that the image existed as a wounding feminine potential that they shared in common. In relationship to her mother and half-sister however, **Sarah** identified with wounded potentials.

Finally, the presence of a third sibling with whom participants identified was associated with envious and competitive relationships. **Sarah** integrated the projected images of *Snake Woman* and *Serial Killer* into her identity subsequent to recording her dream-series. **Lisa** appeared to differentiate from her middle sister by killing off that aspect of her sister with whom she identified, i.e., her competitive instincts.

#### 6.3.1.4 Summary of Themes

Participants' family contexts, as explicated above, suggested that not only did participants lack an adequate model for heterosexual relating during childhood, but that they desired a sense of family belonging that could not be taken for granted within their lovers' families.

Superficially there appeared to be little consistency in lesbians' images of their mothers, in so much as **Sarah** identified with her mother, while **Traci** and **Lisa** related to their mothers. Deeper analysis of the transferential and correspondence relationships however, revealed that while all participants recognised that their mothers carried wounding potentials, the narcissistically invested mother demonstrated only wounding potentials in relationship to participants. Deeper analysis also revealed that regardless of the potentials carried, participants' mothers presented as an obstruction to participants' individuation process, that participants took responsibility for their mother's welfare, and that participants desired the death of those aspects of their mothers that obstructed their individuation process.

Fathers were conspicuously absent from participants' dream-series. Nonetheless, participants appeared either to identify with their fathers wounded (**Sarah** and **Lisa**) or wounding (**Traci**) potentials. Moreover, while participants were at different stages of their attempts to relate to their fathers, participants were reluctant to reveal their orientation to him. Moreover, they all took upon themselves their fathers'

responsibilities for caring for dependants.

All participants imagined a supportive sibling whom they considered to be very different to themselves, and to whom they disclosed their identity before coming out their mothers. The support of this sibling demanded compromise, however. Where a third sibling was evident, participants identified with the sibling who played the role of rival for their mother's attention. Where the mother was narcissistically invested in her children, participants were the targets of a sibling's murderous rage and envy.

### **6.3.2 ROMANTIC LIAISONS AND RELATIONSHIPS**

All participants had enjoyed several sexually intimate relationships with a wide variety of women, and several problems confounded identification and differentiation of the women (and men) whom participants desired. Firstly, the extent of erotic content in each dream-series differed. Secondly, the boundary between platonic and erotic relations was ambiguous. Thirdly, participants' needs of their relationships differed. It would seem thus that participants did not desire women of any particular gender identity. Indeed, all participants had explored relationships with women whom they described as butch, femme, and bisexual.

#### **6.3.2.1 Finding Lovers, Making Friends**

All but one participant dreamed about erotic encounters. **Traci** enjoyed affectionate and erotic encounters with a wide variety of lived and imagined women (#1, #3, #4, #19, #24, #25, #27, #29, #31, #32, #36, #47, #51 & #52), but retreated from potentially erotic encounters with imagined men (#13 & #39) whom she described as abusive. **Sarah** dreamed of her two lovers (#E, #3, #7, #12, #15, #16, #17, #18, #20, #21, #22, #24 & #30), as well as potential female lovers (#5, #6 & #8), and it was clear that she was able to distinguish between sexual and supportive intimacy with women (#9). Her erotic encounters with men were threatening, abusive and conflicted (#H, #J, #3, #13, #25 & #29). Despite the absence of erotic content in **Lisa's** dream-series, her relational history was consistent with that of the other participants. She had enjoyed four lovers, three of whom later became friends, and admitted to "about three or four flings". In that sense, all participants were well versed in lesbian eroticism, but had avoided men as a sexual possibility.

With respect to the women participants' desired, the boundary between platonic and erotic friendships were ambiguous. Firstly, ex-lovers were frequently included as friends following termination of a relationship. This dynamic was most obvious for **Lisa** and **Sarah**, both of whom maintained close friendships with their former lovers. Secondly, ex-lovers functioned as role models for participants, and it was therefore difficult to differentiate between those women whom participants desired and those whom they idealised. In instances of unrequited love, the sexually unobtainable other was idealised and awarded the role of mentor. **Traci**, for instance, became infatuated with many of her tutors, and clearly desired Mystic. When Mystic failed to respond to this invitation in a lived sense, the union was nonetheless consummated within **Tatia's** dreamed existence. Thirdly, it was also true that desired others were sometimes pursued and then rejected as an erotic possibility. **Sarah**, for instance, rejected an erotic opportunity on the basis of her experience of bisexual women. Fourthly, participants differed in terms of how they defined a serious relationship versus an affair or casual encounter. **Lisa** differentiated between lovers and "flings" and did not dwell upon the latter. **Traci** differentiated between an affair and a serious relationship on the basis of whether

she had lived with her lover or not. Finally, the presence of love triangles further confounded the distinction between platonic and erotic relationships. While none of the participants included had literally enjoyed a three-way relationship, **Sarah** admitted that she felt overwhelmed by the attention of her first and second lovers, while **Lisa** remained close friends with her second and third lovers who were now "happily involved".

Participants differed in terms of their needs of relationships and the issues they deemed responsible for the termination of a relationship. **Traci** left her lovers because they were too needy, because they were ambivalent about the relationship and/or their orientation, because the relationship was destructive, and because she wished to work through and resolve her distress around the issue of co-dependency. This was also true with respect to **Sarah**. Her first lover was ambivalent and dishonest about being lesbian, while her second lover confronted her with the dissolution of her identity. **Lisa's** investment in her relationships was ambivalent from the outset in so much as she became attracted to women who were already involved and/or were bisexual, and then tolerated their and her betraying her principles of fidelity.

Several issues confounded easy identification and differentiation of participants' gender identities. Firstly, participants were not attracted to any particular gender. **Lisa's** choice of partners shifted from a committed lesbian to a bisexual woman. **Sarah's** choice of partners shifted from a bisexual woman to a "politically correct and committed lesbian". Secondly, following termination of a relationship, participants generally put a hold upon sexual intimacy until such times as they could understand and resolve the co-dependent dynamics that developed. All participants included in this project were in this position at the time of their amplificatory interview, although not necessarily during their dream-series. Thirdly, all participants criticized and resented lovers who were bisexual. **Lisa** considered her relationship to a bisexual woman "exhausting", and her lover's ambivalence about being "gay or not" resulted in a series of "make-ups and break-ups" as her lover moved between her and men. **Sarah** suggested that bisexual women like her first lover refused to commit to a relationship by virtue of refusing a lesbian identity. As such, she doubted her lover's sincerity. **Traci's** dreamed existence also revealed her anxieties with respect to her bisexual lovers, and she described how her bisexual lovers became "dizzy" moving between their heterosexual possibilities and lesbian reality, or were unable to assert themselves against unwanted male attention. Like all the participants, she felt that losing a lover to another woman was less painful than losing her to a man. Bisexual lovers thus confronted participants with the reality that they were competing with men for a partnership with a particular woman.

Despite the above difficulties with respect to differentiating between platonic and erotic relationships, identifying the gender to which participants were attracted, and establishing the reasons as to which they terminated their relationships, it was clear that participants' relationships led to deeper self-insight and self-differentiation, often explicitly in the area of gender. **Sarah** was confronted with her gender ambiguity in relationship to her first lover when she dreamed that she received feminine current in order to become more masculine while her lover received masculine current in order to become more feminine (#E). **Lisa**, in the absence of a lover, integrated her gender possibilities in relationship to herself rather than in relationship to others, i.e., she imagined herself dressed androgynously for her elder sister's wedding (#30). **Traci's** gender ambiguity was more subtle. Her identification of herself as "like a little boy" is a feature she shared in common with **Sarah**, and her image of her more youthful self as a *boy with a grubby face* (#34) suggested that her *animus*, rather than her womanhood, was brought into relationship with her father. She had indeed been

invited away from her mother by her father, but not as a woman.

There was also a more subtle, but nonetheless important, differentiation. This was most explicit in the cases of **Sarah** and **Lisa** who shared an ambivalent desire to separate from their narcissistically invested mothers. Their invitation into being lesbian was revealed as a spiritual (and particularly) Christian invitation away from their mothers by a desired other, and in both instances the mother was seen to jeopardize their relationship to this potential lover.

### **6.3.2.2 Finding Friends, Making Enemies**

Images of friends/enemies were fairly incidental in **Traci's** dream-series, if ex-lovers who became friends subsequent to the termination of an erotic relationship and mentors/authority figures were excluded. **Traci** tended to idealise her female friends, and criticize her male friends as preoccupied with sex and/or *macho*. This was consistent with her view of men in general.

Images of friends were central for **Lisa** and **Sarah**, however. **Lisa** enjoyed supportive friendships with male friends, although like **Sarah**, she criticized them for being irresponsible. Female friends were differentiated in terms of: the support they offered (ex-lovers); the identity conflict they engendered (bisexual and heterosexual women); the competitive spirit evident (squash colleagues and her middle sister); and, the abandonment she endured when she came out them. **Lisa's** dream-series also suggested that she felt inadequate as compared to her heterosexual friends, particularly with respect to accessing appropriate nourishment. **Sarah** appeared to work through her identity issues in relationship to her friends and classmates, rather than her lovers. Male friends were either gay or reminded her of her brother, i.e., she assumed that they were heterosexist. It was clear however that transference images of her brother and first therapist transformed from hostile and menacing to playful and provocative during the course of her dream-series. **Sarah** imagined that she was accepted by her first lover's friends, but was intimidated by her second lover's friends. The former relational world called her to integrate her gender identity, while the second challenged her identity. Her attempts to integrate healing potentials in relationship to a platonic friend were explored in more detail in Section 6.1.1.

### **6.3.2.3 Mentors and Authority Figures**

Participants' dream-series revealed their relationships to a variety of authority figures, some of whom took the role of mentors. For **Lisa**, authority figures were idealised if they did not indulge in "power trips" or persecute her. **Lisa** was irritated by her servile attitude towards the latter. **Sarah** was compulsively attracted to and identified with female authority figures who carried *Dark Woman* potentials, i.e., were wounded, and was then disappointed by them. Male authority figures, like her father, were unreachable and/or critical of her attempts to achieve a sense of competence. Authority figures were all but absent for **Traci**, and when present, appeared as transference images of a father who was hostile towards her spiritual and/or vocational choices. **Traci** appeared to neutralise power relationships between herself and women in authority by eroticising the relationship in her dreamed existence.

### **6.3.2.4 Summary of Themes**

Several important themes emerged and were confirmed in distilling themes associated with participants'

experience of and relationship to various lived and imagined others. Firstly, participants were well versed in lesbian eroticism, but avoided men as a sexual possibility. It was difficult to differentiate between those women whom participants desired and those whom they idealised given that: desired others were sometimes pursued and then rejected; ex-lovers were frequently included as friends following termination of a relationship; sexually unobtainable others were idealised and awarded the role of mentor; and, authority figures who did not express wounding potentials were idealised and chosen as mentors.

Secondly, participants differed in terms of how they define a serious relationship versus an affair or casual encounter, their needs of their relationships, and the issues they deemed responsible for the termination of a relationship. Issues that threatened participants' relationships appeared to concern co-dependency, ambivalence about orientation on the part of a lover, and fears of an identity dissolution in relationship to a lover. Moreover, participants put a hold upon sexual intimacy until such times as they could understand and resolve the destructive dynamics that developed between themselves and their ex-lovers.

Thirdly, participants did not appear to be attracted to women with any particular gender identity, although they criticized and resented lovers who were bisexual because bisexual lovers confronted them with the reality that they are competing with men for a sexual relationship. Nonetheless, erotic relationships led to deeper self-insight and self-differentiation, often explicitly in the area of their gender identity. Moreover, identity differentiation on a broader level appeared to occur in relationship to platonic friends rather than lovers. This process appeared to involve identification with a friend who carried healing potentials, integration of healing potentials, and thereafter, differentiation from the friend.

Fourth, where the mother was narcissistically invested in a participant, being lesbian was revealed as a spiritual (and particularly Christian) invitation away from the mother by a desired other. Platonic friendships with men and women were cultivated by these participants, and friends were categorized in terms of the support they offered, the competition they engendered, and the extent to which they challenge lesbians' identities.

#### **6.4 GENDER IMAGES AND IDENTIFICATIONS**

The form that imagined others took within each participant's dream-series was unique to each of them, as were the potentials which each participant identified with or related to, integrated or differentiated from, and projected or internalised. In gathering participants' imagined others together however, it became clear that the potentials expressed wounding, wounded and healing qualities in relationship to participants. It is important to note that this classification arose in the course of explication rather than in the course of the amplificatory interview. As such, it is a heuristic device developed in dialogue with the empirical basis, and served to reduce the wealth of images identified to more manageable proportions.

Wounding potentials were carried by those imagined and lived others who appeared to persecute others, including participants. Wounded potentials were revealed as those imagined and lived others who were the victims of persecution. As suggested above, participants appeared to identify with wounded potentials, at least initially. Healing potentials were carried and expressed by those lived and imagined others who invited participants to adopt a transcendent position, i.e., to neither victimise nor be the victim, but heal themselves.

#### 6.4.1 IMAGINED FEMININE OTHERS

Imagined feminine others were differentiated according to whether they expressed wounding, wounded or healing potentials in relationship to participants. Images that expressed wounding feminine potentials were described as cunning, deceptive and destructive. Images that expressed wounded feminine potentials were described in terms of their victimisation by both wounding feminine and masculine potentials. Images that expressed healing feminine potentials were described as holding and containing. Participants differed with respect to the presence of these three qualities in their dream-series, as well as the extent to which they either projected and/or integrated these qualities.

##### 6.4.1.1 Wounding Feminine Potentials

Perhaps the single most prolific theme within **Sarah's** dream-series was her attempts to come to terms with the wounding potentials carried by *Snake Woman* (#A) and *Serial Killer* (#3 & #11). **Sarah** was unsure about whether these potentials represented her self, her mother or her half-sister. This suggested that wounding potentials existed as both a correspondence and transference, as well as identity, relationship for **Sarah**. *Snake Woman* represented cunning deception. She lulled her victims into a sense of complacency and then struck. *Serial Killer* represented the murderous rage and persecution that was focussed upon **Sarah's** sexuality (genitals) and clarity of vision (eyes). The manner in which **Sarah's** imagined feminine others were constellated suggested that **Sarah** experienced her mothering as persecutory, and moreover, that she was unable to establish a firm sense of personal identity that enabled her to defend against women who held the potential to wound her. As such, she appeared to identify with wounding feminine potentials (the aggressor) in order to avoid being wounded (victimised) by those upon whom she had projected wounding feminine potentials.

**Traci's** dream-series was also rich with imagined feminine others. **Traci** considered *Cat Woman* (#4) who persecuted her, as evil. She was a shape-shifter who like **Sarah's** *Snake Woman*, carried destructive potentials that left **Traci** terrified, and which prevented her from accessing the more benign and healing aspects of the feminine that she associated with *Mystic* (#15). In projecting *Cat Woman* onto a lived other however - a leopard skin clad woman by whom **Traci** imagined her erotic and intimate needs could be met, these destructive potentials were contained. It would seem thus that **Traci** projected her wounding feminine potentials rather than identified with them, and in so doing, was able to access and integrate healing feminine potentials.

Feminine imagined others were not a strong feature within **Lisa's** dream-series. Her dream-series disclosed only *Envious Girl* who threatened to 'out' her, and who persecuted her and her lesbian friends. There was a clear correspondence relationship between *Envious Girl* and **Lisa's** middle sister. More specifically, she was identified as a member of the anti-gay contingent with whom **Lisa** fought to keep the story of her life private (#3), and the women who kidnapped and shot her and her supportive friends (#20). Collusion between her middle sister and mother against **Lisa**, and the potential of this collusion to wound **Lisa**, was also evident in their shared assumption that **Lisa** had committed a murder, in her mother's insistence that her middle sister drive (#8), and in her mother's relief when her sister won a squash game that **Lisa** deliberately lost in order to keep the peace (#12). What is striking about **Lisa's** dream-series is the presence



of conflict in relationship to women in general, and her sense of being endangered and immobilised in competition to them (#2, #3, #6, #7, #8, #12, #17, #18 & #22), as well as the presence of primitive images that persecuted her (#4, #7, #14, #16, #18, #20, #21, #24 & #27). It would seem that the quality of the mother-sister collusion was expressed as a transference phenomenon in Lisa's relationship to women in general.

#### 6.4.1.2 Wounded Feminine Potentials

**Sarah** identified with *Dark Woman* to whom she was "compellingly attracted", rather than the light, rough and conventionally butch presence of *Heavy Dyke* (#D). Her fascination for *Dark Woman*, and indifference to more masculine-identified lesbians, evoked her recognition of her wound. In projecting this potential upon female authority figures, **Sarah** was called to recognise her own unmet needs for mothering. **Sarah** also identified with the *Anorexic Young Girl* (#10) whom she betrayed at the insistence of her mother and half-sister. This image suggested that **Sarah** had integrated wounded feminine potentials.

**Lisa** identified with *Murdered Girl* who choked on her tomato sauce. **Lisa** felt exceedingly guilty about her part in the girl's death, and following the funeral was about to add another tomato when she *went into a state of shock*. This dream mimicked her relationship to her middle-sister. More specifically, when her middle sister suffered from burnout on the squash circuit, **Lisa** started playing squash more seriously, and in that sense took up her sister's identity. Consequently, she faced the possibility of burnout. It would seem that this dream spoke of the death of her identification with her sister, and that **Lisa** also initially integrated wounded feminine potentials.

**Traci**, it would seem, did not identify with or integrate wounded feminine potentials. More specifically, following an image of women's bodies being thrown off a train, **Traci** dreamed about a group of:

*Dark women dressed in their leathers who had their arms tied up in such a way that they had gone blue. They were all pacing up and down in a trance, up and down the verandah between these two pillars, speechless, almost unconscious.*

**Traci** described these women as male-identified "horrible" lesbians who "had slipped off into the outside world and what the world was wanting" because they were "not strong enough to resist the warped ideology, and had become lost along the way". **Traci** attempted to distance herself from these lesbians by opting to be a *witch*, or to integrate what she described as healing feminine potentials.

#### 6.4.1.3 Healing Feminine Potentials

Imagined feminine others who expressed healing feminine potentials were absent from **Lisa's** dream-series. Likewise, imagined feminine others who expressed healing feminine potentials were absent from **Sarah's** dream-series until her second therapist appeared as a *Killer Whale* (#3) who listened to her stories, and offered her an experience of being held.

The presence of healing feminine potentials was a fundamental theme for **Traci**, however. First, an imagined feminine other facilitated the birth of **Traci's** feminine instincts (#6 & #7). This allowed **Traci** to retreat from images of wounded feminine potentials (#8) and male-identified lesbians (#9), and accept her status as a 'witch'. *Wise Woman* then appeared as a spiritual invitation that she projected onto Mystic, a woman in relationship to whom she integrated her intuitive and spiritual potentials. This permitted **Traci** to relate to, rather than identify with, wounding feminine potentials.

#### 6.4.1.4 Summary of Themes

All participants demonstrated the presence of wounding feminine potentials that persecuted them. Moreover, all participants initially identified with wounded feminine potentials, in so much as they were the targets of attack by others that carried wounding feminine potentials. Deeper analysis however, revealed that participants demonstrated different constellations of feminine potentials. More specifically, participants who demonstrated the presence of a narcissistically invested mother initially included only wounding and wounded feminine potentials in their constellation, whereas the constellation of feminine potentials for that participant for whom the narcissistically invested mother was absent was more differentiated, i.e., it included the possibility for healing feminine potentials.

Where the mother was narcissistically invested in a participant, the participant projected wounding feminine potentials onto lived others, and identified with these others in order to integrate these potentials into their personality. These participants appeared to identify with wounding feminine potentials in order to defend against being wounded. Where the defence failed, the participant accepted their identification with wounded potentials. Moreover, these participants appeared to lack awareness of healing feminine potentials, or came to this awareness only through psychotherapeutic intervention.

Where the mother was not narcissistically invested in a participant, wounding potentials were projected onto lived others whom they defined as 'other' to themselves, i.e., male-identified lesbians and/or heterosexual women. This enabled the participant to differentiate from wounding feminine potentials, and relate to others upon whom she projected these potentials in an effort shift her identification with wounded feminine potentials and access healing feminine potentials. Healing feminine potentials were projected onto lived others with whom she identified in order to integrate these potentials into her personality. It is worth noting that the emergence, presence and integration of healing feminine potentials appeared to be related to the length of time participants' had been committed lesbians.

#### 6.4.2 IMAGINED MASCULINE OTHERS

Participants' images of imagined masculine others reflected the ongoing emergence and integration of masculine potentials in their wounding, wounding and healing capacities. Participants differed however, with respect to the presence of masculine imagined others in their dream-series.

**Lisa**, for instance, seldom dreamt about imagined male others. Healing masculine potentials were projected onto sports and political heroes whom she idealised, while wounding masculine potentials were projected onto male authority figures whom she encountered in her dream-series. It was also clear that she identified with wounded masculine potentials, in so much as she identified with an adolescent boy who was being handcuffed (#14) and chased by the police (#18).

**Sarah's** imagined male actors were *Sherlock Holmes*, *Dracula*, *Old Man* and *Dr. Sturgis*. It was clear that *Sherlock Holmes* (#G) as an imagined other corresponded to her first therapist, and in that sense expressed healing masculine potentials. *Dracula* (#G) however, threatened to sabotage her efforts to access healing masculine potentials. In terms of how her mother and father related, *Dracula* corresponded to her mother, and *Old Man* to her father. This image offered insight into: how **Sarah** became a victim of wounding feminine potentials in order to save wounded masculine potentials, i.e., she offered her blood to *Dracula* in

order to save the life of an *Old Man*; the extent to which **Sarah** took care of her mother in order to relieve her father of his responsibilities towards her mother; and, the extent to which **Sarah** identified with wounded masculine potentials. *Dr. Sturgis* (#28) arose at the end of Sarah's dream-series, and expressed wounding masculine potentials. His cruel and sadistic conduct corresponded with the conduct of a lived other, i.e., her professor and course co-ordinator.

**Traci's** only imagined males were those of a man who took pride in sexually violating his son (#21), and the man she assumed was her husband (#32). It was clear however that **Traci** identified with little boys. This image arose out of a recurring dream in which she internalised a familiar presence. **Traci** imagined the presence as *a mummy inside this tomb* (#14). In following dreams the presence became *solid...almost like a stone statue*. **Traci** identified with this presence, a lost but preserved potential, watched herself *crack and crumble down to dust* (#18), and was then reborn, i.e., she was *teaching (her) three year old self to swim and live* (#22). After meeting her imagined husband she became both a young woman and *also this young boy who always seemed to have a grubby face* (#34). It would seem that **Traci** mothered the masculine potential to which she had given birth, and like **Sarah**, described the masculine potentials with which she identified as those of a "little boy rather than man".

#### **6.4.2.1 Summary of Themes**

Participants were not consistent with respect to the frequency with which they include imagined masculine others, nor with respect to how they constellated their masculine potentials. In general, participants appeared to identify with immature masculine potentials such as adolescent males and boys, as well as wounded masculine potentials.

All participants demonstrated the presence of wounding masculine potentials. For those participants who lacked awareness of healing feminine potentials, wounding masculine potentials played a relatively insignificant role, or arose only after the participant became aware of healing feminine potentials. These participants tended to idealise healing masculine potentials. Where a participant was aware of healing feminine potentials, her concern with wounding masculine potentials was highlighted.

### **6.5 THE RELATIONAL WORLD OF LESBIANS**

In the previous sections, participants were introduced in their uniqueness, and the actors in their dream-series explored. In the course of exploring lived and imagined others who appeared in participants' dream-series, actors were assigned a gender identity (masculine or feminine) on the basis of their sexual appearance (male or female). Explication revealed the presence of transferential relationships between lived others, correspondence relationships between lived and imagined others,, and potentials or unlive possibilities that constellated around particular gender images. These relationships were further differentiated in terms whether they expressed wounding, wounded or healing potentials in relationship to participants, and participants' relationship to these potentials were identified. In the following section participants' constructions of particular sexual categories are explored.

## 6.5.1 SEXUAL CATEGORIES

Participants differentiated between several sexual categories, and demonstrated different attitudes towards these categories. Homosexual men were not a common feature within participants' dream-series. Where they did feature, amplification revealed that participants were critical of their lifestyle. For instance, **Traci** rejected their spiritual rituals as violent, and **Sarah** rejected the misogynist principles underlying their lifestyles.

### 6.5.1.1 Images of Heterosexuality

Parents, by definition, provide the first model of heterosexual relating for their children. What was striking about participants' perceptions of their parents' relationships were that fathers were perceived to be emotionally and/or physically absent in relationship to their mothers. For instance, although both **Lisa** and **Traci** described their parents' relationships as "good", it was clear that their fathers were absent either physically or emotionally, while **Sarah's** parents divorced after a series of breakdowns in their relationship. It would seem thus that participants' initial experiences of heterosexual relationships was far from ideal, and that these experiences influenced their perceptions of heterosexuality.

**Traci** admitted that she could not conceive of heterosexuality in terms of a partnership, since men were caught up with "the Beast", or patriarchy, and were therefore always in control and dominant. **Lisa** and **Sarah**, on the other hand, were not anti-heterosexuality and imagined that they could marry someone like their fathers. **Lisa's** dreamed existence however, portrayed a conflict-ridden image of heterosexuality (#10, #14 & #27), and she suggested that her father still struggled to express emotions that would affirm her mother. This was also true for **Sarah**. For her, heterosexual relating involved women who were sexually aggressive and cunningly deceptive, and men who were inadequate and ineffectual. Her understanding of heterosexuality was thus based upon her experience of her parent's relationship, i.e., the constellation of wounding feminine potentials and wounded masculine potentials. Common to both was the sense that their fathers were unable to meet their mothers' needs. **Sarah** suggested that her mother looked towards the wrong people, i.e., people like her father, for what she needed.

### 6.5.1.2 Images of Bisexuality

The image of bisexual women was fraught with tension and ambivalence. On the one hand, bisexual women challenged participants' lesbian identity. **Lisa**, for instance, suggested that bisexual women wanted the "best of both worlds" and that her relationships to bisexual women were destructive to her self-esteem. She felt immobilised by their ambivalence, and feared being betrayed by them. **Traci** suggested that her bisexual lovers became "dizzy" moving between their hetero- and homosexual possibilities. **Sarah** could not trust bisexual women by virtue of the fact that they were ambivalent about their sexual orientation. Participants in general resented the bisexual lesbian's tendency to experiment with committed lesbians, and then abandon the relationship in the face of homophobic responses. They also resented being in competition with men for the affection of women.

On the other hand, all participants found bisexual women attractive, and expressed empathy and compassion for their struggle. **Lisa**, for instance, understood the pain of coming out, **Sarah** respected their

right to be who they pleased, and **Traci** felt sad because they were “fallen wild women” who had “lost their rightful path”.

### 6.5.1.3 Images of Lesbians

While participants generally held a positive and compassionate view of women in general, they were highly critical of butch (male-identified) and/or sexually aggressive women, and all participants expressed reservations about classifying themselves in terms of stereotypical lesbian categories. In general, participants differentiated between butch lesbians, femme lesbians and an intermediate category of lesbians, and tended to situate or identify themselves within the intermediate category.

**Traci** described male-identified lesbians as “shape-shifters” who could not permit integration of their feminine potentials, and/or who compromised these potentials in the interests of masculine potentials and interests. She described this section of the lesbian community as “horrible”. Her dream-series revealed male-identified lesbians as disempowered and unconscious (#9). While she considered male-identified images to be an alternative lesbian identity, her experience of such lesbians led her to believe that they carried a “dark energy”. It would seem that they objected to her feeling good about herself, and that they chose to identify with and enjoy their status as victims of patriarchy. As such, **Traci** regarded male-identified lesbians as wounded, rather than wounding. **Lisa** described the stereotypical male-identified lesbian as harsh, aggressive and vindictive towards men. They were women who shaved their heads in order to attract attention to themselves. For **Sarah**, butch reflected a lesbian’s attitude rather than her appearance, and when a lesbian’s appearance was congruent with her masculine (or butch) attitude, she was considered a ‘dyke’ or male-identified lesbian.

None of the participants described themselves as femme lesbians, and in general, femme lesbians were described in the same terms as bisexual and heterosexual women, or as women who were “soft and gentle and somewhat masochistic”. **Sarah** pointed out however, that a woman could be femme in terms of her appearances and butch in terms of her attitude, thus implying a distinction between a lesbian’s gender identity and her gender identification. Congruent with this distinction, **Sarah** defined herself as a ‘femme-butch’ who sought legendary lesbian signifiers in order to maintain the security of her identity. It would seem thus that **Sarah** was butch in her appearance but femme in her attitude. This complemented the gender construction of her first lover who was femme in her appearance but butch in her attitude. **Lisa** did not want people to assume that she was a stereotypical male-identified lesbian, and for this reason she preferred to consider herself ‘gay’, rather than lesbian. **Traci** considered herself a ‘true lesbian’. True lesbians, according to **Traci**, were women who had chosen to remain true to themselves. They were women who were still innocent and uncorrupted by “the Beast”, or patriarchy, and who had chosen to integrate their feminine potentials and its rhythms. She considered her own calling to this vision of being lesbian to be a “gift” and described it as a “strong inner knowing”.

**Traci** openly regretted that people had made an ideology out of being lesbian, and wanted to “wake people up” to its true meaning, while **Sarah** criticized feminist understandings of being lesbian. Like **Traci**, she considered herself to be part of a younger movement of lesbians who were not focussed upon butch-femme distinctions and roles. She considered this a more feminine, rather than feminist, way of being, and liked to think of herself as a “liberal with no real relationship or people preferences”. Her being lesbian was

thus a matter of personal rather than political integrity.

#### **6.5.1.4 Summary of Themes**

Participants were critical of male homosexuals, and their images of bisexual women were fraught with tension and ambivalence. On the one hand, bisexual women challenged participants' lesbian identities, in so much as bisexual lesbians were understood to experiment in relationships with committed lesbians, and then abandon the relationship in the face of homophobic responses. They also resented being in competition with men for the affection of women. At the same time, participants found bisexual women attractive, and expressed empathy and compassion for their struggle to come out. Participants were also highly critical of stereotypical butch, or male-identified lesbians, by virtue of the fact that they expressed wounding potentials in relationship to them. For this reason, participants tended to identify with the intermediary position, i.e., femme-butch, or what some participants termed 'dyke'.

While participants were not consistent with respect to whether they could be heterosexual, they rejected heterosexual relationships because they were constructed in terms of a relationship between wounding and wounded potentials. It would seem thus that being lesbian was a matter of personal rather than political integrity for all participants, and that lesbians are unwilling to express or become the target of either wounding masculine or wounding feminine potentials.

#### **6.5.2 UNDERSTANDING OF BEING SEXED**

As indicated in the previous sections, the assumption that men are masculine and women are feminine was not supported, given that men and butch (or male-identified) lesbians were both seen to express wounding masculine potentials. It would seem thus that wounding masculine potentials were rejected by participants regardless of the imagined or lived status of the other, or his or her biological sex. It was interesting to note also that participants tended to distinguish between boys and men, and between being bisexual and being androgynous. Bisexuality appeared to concern an individual's sexual orientation, whereas androgyny concerned her possibilities for merging masculine and feminine potentials within her identity. These features appeared to confirm that lesbians distinguish between sexual categories (man and woman) and gender categories (masculine and feminine).

##### **6.5.2.1 Images of Men**

Men as erotic partners played a very small part in participants' relational histories and dream-series. **Sarah** was seduced in an imagined encounter with her brother, but retreated from heterosexual possibilities in her wakened existence. **Traci**, like **Sarah**, had never slept with a man, and although she had recently considered the possibility, she dismissed men because they could not understand the rhythms of women. Both felt that they would never appreciate a man in the same way as they did women. The possibility of such an encounter did not even occur to **Lisa**.

During her childhood **Traci** experienced a man's world as exciting, but during her adolescence discovered that men were not challenging as lovers. Moreover, she considered that the true masculine was unknown, whereas the masculine as embodied by men was a "controlling and darkly devouring Beast", or

primarily wounding. Currently Tatia viewed most men in terms of “the Beast” that invited women away from their real project.

For **Sarah** men were dangerous by virtue of their having been wounded by women, although their more playful and healing qualities were increasingly revealed within her dream-series. This appeared to have occurred in response to her experience of a male therapist. **Lisa**, despite having alienated men as an erotic possibility, experienced her relationships to men as supportive unless they were authority figures. In general, she tended to idealise and identify with men who did not exercise power over her. **Lisa** desired not only to be as good as the men she admired, but like **Sarah**, considered women to be inferior to men. Being lesbian thus offered **Lisa** the opportunity to become an ‘honorary male’.

All participants differentiated between men and boys, and several images suggested that they identified with the latter. **Traci** spoke of her and her lover as “like two little boys” and wondered if the “butchy” (or male-identified) part of her was still unconscious. **Sarah** referred to herself as “butch but more like a boy than a man”. **Lisa**’s identification with an adolescent boy was made explicit by her image of being mistaken for a gang member whom she recognised as her “masculine counterpart”.

#### **6.5.2.2 Images of Women**

**Traci** considered women more evolved than men as a “species”, and differentiated between various types or categories of women. Wild or unconquered women were women who were either celibate or lesbian, and these women held legitimate power. Shape-shifters, or butch lesbians, had sold out to patriarchy, in so much as they used its norms to control, exploit and devour other women. They were men in women’s bodies, and were male-identified regardless of their sexual orientation. Fallen women, like her ex-lover, were those who had become lost along the way because they allowed themselves to be exploited by “the Beast”. Generally, such women were either bisexual or heterosexual. **Traci** idealised and identified with wild women and was sometimes attracted to shape-shifting (or butch) lesbians. When they cramped her style in the same way as would a man, she moved on.

**Sarah**’s view of women included authority figures with whom she identified by virtue of their being similarly wounded to herself, and wounding women like her mother who jeopardized her clarity of vision about her sexuality. **Lisa**’s relationships to women were characterized by competitive tension, arguably a transference that arose in relationship to her middle sister. Moreover, she was, like **Sarah**, frustrated in her attempts to seek out a ‘good mother’ or mentor in female authority figures. Their vision of women was thus that they were both alienated and alienating. Whereas they both idealised women during their childhood and adolescence, they currently felt abandoned by all but supportive lesbians, and considered heterosexual women to be homophobic at worst and anti-gay at best.

#### **6.5.2.3 Heterosexism and Homophobia**

Concerns about the issues of homophobia and heterosexism were not consistent for participants. Nonetheless, all participants appeared to struggle with and against the negative stereotypes that they had internalised in the process of developing and disclosing their identity to friends and family members.

As children, participants could not imagine that a single women could survive alone. This was implicit in **Lisa's** fears about letting go of her heterosexual fantasies. Once they reached school going age however, participants' began to admire and idealise women who were single. They were nonetheless aware that these women, and their admiration for these women, was unusual. They therefore did not inform their parents or friends for rejection. A consistent feature was thus that participants hid the intensity of their love for their heroines and lodestars.

**Lisa** clearly expected to be rejected as a lesbian, and was still struggling to overcome the ravages of internalised homophobia. Her dream-series was characterised by images in which she was immobilised, accused of murder, and persecuted for adopting a lesbian identity and lifestyle. Much of **Lisa's** concern about being rejected appeared to be an internalisation of her mother's desire that she be cured of her condition. **Lisa** regarded her mother's attempts to convert her as "paradoxical", in so much as she felt better about her orientation after reading the Christian texts her mother gave her. **Lisa** appeared to resolve her sense of gender ambiguity by choosing to be androgynous, i.e., to integrate rather than differentiate from her masculine potentials, and distinguished between people who were anti-gay and people who were homophobic. Anti-gay people were heterosexist but accepted gay lifestyles as an alternative, whereas homophobic persons were vindictive, rude and aggressive towards gay people.

While **Sarah** suggested that for her to become 'straight' would be deviant, she was nonetheless disappointed when her brother responded to her identity with disgust and when her mother informed her that she would rather see her daughter dead than in the arms of another woman. **Sarah** admitted that she was very frustrated by other's responses to her being lesbian. **Traci** became angry with people who considered her orientation a phase, or whose fascination turned to curiosity. She experienced the latter as intrusive.

#### **6.5.2.4 Summary of Themes**

As children, participants could not imagine that a single women would survive alone, and hid the intensity of their love for their heroines and lodestars. Moreover, they expected to be to be rejected and persecuted at worst, and tolerated at best, by conventional society. When welcomed by conventional society they remained sensitive to becoming the target of curiosity.

Participants rejected wounding potentials regardless of whether these were masculine or feminine potentials, or were embodied by men or women. On this basis they rejected men as erotic partners, and were cautious in relationship to butch lesbians. In contrast, heterosexual women were considered to be either wounded by virtue of their having become victims of patriarchy, or were wounding by virtue of their attempts to defend against being wounded by patriarchy. Participants suggested that true lesbians were women who neither identified with patriarchy nor had they been conquered by patriarchy.

Participants distinguished between boys and men, and between being bisexual and being androgynous. For instance, where participants integrated wounding masculine potentials they were able to set boundaries against male intrusion by virtue of their status as an 'honorary males'. This permitted them to access healing masculine potentials. This differentiation again confirmed sexual categories (man and woman) as distinct from gender categories (masculine and feminine), and moreover, that participants' attempts to become androgynous were also attempts to transcend the binary paradigm of sex and gender.



The literature review suggested that the disclosure of a lesbian identity is a developmental process rather than an event, and amplification revealed an ongoing struggle to: find a place for gender differences experienced during childhood; explore, disclose and come to terms with a socially deviant sexual orientation during adolescence; and, negotiate the vicissitudes of lesbian loving.

For **Lisa** the process of coming out was fundamental, in so much as her dreamed existence was filled with obstructions to this process. For **Traci** and **Sarah**, their attempts to disclose their identity as lesbian were fundamental for understanding their relationships to their family members.

### **6.6.1 THE AGE OF INNOCENCE**

The journey, without exception, began in each participants' childhood. At least three of the four participants were involved in cross-gender activities, most often in the company of their boy friends by whom they felt respected. **Traci**, for instance, avoided girls games because she became bored, and **Sarah** was awarded the role of 'honorary male'. In short, participants were labelled 'tomboys', developed so-called masculine competencies, and continued this pattern of behaviour throughout junior school.

Both **Sarah** and **Traci** were aware of feeling and being judged 'different' during their childhoods. For **Sarah** it was a sense of "things not being quite right" in comparison to others. **Lisa** projected the possibility for gender ambiguity onto her boy friend by questioning whether her was a boy or a girl. Parents were seen encourage participants' gender ambiguity. **Lisa's** mother, for instance, did not correct her perceptions about her boy friend. **Tatia's** parents permitted her more freedom than they did her elder sister, and respected her need for adventure and her desire to "live the best of both worlds". **Sarah**, in contrast, withdrew into illness as a child.

How 'innocent' participants were at this age was questionable. **Traci** recalled feeling naughty, rather than bad, when she imagined her pre-school teacher naked. Likewise, **Sarah** formed intense friendships with one or two female peers during primary school, but generally hero-worshipped older women, and used them as mentors. **Lisa** became attracted to her best friend at school, but regarded this as "hero-worshipping" rather than as an erotic relationship.

### **6.6.2 THE CALLING**

The onset of puberty and adolescence brought with it participants' awareness of their sexuality. Their 'hero-worship' became sexualised, and same-sexed friendships became more romantically intense. Moreover, all participants became preoccupied with fantasies about women who they wished to emulate, and all recalled an "unspoken connection" between themselves and a woman a few years senior to them. **Traci's** fantasies were about powerful, independent and beautiful women, and she described how she was "seen" and "recognised" by these women. **Lisa** became attracted to several squash players on the circuit and had a "huge crush" on an overseas player. **Sarah** formed "quite intense friendships" with peers which she experienced as "heart breaking and heart wrenching". She also hid her love from a woman she loved and

who later disappointed her. Thereafter her attentions turned to a female teacher.

All participants were presented with heterosexual possibilities during adolescence, and all of them rejected the possibility. **Lisa** regarded men as boring and immature. Women, on the other hand, were fun to be with, were able to express their need for intimacy, and were devoted to relationships characterised by maturity and depth. **Traci** also complained about being easily bored by men, in so much as they were easy to please and uncomplicated. Where a heterosexual possibility did present, she rejected it because she was "too busy fantasising about women". **Sarah's** encounter with a man some years her senior left her feeling misunderstood in her need for a father-figure.

Participants described how before coming out they lived in two worlds: a world of ordinary fantasies that conformed to conventional expectations; and, a world of sexual fantasies and anxieties. This alienated them from both their heterosexual peers because they could not express sympathy with their girl friends' problems with boys. Moreover, they were afraid to express their desires for fear of being rejected by their girl friends. **Sarah** felt she could not allow herself not to deny her desires and endured periods of time when she wondered, with "horror", if she was lesbian. **Traci**, in retrospect, considered this period of her life constructive. It forced her to consider who she was, allowed her to become comfortable with herself, and permitted her to deal with the reality and implications of being lesbian.

### 6.6.3 THE INITIATION

**Traci** considered herself to be truly 'out' after she encountered her first female lover. **Traci** described her first encounter as "incredible, right, magic and natural" and she felt she had been "welcomed back into a world" for which she had always longed. In other words, she felt that she had "come home". She still felt isolated from her peers, however.

**Sarah** labelled herself lesbian to the woman she loved prior to entering into a relationship with her. She came out with such awkwardness however, that her proposed lover initially retreated from her. After they became lovers Sarah became "very concretely lesbian" and challenged her lover to come out. **Lisa** entered into a relationship with her first lover and then bailed out, i.e., she got "cold feet" six months into the relationship. Her ambivalence was based upon her fear of being deemed a social outcast and because it meant sacrificing her family's heterosexual fantasies for her. Only following termination of her relationship to her first lover did Lisa name herself lesbian.

### 6.6.4 THE NAMING

Following their initiation, participants attempted to confirm their lesbian identity. **Traci**, for instance, wrote to a magazine agony column and became angry when they suggested that it was a phase she was going through. Thereafter she made concerted efforts to access and attend gay and lesbian meetings. She felt confirmed by her interaction with other intelligent lesbians, could identify with their world, and now "knew" she was lesbian. **Lisa** said she felt really good about telling someone, but was also afraid because she "did not know what lay ahead" of her. Spending time with lesbian couples however, enabled her to feel less alone and more comfortable about disclosing her orientation.

Following the naming, participants began to prepare the ground for disclosing their orientation to their parents. In other words, none of them came out to everyone at once. In all instances, they first declared themselves to someone whom they hoped would be sympathetic. **Lisa**, for instance, told a friend and this gave her enough confidence to come out to several more friends. Later she came out on the squash circuit in order to prevent rumours about her and her lover. In coming out to her family, **Lisa** told her more sympathetic elder sister first. **Traci** also told a sympathetic sibling before telling her parents. Like **Lisa**, she believed this allowed her to confirm and language her orientation more clearly. It was interesting to note that siblings, even when supportive of participants, encouraged them not to hurt their parents and particularly their mother with the truth. This led participants to believe that being honest with their parents would not be easy. **Sarah** told her brother initially, and when not well received, disclosed herself to a teacher whom she admired. This gave her the confidence to bring the situation to crisis in the presence of her mother.

Heterosexual friends who received the participants' disclosure allowed them to feel deeply confirmed and known. Rejection however, led to a crisis of identity. **Lisa**, for instance, regretted coming out on the basis of people's responses to her, and realised that being gay had a stigma attached to it. She suggested that her 'straight' friends withdrew from her for fear that they would also be assumed to be gay by virtue of their association with her. She realised her integrity and happiness was at stake however, and thus persevered despite her sense of alienation from others.

Participants became frustrated when opportunities to tell their parents did not arise, and tended to bring the situation to crisis in order to disclose to their parents. **Traci**, for instance, came out to her mother as an "act of rebellion" when her mother confronted her about why she never brought her friends home. When her father confronted her, she threatened to abandon them if they interfered with her sex life. **Sarah** longed for her first lover so much that she became ill, and in the course of her illness, confronted her mother.

The extent to which participants felt that their identity was accepted by their parents was ambiguous, although all regarded pursuing their identity as a matter of personal integrity. **Traci** felt she gained the respect of her parents, but that her mother would never accept her orientation completely. Moreover, she felt guilty in so much as she knew she had hurt her parents by coming out, but "it was an unconscious and unspoken hurt for them". Where their mothers' sense of identity was invested in participants, participants were still engaged in the process of differentiating their identity from their mothers' demands that they conform. For instance, **Lisa's** mother attempted to manipulate her with Christian texts in order to draw her daughter back to a heterosexual way of life. **Lisa** remained steadfast in the face of her mother's manipulation. **Sarah's** mother suggested that she would rather see her daughter dead than in the arms of another woman. **Sarah** said that her mother's own therapy had helped her mother understand that she was not being usurped by her lovers.

#### **6.6.5 LIVING FORTH AS A LESBIAN**

All participants had been involved with several women. Initial relationships were intense, exploratory and clandestine. Each participant had experienced what they considered to be a destructive relationship, and each had experienced a relatively long term committed relationship. The latter confronted participant's with their fears of co-dependency, and the relationship was terminated on this basis.

Participants tried to make sense of their erotic relationships. On this basis, some invitations were rejected and some invitations filled gaps between committed relationships. At the time of the amplificatory interview, **Lisa**, **Traci** and **Sarah** had withdrawn from the intimate relational realm in order to understand their desires for bisexual women, as well as the co-dependent nature of their relationships.

Relationships with bisexual women and committed lesbians confronted participants with different issues. **Sarah** regarded bisexual women as insincere and rejected several potential relationships on that basis, whereas her relationship to a committed lesbian allowed her to come out publicly, and thus gather a supportive social network. At the same time, the latter relationship reminded her of her lack of boundaries in relationship to her mother, in so much as she became the target of her lover's wounding potentials.

The extent to which participants were comfortable with living their lesbian identity forth also differed. **Lisa**, for instance, felt angry and chaotic about her identity, and had experienced several "bad months" after people challenged her identity. At the same time however, she suggested that coming out to her parents had made a "huge difference" in so much as it had given her the freedom to be completely true to her herself. **Traci**, despite her early initiation and several relationships thereafter, was still careful "not to flaunt her love" in front of her parents. **Sarah** suggested that she was fairly comfortable with her identity and did not ever wish she was straight because, for her, that would be "deviant". She admitted that she was very frustrated by other's responses to her being lesbian, however.

#### **6.6.5.1 Summary of Themes**

Participants' childhoods were characterised by cross-gender activities and the development of masculine competencies, which parents apparently encouraged. This was accompanied by a subjective sense of being different and the idealisation of strong, independent, older women.

The onset of puberty and adolescence brought with it participants' awareness of their sexuality. Their idealisations of older women whom they wished to emulate became sexualised, and same-sexed friendships became more romantically intense. Moreover, all participants became preoccupied with fantasies about women, and all recalled an "unspoken connection" between themselves and women a few years senior to them. In addition, while all participants were presented with heterosexual possibilities during their adolescence, they rejected these possibilities.

Participants described how before coming out they lived in two worlds. The first was a world of ordinary fantasies that conformed to conventional expectations. The second was a world of sexual fantasies and anxieties. This alienated them from their heterosexual peers because they could not express sympathy with their girl friends' problems with boys, and themselves because they were afraid to express their desires for fear of being rejected by their girl friends.

For all participants, confirmation of their identity required a sexual relationship with a woman. They either embraced this possibility or retreated from it due to their fears of being judged deviant and because it meant the loss of their heterosexual fantasies. Following their initiation however, all participants attempted to confirm their lesbian identity, and began to prepare the ground for disclosing their orientation to their parents, i.e., none of them came out to everyone at once. In all instances, they first declared themselves to someone whom they hoped would be sympathetic. Heterosexual friends who received participants' disclosure allowed them to feel deeply confirmed and known. Rejection however, led to a crisis of identity.

Participants became frustrated when opportunities to tell their parents did not arise, and tended to bring the situation to crisis in order to disclose to their parents. The extent to which participants felt that their identity was accepted by their parents was ambiguous, although all regarded pursuing their identity as a matter of personal integrity.

## **6.7 SYNTHESIS OF SYSTEMATIC EXPLICATION**

The common inter-case concerns extracted through the distillation process recorded above were subjected to a final methodological step. This step involved drawing the summaries of the themes explicated together for the purposes of creating a synthesis, or general statements about participants' experience. This synthesis focuses upon the primary question that guided the project, i.e., the psychological meaning of lesbian gender identity development and its diversity. This final step prepared the foundation for taking common inter-case concerns to a higher level of abstraction.

### **6.7.1 THE QUESTION OF METHODOLOGY**

Several themes explicated appeared to be the product of the method adopted. Firstly, participants' expectations of me were that I be mentor, guide and authority figure, by virtue of being a lesbian clinical psychologist and lecturer. Where I failed to fulfill this expectation, participants expressed their disappointment about my inability to fulfill this need, particularly with respect to exploring dreams as they were dreamed, rather than retrospectively. This was both a pragmatic and ethical decision. To have chosen a therapy context for research purposes would not only have pathologised participants (who did not necessarily need or want therapy), but would have placed gender issues at the heart of participants' individuation process. This was not necessarily what participants would choose or need to focus upon in their individual therapies. A therapy context would also have subverted the aim of exploring lesbian individuation in its ordinariness, as a natural and ongoing process in any human being's development. At the same time, the presence of this expectation confirmed participants' need for lesbian role models.

Secondly, participants' initial motivations for beginning their dream-series were reflected in their dream-series, and their emerging personal pre-understandings or forestructures for making sense of their dreamed and wakened experience were congruent with this intention. More specifically, the forestructures adopted by that participant who recorded her dream-series for the project itself focussed upon gender identity development, i.e., identity disclosure (**Lisa**). In addition, those participants who recorded their dream-series for reasons other than the research project (**Traci** and **Sarah**) demonstrated psycho-spiritual forestructures that were consistent with their intention for recording their dream-series. Participants' intentions for recording their dream-series did not appear to affect the gender constructions that emerged through a systematic explication however. More specifically, **Lisa** and **Sarahs'** gender constructions demonstrated similarities in so much as they considered men to be superior to women, while **Traci's** gender constructions demonstrated that she considered women to be superior to men.

## **6.7.2 THE QUESTION OF DIVERSITY**

In so much as the literature review acknowledged and explored social constructionist perspectives of being lesbian, diversity between participants was anticipated rather than denied (Fincheliscu, 1995). Perhaps most intriguing in terms of the common primary lesbian status of participants however, was that two types of lesbian emerged. At the risk of over-simplifying the complexity of participants' individual positions, these are termed 'masculine-identified lesbians' and 'feminine-identified lesbians'.

Masculine-identified participants idealise masculine potentials. Such a participant describes her mother as narcissistically invested in her, and her mother is seen to express wounding feminine potentials exclusively. Her first erotic attraction is a spiritual invitation away from her mother, and her formal studies are seen as a means for becoming independent of her mother. This lesbian sees her mother as in collusion with a sibling against her, and is disappointed in her efforts to find supportive mentors who are prepared to re-mother her. Instead, she attempts to achieve a sense of autonomy in relationship to platonic female friends. This participant demonstrates a more differentiated construction of masculine potentials, which are seen to carry wounding, wounded and healing qualities, and a less differentiated construction of feminine potentials, i.e., healing feminine potentials appear to be absent.

In contrast, a feminine-identified participant idealise and/or relate to her mother and mother-others. She is inclined to reject men and masculine ways of being, and regards women as superior to men. She is more successful with respect to finding a mentor, whether male or female, and in so doing, is able to integrate previously unexpressed potentials. For this type of lesbian the construction of the feminine is highly differentiated, in so much as this lesbian demonstrates the presence of wounding, wounded and healing feminine potentials. Masculine potentials however, are restricted to their wounding qualities.

Participants' appearances were deceptive with respect to their gender identification, i.e., butch or femme, and they defined being lesbian in terms of their sexual orientation rather than gender identity, i.e., as an attraction to women on both a physical and emotional level. Moreover, participants did not appear to be attracted to any particular gender, or establish a fixed gender orientation. Participants distinguished between boys and men, and tended to identify with the former. Moreover, participants described their gender identity as neither masculine nor feminine, but as a mid-point and integration of masculine and feminine potentials, regardless of their masculine- or feminine-identification.

## **6.7.3 THE QUESTION OF LESBIAN DEVELOPMENT**

With respect to the development of participants' lesbian identities, the possibility of lesbian loving-being-with existed during early childhood, although the desire was not necessarily sexualised at this stage. Participants' childhoods were characterised by cross-gender activities and the development of masculine competencies. Parents were seen to support this behaviour. As children, participants could not imagine that a woman could survive without a husband, and were aware of being different by virtue of their being awarded an honorary male status regardless of their masculine- or feminine-identification.

The onset of puberty and adolescence brought participants to an awareness of their sexuality, and was characterised by intense unrequited romantic friendships with specific peers, and more sexualised

idealizations of women in positions of authority. More specifically, participants became preoccupied with fantasies about women whom they wished to emulate. They also recalled an "unspoken connection" between themselves and the women they loved. This was accompanied by fears of being disclosed as deviant. When presented with heterosexual possibilities, participants rejected these as boring and unchallenging.

Participants described how, before coming out, they lived in two worlds. The first was a world of ordinary fantasies that conformed to conventional heterosexual expectations. The second was a world of lesbian sexual fantasies and anxieties. This divided reality alienated participants from both their heterosexual peers and themselves. They were alienated from their heterosexual peers because they could not express sympathy with their girl friends' problems with boys. They were alienated from themselves because they were afraid to express their desires for fear of being rejected and persecuted by their peers. Participants therefore hid the intensity of their love and their orientation, even from those whom they loved.

Initiation into lesbian loving occurred during late adolescence, and a lesbian sexual encounter confirmed and prompted participants to label themselves lesbian. At this point, participants either embraced their identity with relief, or retreated from the relationship due to fears of being judged negatively, and because being lesbian implied the loss of their heterosexual fantasies. Following their initiation into lesbian loving, participants attempted to confirm and support their identity by spending time with other lesbians. Thereafter, participants began to prepare the ground for disclosing their orientation to their parents by seeking out the support of a sibling or friend. In other words, participants did not come out to everyone at once, i.e., they first declared themselves to someone whom they hoped would be sympathetic. Rejection by the chosen friend or sibling led to a crisis of identity. Heterosexual friends and siblings who received a participant's disclosure however allowed her to feel deeply confirmed and known. Even when accepted by heterosexual society, participants remained sensitive to becoming the target of heterosexuals' curiosity and prejudice.

Participants become frustrated when opportunities to tell their parents did not arise, and in the face of their expectation that their parents would abandon them, they initiated a crisis and threatened to abandon their parents. In general, participants were unsure about whether their lesbian identity was accepted by their parents, but regarded pursuing their identity as a matter of personal integrity. Moreover, participants remained engaged in the ongoing negotiation of their lesbian identity by virtue of being engaged in relationships with women, and/or by virtue of their attempts to understand and find a way for having a healthy relationship with a woman. This suggested that lesbian identity development involves ongoing self-definition.

#### **6.7.3.1 The Relational Grounds for Lesbian Identity Development**

In terms of the relational ground out of which a lesbian identity develops, the relational mother presented as an obstruction to participants' individuation, irrespective of whether the individual participant identified with or related to her. Participants felt responsible for their mother's welfare and desired the death of those aspects of their mothers that obstructed their individuation. When brought to an awareness that their mothers might die, they initiated attempts to separate from their mothers without abandoning her. Participants' mothers expressed wounding potentials, and more exclusively when a lesbian is masculine-identified.

Participants identified either with their fathers' wounding potentials, or with their father's wounded potentials where the mother was narcissistically invested in them. In either instance, they took upon

themselves his responsibilities for caring for his dependants. Participants were reluctant to reveal their orientation to their fathers, and either feared his death and attempted to integrate the potentials he presented, or engaged in the process of separating from and establishing a relationship to him.

Siblings played the role of mediators or competitors for parental attention. Mediating siblings were described as supportive and different, but demanded that participants compromise their integrity by maintaining their silence about being lesbian. Competitive siblings colluded with the narcissistically invested mother, and the quality of their relationship to participants was one of murderous rage and envy.

#### **6.7.4 THE QUESTION OF LESBIAN GENDER IDENTITY**

In general, participants identified with persecuted, wounded and victimised others, and moreover, demonstrated attempts to differentiate from these qualities. In essence, participants rejected wounding potentials regardless of the sex of the person who expressed these potentials, and attempted to access those who carried healing potentials.

Participants differed in their attitudes towards men, in so much as masculine-identified lesbians tended to cultivate friendships with men. All participants rejected erotic relationships with men however, and declared men to be irresponsible. At the same time, participants were not consistent with respect to the inclusion of imagined masculine others, nor in their construction of masculine potentials. All participants demonstrated the presence of wounding masculine potentials. Feminine-identified lesbians' constructions of masculine potentials were less differentiated when compared to masculine-identified lesbians however.

All participants demonstrated the presence of wounding feminine potentials. For masculine-identified participants these potentials were projected onto others and then integrated into their personality, if somewhat ambivalently. These participants also identified with and integrated wounded feminine potentials, but appeared to lack awareness of healing feminine potentials, or only come to an awareness of these potentials through psychotherapy. For feminine-identified participants, wounding feminine potentials were projected onto others and differentiated from their personality. These participants projected wounded feminine potentials onto male-identified lesbians and/or heterosexual women in order to differentiate from these potentials. Where participants became aware of the possibility of healing feminine potentials, these potentials were projected and integrated into the personality.

Participants distinguished between being bisexual and being androgynous. The former described a woman's sexual orientation, whereas the latter described her gender identity, and more specifically, her attempts to integrate both masculine and feminine potentials into her personality. The integration of masculine potentials, or masculine-identification, enabled a lesbian to set boundaries against male intrusion.

True lesbians were described as women who did not identify with patriarchy and who had not been conquered by patriarchy. Heterosexual women were described as wounded women by virtue of their being the victims of male sexuality, and/or as wounding by virtue of their attempts to victimise lesbians and men. Male-identified lesbians were described as wounded women who express wounding masculine potentials in relationship to their lovers, and were also rejected by lesbians.



### **6.7.5**

### **THE QUESTION OF LESBIAN RELATIONSHIPS**

Lesbians' social networks were complex. Definitions of erotic relationships were ambiguous with respect to the distinction between lovers and friends, in so much as ex-lovers were frequently included as friends following the termination of a relationship, and friends often became lovers. Participants also expressed ambiguity with respect to their gender orientation, i.e., they were attracted to both masculine-identified and bisexual women. It was also difficult to differentiate between women whom participants desired and those whom they idealised. In instances of unrequited love or desire, the sexually unobtainable other was idealised and awarded the role of mentor, provided they did not express wounding potentials. Moreover, desired others were sometimes pursued and then rejected.

Participants differed in terms of how they defined a serious relationship versus an affair or casual encounter, their needs of a relationship, and the issues they deem responsible for terminating a relationship. Moreover, while participants avoided men as a sexual possibility they were well versed in lesbian eroticism. Erotic relationships invited participants to differentiate their gender identity in relationship to their lovers, led to deeper self-insight, and invited lesbians to retreat from the narcissistically invested mother. Issues that threatened participants' relationships concerned issues of co-dependency if the lover was male-identified, fears of an identity dissolution if the lover was masculine-identified, and ambivalence if the lover was bisexual. Participants criticized and resented lovers who were bisexual because bisexual lovers confronted them with the reality that they were competing with men for a sexual relationship. Following termination of a relationship, participants tended to put a hold upon sexual intimacy until such times as they understood and resolved the co-dependent dynamics that developed between themselves and ex-lovers.

Friends were categorized in terms of the support they offer, the competition they engendered, and the extent to which they challenged a participant's lesbian identity. Participants differentiated in relationship to their platonic friends and/or women they idealised rather than their lovers. The process of differentiation involved the projection of healing potentials onto the friend or idealised other, identification with the friend or idealised other who now carried healing potentials, internalisation and integration of these potentials, and subsequent differentiation from the friend or idealised other.

### **6.7.6**

### **THE QUESTION OF LESBIAN SPIRITUALITY**

A final, and consistent theme expressed by participants suggested that they suffered from a sense of alienation on both a personal and social level. More specifically, participants expressed a strong desire for a sense of family belonging that could not be taken for granted in either their families of origin or their lovers' families. Moreover, at the same time as lesbians demonstrated a strong interest and affinity to ritualistic spiritual practices, they rejected contemporary Christianity on the grounds that it promoted male interests and understandings, and therefore wounded women and lesbians in particular. Instead, they adopted alternative and more feminine-friendly New Age spiritual understandings.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE MEANING OF BEING LESBIAN: DISCUSSION

Out of a history of invisibility and silence, lesbians have devised some of the most unique (and creative) ways of having relationships - ways that defy convention and sometimes appear downright crazy. We are everywhere. And when it comes to loving we are also everything: Sexual tourists and merger queens, bisexual dabblers and chat room Romeos, polymorphous perverts and permanently asexual partners. But whether we like our sex spicy or bland or not at all, whether we break up regularly or stay together for keeps, whether we are partnered or embedded in a sprawling network of friends and other lovers, one fact is clear: our love lives are as diverse as we are... One-size-fits all ends up fitting no one. Our relationships need to be just as diverse as the other aspects of our lives (Hall, 1998, p. 4).

Buber (1958; and, 1965), Strasser (1969), Gadamer (1975), and Polka (1986) see the role of dialogue as central for the process of understanding, and as essential in the search for meaning. In the previous chapter dialogue between questions arising out of the literature review and the amplification of each participant's dream-series revealed the vital significance (Boss, 1977b), or common inter-case concerns, associated with being lesbian. These concerns pertained to: the methodology used for lifting out the psychological meaning of being lesbian; the diversities noted with respect to lesbian gender constellations; the development of a lesbian identity, and the original relational ground out of which a lesbian identity appeared to arise; lesbians' gender identities; lesbians' relationships; and, lesbians' spiritual understandings.

Phenomenological integrity implies remaining true to the experience as it reveals itself (Kruger, 1979). In order to maintain the phenomenological integrity of lesbian experience, the synopsis for each participant was expressed in terms of the categories and meanings used by participants. This initial process ensured that I honoured and was able to do justice to the views expressed by individual participants (Halling & Leigher, 1991). It also ensured that future interpretations would be *both* carefully grounded in the experience of being lesbian *and* move towards a greater depth of understanding. It was inevitable that the synthesis that emerged through identifying and gathering together participants' common inter-case concerns was subject to the limitations of the reading guide developed. This reading guide was based on the questions that arose in the course of reviewing the literature about lesbians and lesbianism. The synthesis was also subject to the language that was developed in order to make sense of the relationship between participants and the actors in their wakened and dreamed existences. This brought psychoanalytic and analytical, as well as feminist, understandings of human existence to bear upon the research.

In the current chapter an attempt is made to maintain hermeneutic integrity. Hermeneutic integrity implies taking responsibility for the perspectivity of any attempt to distill the meaning of a phenomenon (Packer and Addison, 1989). Hermeneutic endeavours suggest that a researcher's point of view and her explanatory account are in constant dialogue. When a researcher tries to study a phenomenon she is thrown forward into it. Unless the phenomenon is totally alien to her, she will have some preliminary understanding of the phenomenon, and will inevitably shape the phenomenon to fit the forestructure upon which her expectations and pre-conceptions are based. The reading guide and theoretical language developed

constituted such a forestructure. Rather than being opposite ends of a straight line however, the dialogue between the forestructure adopted and the phenomenon of being lesbian constitutes the circumference of a circle: the hermeneutic circle, or spiral. Establishing a point of view, or perspective, is the forward arc of the circle, and evaluation of the perspective in terms of the phenomenon forms the reverse arc.

Maintaining hermeneutic integrity, as described above, involved several challenges. First, that which was revealed as significant for being lesbian in the foregoing chapter needed to be expressed in more theoretical language if the psychological meaning of being lesbian was to be disclosed. Second, these meanings needed to be evaluated and crafted in dialogue with the literature reviewed. These steps fulfilled the task of hermeneutic research which is that of bringing what is strange, unfamiliar and obscure in meaning into psychological language (Sardello, 1975). A further challenge for this research, like all research guided by feminist theory, was to respect the diversities demonstrated by participants and yet, at the same time, identify commonalities in their experience of being lesbian (Leslie & Sollie, 1994).

This chapter constitutes a further step in a systematic inductive procedure for gathering and analysing data towards the generation of new understandings (Addison, 1989) about the psychological meaning of being lesbian. In order to prepare the grounds for this deeper understanding, the current chapter first clarifies several of the terms and categories that arose out of the inductive process, and then asks what it means to live in a sexualised body. In the course of attempting to answer this question, yet another question is raised, i.e., is lesbian loving necessarily immature? In order to answer this question, the literature reviewed in Chapters Two and Three, and the synthesis constructed in the previous chapter, are weaved into a dialogue. This dialogue focuses upon what it means to appropriate a lesbian identity and what it means to relate as a lesbian. Thereafter, the question of lesbian individuation and lesbian gender identity development is addressed. The final section attempts to distill the psychological meanings of being lesbian.

## **7.1 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS**

The motivating concern for this research was that of coming to an understanding of the psychological meaning of lesbian identity development and its diversity. In terms of the literature reviewed, this implied exploring the processes by which lesbians' appropriate a lesbian identity, the relational grounds for appropriating a lesbian identity, and the manner in which lesbians develop a gender identity. When explicated through the hermeneutic lens of gender, participants' narratives revealed that they shared a great deal in common with respect to the appropriation of their lesbian identities, as well as the dynamics of its disclosure. It also became apparent that discussion about lesbian development would need to differentiate between the appropriation of a lesbian identity and lesbian individuation, since the former concerns the development of lesbians' social identities and the latter the development of lesbians' personal identities. The manner in which participants appropriated a lesbian identity confirmed the 'coming out' process described in the literature, and identity disclosure followed a relatively consistent pattern for all participants. The focus of participants' individuation process however, was unique to each of them. The foregoing chapter also revealed that masculine and feminine potentials could be differentiated in terms of their wounding, wounded and healing qualities, and moreover, that participants could be differentiated in terms of how they constellated these qualities or potentials.

### 7.1.1

### PRIMARY LESBIANS

In the course of applying the inductive procedure outlined in Chapter Five, participants' narratives revealed that they shared a great deal in common with respect to appropriating a lesbian identity. This may be a consequence of all participants involved in the research being categorized as what Burch (1993) terms 'primary' lesbians, and Greene (1994) terms 'elementary' lesbians. For this kind of lesbianism is not a political choice but a desire and sense of difference that is felt from an early age, as opposed to 'elective' lesbians for whom lesbianism is consciously chosen for political or erotic reasons (Golden, 1987).

Burch (1993) suggests that two different types of lesbian can be distinguished on the basis of their life histories. She describes a primary lesbian as a woman who has gone through her adolescence and early adulthood outside of the usual feminine path. In this sense, primary lesbians are presumed to have suffered less from the cultural devaluation of women and from the patriarchal restrictions on feminine behaviour. At the same time as primary lesbians must generally cope with a profound sense of social difference and alienation however, they are also challenged to incorporate differentness within their identities from the outset, to resist the pull to conformity, and to be less dependent upon others's social approval. In other words, primary lesbians are presumed to be more autonomous from the outset.

Explication confirmed that participants were not only subjected to conventional female socialisation to a lesser degree, but that they actively resisted conventional female socialisation, and were contemptuous of bisexual lesbians because they did not resist conventional female socialisation. As Traci suggested, bisexual women are women who have 'fallen from grace'. They are women who have lost their innocence through sexual involvement with men, or 'the Beast'. Conventional heterosexual women were regarded with the same contempt. They were considered to be sell-outs to patriarchy by virtue of permitting themselves to be wounded by male sexual conduct and views of female sexuality.

Explication also suggested that the category 'primary lesbian' could be further differentiated. More specifically, the inductive approach adopted suggested that participants could be distinguished in terms of their feminine-identification (Traci), masculine-identification (Sarah and Lisa), and/or male-identification. Male-identified lesbians were criticised and rejected by all participants by virtue of the fact that they appeared to be wounded women who expressed wounding masculine potentials. In other words, they were understood to be lesbians who desired to be like men rather than masculine. Male-identified lesbians, as described by participants, conformed to Von Krafft-Ebings (1889/1965) description of the fourth category of female homosexuality, or 'gynandry'. Lesbians of this type possess the feminine genital organs but their thought, sentiment, action and external appearances are otherwise like that of a man. Given that all the participants included in this research vehemently denied that they were male-identified lesbians, statements about being lesbian and lesbian experience that arise out of the inductive process must be restricted to feminine- and masculine-identified primary lesbians.

### 7.1.2

### PROJECTION, INTEGRATION AND DIFFERENTIATION

Existential phenomenologists such as Kruger (1979) and Boss (1977a; and, 1977b) reject psychoanalytic and analytical concepts such as 'internalisation' and 'projection' as spurious theoretical concepts that serve

to mystify rather than reveal the essence of human experience. In the context of linking dreamed and wakened existence however, these concepts proved descriptively useful. For instance, lived others who presented in participants' dream series, or 'objective' images in Jung's (Mattoon, 1984) terms, were actual others who were made present by the dreamer in their absence, and were understood to be the internalisation of existing relational possibilities. Imagined others, or what Jung (Mattoon, 1984) termed 'subjective' images, did not reflect an actual relationship with an actual person, and in that sense were understood to represent participants' un-lived possibilities for relating to others. In analytical terms these un-lived possibilities represented archetypal patterns of relating, or potentials. For instance, *Wise Woman* represented Traci's un-lived feminine possibilities for healing herself and others, while *Cat Woman* represented her un-lived feminine possibilities for wounding herself and others.

Several psychoanalytic and analytical concepts also proved useful for describing the process by which participants either included or excluded their un-lived possibilities for relating. It would seem that in order to come to know and live these potentials, participants initially projected these potentials for relating onto lived others. For instance, Traci projected her *Wise Woman* potentials onto Mystic, a friend whom she idealised. In so much as Mystic carried these potentials for Traci, she was able to come to know, identify with, and integrate this as yet un-lived healing potential into her personality. Likewise, she projected her *Cat Woman* potentials onto a lived other, but rather than identifying with and integrating this potential, she differentiated and separated this wounding potential from her personality. As suggested by psychoanalytic understandings, this permitted her to relate to rather than identify with women who expressed wounding feminine potentials. These psychological processes, i.e., the projection of un-lived possibilities in order to either integrate or differentiate from the potential, were common to all of the participants included in this research. Indeed, it was not possible to make sense of the relationship between their dreamed and wakened existences without these concepts. It would seem therefore that despite existential phenomenologists' objections, the concepts of internalisation, projection, integration and differentiation are not only heuristically useful descriptive terms, but are fundamental for describing and understanding the individuation process, or the process by which an individual includes and excludes particular possibilities for being and relating.

### **7.1.3 GENDER POTENTIALS: WOUNDING, WOUNDED AND HEALING**

The foregoing chapter revealed that masculine and feminine potentials, or gender identifications, could be distinguished in terms of their wounding, wounded and healing qualities, and that participants could be distinguished in terms of how they constellated these potentials. At the risk of repeating definitions that arose out of the inductive process itself, wounding masculine potentials emerged as sadistic and sexually controlling. In this sense, these potentials were seen to enact what feminists describe as the patriarchal imperative, and what Traci described as 'the Beast'. It is important to note that wounding masculine potentials were not regarded as the 'true masculine' by participants, but as a patriarchal perversion of masculine potentials. Wounding feminine potentials emerged as cunning, deceptive and destructive for both men and lesbians' sexuality. Heterosexual women who expressed these potentials appeared to identify with the contemporary Woman as Witch option as described by Armstrong (1986), and were seen to victimise not only men but also lesbians, and particularly masculine-identified lesbians.

Wounded masculine and feminine potentials were constructed in terms of their relationship to wounding masculine and feminine potentials, i.e., they were described in terms of their victimisation and persecution by these potentials. Wounded masculine potentials were evoked in relationship to wounding feminine potentials, while wounded feminine potentials were evoked in relationship to both wounding masculine and wounding feminine potentials. As such, women were seen to be more vulnerable to being wounded, i.e., they were the targets of both men and women who carried wounding potentials. Heterosexual partnerships, and lesbian partnerships that mimicked heterosexual partnerships, were seen to enact the wounding-wounded relational dynamic.

The emergence of healing potentials in participants' dreamed existences, and participants' capacity to project and then integrate these possibilities into their functioning was encouraging. It suggested that participants were attempting to transcend the wounding-wounded relational dynamic. Healing masculine potentials were described as playful and facilitative, and healing feminine potentials as holding and containing. The presence of masculine or feminine healing potentials was also fundamental for distinguishing between masculine-identified and feminine-identified lesbians. The former type of lesbian valued masculine potentials and demonstrated a more differentiated constellation of these potentials. The latter valued feminine potentials and demonstrated a more differentiated constellation of these potentials. Despite obvious similarities based upon the primary lesbian status of participants, their appropriation of a lesbian identity, their ambivalence towards women who categorized themselves bisexual, and their alienation of male-identified lesbians, at least two possible types of gender identity for lesbians emerged therefore. These different gender identities appeared to rest upon the extent to which participants valued masculine as opposed to feminine potentials, as well as the presence of a narcissistically invested mother.

### **7.1.3 FEMINISM AND PATRIARCHY**

The usefulness of the term 'patriarchy' has been widely debated, even by feminists (Barret, 1980; and, Beechey, 1987). Armstrong (1986) explores patriarchy as practised in the Christian West in order to identify the historical emergence of systems of male domination and the origins of women's subordination. The foregoing literature review adopted this understanding when it suggested that being lesbian is a marginal phenomenon that must be seen in the context of the options available to women in general.

Mitchell (1975) and Chodorow (1978) use the term patriarchy to assist their analysis of the female psyche, and suggest that the valuing of male over female, and masculine over feminine by virtue of the binary paradigm, is something both men and women internalise. Patriarchy, or the belief in female inferiority, is not simply a conscious belief that women have been socialised to accept, but is part of the formation of men and women's earliest sexual identities. Wehr (1987) adopts a more analytical perspective, and suggests that women suffer from 'internalised oppression' in a patriarchal context. Against this background, feminism defined being lesbian as a political, rather than an emotional, sexual or spiritual choice. In feminist terms, lesbians are women who consciously refuse to succumb to patriarchal definitions of what it means to be a woman. While this understanding of being lesbian was supported by participants, participants were also critical of feminism.

Lesbian feminists were seen to promote de-sexualised images of lesbians, in so much as their

underlying discourse implies that sex, and particularly penetration, is bad. Sarah was more aware of feminist discourses than the other participants, and held lesbian feminism accountable for the phenomenon of 'lesbian bed death', or the absence of sex in long-term lesbian relationships. In Armstrong's (1986) terms, lesbian feminism was seen to support the image of a de-sexualised pre-Reformation Woman as Witch who was burned at the stake. Sexual feminism, on the other hand, was criticized because it promoted bisexuality, and by virtue of this, evoked the image of a sexualised, secular and contemporary Woman as Witch. This vision of women was seen to honour wounding feminine potentials, or potentials that controlled and persecuted the men and women who loved them. Participants' views of sexual feminism were, in part, a reaction to their having been the victims of glamorous but cold and cruel hearted bisexual women who castrated them with their manipulative sexuality. It was also a product of their understanding that bisexual women were frauds by virtue of their being sexually available to men, and their perception that bisexual women stole lesbian energy. It would seem then that being lesbian involves an attempt to transcend the wound of being sexed within a patriarchal context but without becoming either de-sexualised or wounding. Hamer (1994) suggests that the feminisation of butch and the masculinization of femme by sexual feminism can be interpreted as the main streaming of lesbian stereotypes, in so much as it ensures that contemporary lesbians are different rather than deviant. In this sense, feminism was helpful to participants, for the debates around sexuality and gender promoted more diverse images of lesbians. For instance, both Lisa and Sarah were masculine-identified, in so much as they idealised masculine potentials. In terms of their own conscious self-definitions however, Lisa preferred to be called gay and Sarah considered herself a 'femme-butch'. This suggested that they both adopted an intermediate position that honoured healing masculine potentials, and in so doing, embraced 'lesbian camp', or 'dyke' as their gender identification. Traci was feminine-identified, in so much as she proclaimed that women were innately and spiritually superior to men. She described herself as a witch, and interpreted witchcraft as women's wisdom, or wisdom that is built upon a reverence for life and women orientated values. She also adopted an intermediate position therefore, but one that honoured healing feminine, rather than masculine, potentials. It would seem then that participants were looking for and living beyond the images of women offered by either lesbian feminism or sexual feminism.

The political main streaming of lesbian identities does not appear to have dissolved or resolved the heterosexual relational dynamic within lesbian relationships. More specifically, the lesbians who participated in this research were still struggling to transcend the limitations of heterosexual role models in their relationships. In other words, despite participants self-definitions as gay, femme-butch, or witch (rather than lesbian *per se*), participants still tended to experience and live forth their relationships in terms of complementary gender identifications. This inevitably called forth the co-dependent dynamics associated with heterosexual relationships. At the time of recording their dream-series, all three participants had retreated from relationships with women in order to reflect upon the co-dependent dynamics of their previous relationships. If it takes two women to make a lesbian, as suggested by Teresa de Lauretis (cited in Hall, 1998), then participants could not be said to be 'true lesbians' at the time of their amplificatory interview. The fact that participants did still consider themselves part of the category lesbian however, suggests that appropriating a lesbian identity depends upon more than the presence or absence of a female partner. On the level of psychological meaning, it suggests that being lesbian depends on a woman's willingness to explore new ways of relating, or ways of relating that do not evoke heterosexual role playing and the co-

dependent dynamics that are associated with such relationships.

## **7.2 THE SEXUALISED BODY**

To say that sexuality is constructed is to say that sexual feelings and activities, the way sexuality is thought about, and sexual identity, are not biologically determined but are the product of social and historical forces. In other words, sexual responses are learnt. The view that sexuality is constructed is central to most feminist analyses of sexuality (Richardson, 1993), as is the concept of gender. Feminism argues that sexuality has been constructed in the interests of men, and consequently, is defined largely in terms of male experience and needs. As such, feminists have emphasized that sexuality, commonly regarded as something that is private and personal, is a public and political issue. Clearly, being lesbian is an attempt to defy male control of female sexuality, but it would seem that for participants being lesbian was not necessarily a conscious political or feminist statement. At the same time, Ulanov and Ulanov (1991, p. 73) suggest that "sexuality is not just a part of life, but rather a central way in which we put ourselves into life". Consciousness about sexual orientation and all the temporal and cultural gender-making assumptions that are associated with being lesbian is therefore central for understanding what it means to be lesbian. It is not enough to say that a woman has come out of the closet, or to describe how a woman came out of the closet. The sorts of lenses that shape a lesbian's understanding of herself as a lesbian, and the psychological implications of this, must also be explored.

Several issues confound easy identification of the lenses that shape lesbians' understandings of themselves as lesbians. First, while sexuality is a basic and unconscious instinct for human beings in so much as it is fundamental for any human beings' conception, sexuality as constructed by conventional scholarly enquiry proves problematic when applied to lesbians. Underlying the confusion about sexuality is the binary paradigm of sex and gender. This paradigm assumes that males are men who are masculine and desire women, and females are women who are feminine and desire men. The binary paradigm was suspended for the purposes of this research. By virtue of the fact that lesbians desire women rather than men, to talk about lesbian sexuality inevitably called forth a collection of complex concepts associated with the binary paradigm, namely: sex (male or female), sexual identity (man or woman), and sexual orientation (heterosexual or homosexual); and, gender identity (masculine or feminine), gender identification (butch or femme) and gender orientation (desire for butch or femme partners). Each of these concepts represents a vast, complex and essentially unknown universe of meanings in its own right. Moreover, if defining these concepts proved difficult, attempting to establish relationships between these concepts proved even more complicated. For instance, if participants could also describe themselves as 'like little boys', then lesbians' sexual identities is not unambiguously that of 'woman'. In other words, lesbians' sex (female) must be differentiated from their sexual identity, or the category to which an individual is assigned on the basis of his/her genital form, i.e., man or woman. From the outset then, lesbians challenge the binary paradigm of sex and gender, and conventional understandings of the concepts associated with sexuality and the relationships between these concepts could not be taken for granted.

A second and related issue that confounds easy identification of the lenses that shape participants' understandings of themselves as lesbian is that sex as genital conduct and sex as a collection of complex



constructions need to be distinguished. Sex as genital conduct assumes penetration. Lesbians are by definition female, and females by definition, cannot penetrate each other physically. This raises questions about whether lesbians can have sex, and if so, whether they experience sex as satisfactory. Sexual behaviour was not the primary focus of this research. Rather, the primary questions concerned lesbians' gender development. Nonetheless, the proliferation of dream images of lesbian sex in some participants' dream-series suggested that sex as genital conduct deserved attention.

A third issue that confounds easy identification of the lenses that shape lesbians' understandings of themselves as lesbian is that sexuality means different things to different schools of psychology. For Freud and his disciples, sexual instinct, or *libido*, motivates human development, and all of civilisation is the product of its successful (heterosexual) sublimation. For Jung and his disciples, sexuality is embodied desire for *coniunctio*, or wholeness, and is achieved through acting out or projecting and then integrating contrasexual tendencies within psyche. For Boss (1982), sexuality is an embodied mode of loving-being-with, or a particular way of being in the world. It would seem thus that sexuality not only involves genital conduct and the classification of human beings as male and female in terms of their genital form, but is conceived of as a cause and motive for worldly relationships to others by psychoanalysts, as an invitation or call towards individuation by analytical theorists, and as lived and experienced loving relationships by existential psychologists. In order to address these issues, the following sections attend to how lesbians understand sex, love and intimacy.

### **7.2.1 LESBIANS AND SEX**

Faderman (1981; 1984; and, 1991) suggests that women's intimate relationships were universally encouraged prior to the twentieth century, and it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that the category lesbian, or the female sexual invert, was formulated. The invention of the category tainted intimate relationships between women with social disapproval and personal guilt. As a result, women who found themselves passionately attracted to another woman were usually forced to react in one of four ways. First, a woman could deny that she was a man trapped in a woman's body, and thus deny that she was lesbian in terms of sexology. Second, she could become fearful of her feelings towards women and force herself to repress her feelings. Third, she could live a double life, thus separating her public from her personal life. Finally, she could accept her identity as lesbian, take up the challenge of being separated from heterosexual women, and form a lesbian subculture. Underlying this understanding of the options open to lesbians is the view that human beings' genital form (penis or vagina) implies a particular sexual identity (man or woman) and that deviations from this imply cross-identification, i.e., lesbians are females who want to be males. Clearly, this was not the case for participants in so much as the inductive method adopted revealed that participants were critical of male-identified primary lesbians, and that they could be distinguished in terms of whether they adopted a feminine-identification or masculine-identification.

Samuels (1985a) suggests that after the 1950s psychology differentiated between sex and gender. Sex came to refer to male and female sexual behaviour, i.e., active or passive genital conduct, while gender referred to the roles, attitudes and expectations attributed to men and women. Lesbian studies have focussed for the most part upon gender, or the internal psychological balance between masculine and

feminine potentials, and against this background Richardson (1992) suggests that contemporary lesbians rarely talk about their sexual behaviour. She attributes the silence about lesbian genital conduct to radical feminists' reaction against traditional scholars using the purely sexual aspects of being lesbian to define being lesbian, as well as the fact that sex between women is often used as a titillation for men by popular culture. It is also a product of the history of anti-lesbianism in the feminist movement. More specifically, lesbians felt pressured to downplay their sexual expression in order to avoid giving feminism a bad name or scaring off heterosexual women. As Shemoff (1989) suggests however, the paucity of research concerning lesbian sex may also reflect society's discomfort with the topic of sex *per se*, even among psychotherapists.

Research that has been conducted about lesbian sex, and more specifically, the importance of sexual satisfaction and orgasm in lesbian relationships, is contradictory. Coleman, Hoon and Hoons' (1983) research suggests that lesbians report a somewhat higher level of sexual satisfaction in terms of the amount of sexual activity, the frequency of orgasm, and the number of partners as compared to heterosexual women. This research is confirmed by Masters and Johnson (1979) and Peplau and Armaro (1982) who suggest that lesbians are more orgasmic in their relationships than are heterosexual women, and that lesbian sex tends to be very satisfying. In contrast, the low rate of sexual contact among lesbian couples compared to heterosexual and gay male couples, as well as research which suggests that lesbians have fewer partners (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Baber, 1994; and, Hall, 1998), has caused alarm about 'lesbian bed death', or the loss of passion in long-term lesbian relationships (McLaughlin, cited in Rose, 1994).

Smith-Rosenberg (1989) suggests that if sex is defined as penetration, then the expression of non-penetrative desire must be desexualised. Moreover, suggests Newton (1989, p. 293), if "sexual desire is masculine, and if the feminine woman only wants to attract men, then the womanly lesbian cannot logically exist". In terms of sex as penetration and the binary paradigm of sex and gender lesbians must, by definition, be either pseudo-men or asexual. Traditional psychoanalytic literature therefore assumes that lesbians are women who want to be like men, and moreover, that they opt for affection, warmth and closeness rather than sex. In other words, lesbians' emphasis is upon love rather than desire (Meltzer, 1979). While this research suggested that lesbians do focus upon emotional rather than sexual intimacy, the assumption that lesbians are asexual or disregard sexual intimacy was not born out by the research. Indeed, all but one participant demonstrated erotic encounters with women in their dream-series, and these encounters were experienced as explicit and exciting, rather than as frustrating or guilt-ridden.

Hite (1993), in a compilation of her groundbreaking empirical research on female sexuality, argued that women's orgasms are clitoral rather than vaginal. As such, penetration is not a necessary or sufficient condition for female orgasm. Moreover, suggested Hite, women are physically pansexual given that there:

Is no organ especially concocted to fit the clitoral area and the kind of stimulation (women) generally needed for orgasm. From the point of view of physical pleasure, (women) are free to relate to all the creatures of the planet, according to their individual meaning for (women), rather than (creature') specific classification or gender (Hite, 1993, p. 81).

Participants' dream-series confirmed that lesbians use the whole body, rather than just their genitals, in their sexual encounters, and that in terms of sex as pleasure rather than penetration, being lesbian cannot be considered unnatural or unsatisfying. Rather, as Hite (1993, p. 81) suggests "the very naturalness of lesbianism...is exactly the cause for the strong social and legal rules against it" since it challenges both the sex and the reproduction hypothesis, as well as the patriarchal right to control women through marriage

(Miles, 1988). Moreover, suggests Hite (1993, p. 87), all heterosexual relationships are corrupted by the imbalance of power between men and women. More specifically:

In order to maintain their superiority, males must feed on the emotional care and economic servitude of women. To survive in a male-supremacist social order, women must cripple themselves in order to build the male ego. Due to the stifling effect of this culture and to the damaging roles it enforces, women cannot develop fully in a heterosexual context.

While Winnicott (1971) proposes healthy heterosexual sex as a primary area of adult play, lesbian feminists propose that heterosexual sex is an area of power and control over women. As such, heterosexual sex is by definition pathological, while lesbian sex promises the possibility of a more equal relationship. In other words, what is different about sexual relations between women is precisely that there is no institutionalised way of having them. Lesbian sex can therefore be as inventive, playful and individual as the people involved. Hite (1993) suggests therefore that love relationships between women are more likely to be free of the damaging forces that castrate a woman's potential to become a whole person. While the inductive method adopted for this research revealed that participants do consider sexuality as an area of play in their relationships, these relationships are not necessarily free of the damaging forces of power and control, particularly where a partner was male-identified and/or the partnership was constructed in terms of complementary gender roles. The possibility for sex as play rather than power would seem to rest not so much upon an individual's sexual orientation therefore, but upon the manner in which a relationship is constructed by individual lesbians in relationship to the women they love.

At the same time, lesbian desire, by virtue of excluding the penis and emphasizing the clitoris rather than the vagina, does challenge phallic supremacy, but only because the penis is deemed the phallus and the vagina the site of female sexuality. Moreover, while the current research did not focus upon the erotic content of lesbians' dream-series specifically, it was clear that participants did not suffer from a lack of partners, sexual stimulation and/or satisfaction, at least within their dreamed existences. Perhaps more intriguing, is that one participant blamed lesbian feminism for the phenomenon of 'lesbian bed death', or the desexualisation of lesbian desire. In other words, she claimed that lesbian feminism denied the possibility for play in lesbian sexuality by virtue of equating sex with power.

A second problem associated with traditional conceptualizations of lesbian sexual desire is the idea that men are active and women are passive in their sexual encounters. Both psychoanalytic and traditional analytical literature assume that the possibility for sexual desire is based upon genital difference. Clearly, being heterosexual does ensure a relationship as easier to endure. Not only are heterosexual partnerships supported and facilitated by the wider society, but the difference between partners is assumed to be both necessary and polar. In so much as the partner is biologically 'other', genital difference and the meanings that arise on the basis of this, can be used to explain and accommodate conflict between partners. In homosexual relationships however, difference must be established in other areas of the relationship. Burch (1993) suggests that this difference is based upon lesbians' life histories, rather than their gender identifications.

In terms of lesbians' gender identifications, conventional understandings of lesbian sexuality assume that butch or primary lesbians are sexually active while femme or bisexual lesbians are passive. This understanding of lesbians proves problematic for two reasons. In the first instance, gender identification appears to exist as a continuum. More specifically, participants distinguished between butch, dyke and

femme roles, and even when revealed as masculine-identified, participants defined themselves as dyke rather than butch. In the second instance, Rose (1994) describes being lesbian as an inversion on the level of genital conduct, in so much as butch or male-identified lesbians derive their self-worth through pleasing the femme partner. In other words, with respect to sexual pleasure, and in contrast to heterosexual sex, the masculine partner puts herself at the service of her feminine partner. It would seem on the basis of the empirical data collected that participants expected to both service and be serviced in their sexual encounters with women. As such, participants were both sexually active and passive, and expected the same of their sexual partners. On the basis of the research conducted it would seem therefore that contemporary lesbians, in so much as they define themselves as 'dyke', demonstrate biversion rather than inversion. Moreover, while it is true that lesbians do not penetrate each other in a concrete sense, they do appear to penetrate and be penetrated in an emotional and spiritual sense. Being lesbian is not problematic in terms of its sexual expression *per se*, therefore, but problematic because it challenges the psychoanalytic assumption that desire necessarily involves genital difference. Being lesbian therefore challenges the power dynamic evident in the psychoanalytic narrative for defining sexuality.

A final and pertinent question that arose on the basis of the literature review concerned the extent to which lesbians reject men as a relational possibility. Clearly, participants rejected men as an erotic possibility. Moreover, being in competition with a penis in relationship to bisexual women caused a great deal of anguish for all participants, in so much as it evoked the figure of the heterosexual male as an obstacle to the expression of lesbian desire. Attitudes to the penis were thus wholly negative. The penis as phallus, or the penis as an expression of power however, appeared to distinguish between different lesbians in terms of their gender identities.

Masculine-identified participants not only identified with masculine power but regarded masculine potentials as superior to feminine potentials. This did not necessarily imply that they considered men superior to women, but that they distinguished between sexual identity (man) and gender identity (masculine), and directly challenged the binary paradigm of sex and gender. The feminine-identified participant, on the other hand, valued women and considered feminine potentials to be superior to masculine potentials. Masculine potentials, by virtue of being associated with the penis were seen to disempower and contaminate women, and were considered to be the root of all evil. This participant equated the penis with the phallus therefore, and revealed a less differentiated construction of her masculine potentials. More specifically, she appeared to lack access to either wounded or healing masculine potentials. It would seem therefore that lesbians, in terms of this research, are anti-men rather than anti-masculine, and moreover, that their stance reflects the stance taken by lesbian feminism, i.e., that having or relating to a penis is essentially bad.

In summary: Participants recognised that they were female and that they were sexually attracted to other females, i.e., homosexual. As such, their biological sex and sexual orientation could be taken for granted. Whether their sexual identity was that of 'woman' was ambiguous however, in so much as being lesbian means being a woman who is also like a little boy. Participants' gender identifications revealed that primary lesbians, rather than conforming to conventional categories of butch and femme, create a continuum of identifications. The inclusion of 'dyke' as a gender identification, for instance, subverted the passive-active construction upon which traditional understandings of sexual conduct and desire are based. Moreover, the inclusion of 'dyke' suggests that being lesbian is not so much an inversion of genital conduct as traditionally conceived, but an attempt to obtain the best of both worlds. Given participants' attitudes towards the penis,

and Hite's (1993) observation that women are not dependent upon penetration for orgasm, one may be forgiven for wondering why Meltzer (1979) considers being lesbian pathological on the basis of their being stuck at the level of foreplay. It would seem that lesbian sexuality constellates its meaning around the issue of sexual play rather than sexual power, and in this sense conforms to Winnicott's (1971) conception of healthy sexual expression rather than fixation. In addition, lesbians are anti-men rather than anti-masculine, and in this sense, challenge the supremacy of the penis. Whether they challenge the supremacy of the phallus remains unclear however, for while feminine-identified primary lesbians despise masculine power due to its wounding potentials, masculine-identified primary lesbians appear to idealise wounded and healing masculine potentials.

## 7.2.2 LESBIANS AND LOVE

Being lesbian describes a particular kind of sexual relatedness, in so much as 'lesbians' are women who love women, most often sexually. Indeed, participants defined their being lesbian in terms of being physically and emotionally attracted to women. This raises questions concerning the relationship between desire, passion and loving expression. While academic psychological studies in recent years have come to focus on gender issues (Samuels, 1985a), they appear to have shied away from deliberations about love and emotion because these are not easily quantified aspects of human relating (Hite, 1993). The question 'what is love' therefore poses a prickly problem for psychological inquiry.

Freud (1953) saw love exclusively as the expression or sublimation of sexual instinct, as the result of chemically produced tensions in the body which are painful and seek relief. More specifically, Freud (1953, p. 69) suggested that love was in essence a sexual phenomenon in so much as:

Man [sic] having found by experience that sexual (genital) love afforded him his greatest gratification, so that it became in fact a prototype of all happiness to him, must have been thereby impelled to seek his happiness further along the path of sexual relations, to make genital eroticism the central point in his life.

Freud (1953) also regarded love for humanity, or *agape*, as "originally full of sensual love", but with the sexual instinct transformed into an impulse of "inhibited aim". Mystical and erotic union were interpreted as pathological phenomena, as a regression to a state of early "limitless narcissism" (p. 21). For Freud, therefore, love was an "irrational phenomenon" that had "no real existence" (Fromm, 1959/1975, p. 78).

Jager (1978; and, 1989) reveals Freud's theory as primarily a theory of the passions, and lists six passions: sexuality, fury, pain, sleep, birth and death. These passions are allied to the body and treated as "disturbers of the peace or reminders of a primitive or evil past...passions are the bodily actions that the soul must endure" (Jager, 1989, p. 217-218). Freud, suggests Jager, contemplates the extremes of human existence: Human existence at the point where it is being drawn inwards, downwards and backwards into the vertical axis.

Like Merleau-Ponty (Kwant, 1968), Jager (1989) understands the human body as metaphoric, as pregnant with meaning. In his deliberations about sexuality, Jager (1989, p. 228) suggests that "the human body marked by sex and the passage of time is not merely a means to a language but is itself already a language through and through". The human body is a system of references. It is already intentional, capable of longing and condemned to meaning. Sexuality, suggests Jager (1989, p. 225) speaks a wound that:

Announces itself both as a loss and as a gain...To be sexual means both to be wounded and to be healed; it means to have been separated and to have found a new way to bridge

the separation...(and) sexual intimacy becomes possible on the basis of an accepted separation; only those who have accepted the wound can cultivate the healing.

Jager (1989) suggests therefore that human sexuality is far from being a simple natural inclination. To be sexed means to be cut, a being deprived of an original and natural belonging to a natural world. It is to be wounded, to be made conscious that one is not whole, to be made conscious that there is a wound that needs to be healed. The question raised therefore, is: What is the wound that lesbians are seeking to heal in loving women?

Fromm (1959/1975, p. 109), in attempting to argue "that love is the only sane and satisfactory answer to the problem of human existence", grounds his understanding of love upon human beings' awareness of their separation from God<sup>46</sup> and each other, and their resultant longing for union with each other. For Fromm loving someone is an attempt to heal the wound of separateness. Fromm recognised that sexual desire is only one manifestation of love, and in opposition to Freud's notion of *libido* as masculine, he suggested that "a woman is not a castrated man, and her sexuality is specifically feminine" (Fromm, 1959/1975, p. 36). At the same time, he also revealed his prejudice against homosexual loving when he suggested that the:

Homosexual deviation is a failure to attain this polarized union, and thus the homosexual suffers from the pain of never-resolved separateness, a failure, however, which he shares with the average heterosexual who cannot love" (Fromm, 1959/1975, p. 34).

Like traditional psychology, Fromm's (1959/1975) prejudicial attitude towards homosexual love is grounded upon his assumption that polarity between male and female on biological grounds necessitates polarity between them on psychological and social grounds. In other words, the biological polarity between male and female implies psychological polarity between masculine and feminine. Like Freud and Jung, therefore, Fromm identified sex with gender, and then posited the need for union between men and women as a universal existential need.

Clearly, being lesbian challenges the assumption that erotic love depends upon genital polarity, in so much as participants included in this research demonstrated satisfactory sexual relationships in their dream-series, and confessed to enjoying sex with women. Moreover, they rejected men as a sexual possibility, and considered 'lesbian bed death' to be the product of lesbian feminist ideology rather than the product of how lesbians' sexual relationships were constituted.

Freud (cited in Benjamin, 1995) distinguished between attachment and identificatory love, and Fromm (1959/1975) distinguished between 'falling in love' and 'standing in love'. The former, suggested Fromm, is a biological (or perhaps archetypal) pattern that is characteristic of the relationship between the pregnant mother and her foetus. It demonstrates passive (masochistic) and active (sadistic) expression, is co-dependent, and assumes the principle: I love because I am loved, or I love you because I need you. It is neurotic in so much as it involves transference, i.e., feelings, expectations and fears once associated with the mother are evoked by the other. In more severe pathologies, it is characterised by the desire to return

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<sup>46</sup>Or whatever term this transcendent Being is called in passing. The researcher shall take the liberty of agreeing with Plato (cited in Singer, 1979) that if the gods can applaud the Good then the Good must exist independent of the gods. In so doing, debate about the existence of God, or gods and goddesses and their many names and images, as well as the validity of various cosmologies or theological lenses through which the relationship between God and Good are understood, can be deferred.

to the womb, for "if the nature of sanity is to grow out of the womb into the world, the nature of severe mental disease is to be attracted by the womb, to be sucked back into it - and that is to be taken away from life (Fromm, 1959/1975, p. 82). Fromm, like Freud, thus considers sexual passion, whether homosexual or heterosexual, as regressive and immature in so much as it expresses a desire for merger (at best) and fusion (at worst) with the other. Only Sarah described a relationship in terms of fusion and merger. More specifically, her lesbian feminist lover was seen to collude with her relational mother in her dreamed existence, and in this sense evoked Sarah's fear of becoming the victim of wounding feminine potentials. It is important to note that Sarah chose to move away from this relationship. Likewise, in so much as participants sought lovers who were different, or 'other', to their relational mothers, the mother-daughter archetype that traditional literature considers characteristic of lesbian sexual relating was not evident. It was evident in their friendships with women whom they idealised however. For instance, Traci merged with Mystic in order to internalise the healing feminine potentials she had projected onto her friend before differentiating from her. Likewise, Sarah merged with a platonic friend before differentiating from her. It would seem thus that the danger of merger is more prevalent in those relationships where lesbians idealise the target of their affection, rather than in their passionate sexual relationships *per se*.

Mature love, according to Fromm (1959/1975), is characterised by a 'standing in' rather than 'falling for', and in that sense is more impersonal in its attachment. Fromm (1959/1975, p. 87) describes mature love as union under the condition of preserving one's integrity, for "love is only possible if two persons communicate with each other from the centre of their existence, (and) hence if each one of them experiences himself [sic] from the centre of his [sic] existence". It means loving from the essence of one's being and experiencing the other in the essence of his/her being. Paradoxically then, two become one and yet remain two, or interdependent as opposed to co-dependent. Common to all forms of mature love are three interdependent processes: care (active concern for the life and growth of the loved other); responsibility (being able and ready to respond to the other); and, respect (the ability to see the other as he/she really is). These three processes are grounded upon the desire to know the other, and the fundamental motive is that of giving rather than receiving. Mature love thus follows the principle: I am loved because I love, or I need you because I love you. Standing in love is thus not an affect or passion, but an active striving for the growth and happiness of the loved other and is rooted in the lovers' capacity to love. The mature lover is someone who has the capacity to both mother (affirm and nourish) and father (confirm and value) him/herself. While 'standing in' love rather than 'falling for' the other does not necessarily exclude sexual expression, Fromm extends the meaning of love beyond relationships to specific eroticised and desirable others. Loving becomes increasingly non-exclusive, open and compassionate.

The existential emphasis upon sexuality as a mode of loving-being-with not only confirms the link between sexuality and love, but also suggests that sexual expression is only one among many modes of loving-being-with. As such, there appears to be a distinction between what is meant by Loving-being-with and loving-being-with. The former implies a 'standing in', while the latter implies a 'falling for' (Fromm, 1959/1975). It would seem thus that three modes of loving can be distinguished: symbiotic, or motherly, love; erotic, or passionate love; and mature, or differentiated, love. Traditional conceptions of lesbian loving assume that lesbian loving-being-with is immature, i.e., symbiotic, rather than mature. Explication of participants' relationships however, suggested that relationships that were based on idealisation tended to

be symbiotic, relationships that were based upon sexual desire expressed erotic and passionate love, and that their friendships tended to express mature or differentiated love. In so much as participants' lovers became friends, and friends became lovers, it would also seem that lesbians are able to shift between the various forms of love identified by traditional psychological theory.

### **7.2.2.1 Lesbians and Intimacy**

Loving-being-with necessarily involves the lover, the loved and the loving that loves them both (Kriele, 1987). In Buber's (1958) terms, therefore, human loving involves an I (the lover), and an It or Thou (the loved other as object or subject respectively), and the relationship itself, or the field of interpersonal significance that arises between the lover and the loved. Moreover, as Buber (1958) suggests, the question of identity, or 'who am I' can only be answered by asking 'in relationship to whom'. In these terms, being lesbian can only be constructed in terms of erotic relationships.

Jager (1978; and, 1989) suggests that sexuality is the wound of separateness and Fromm (1959/1975) that loving is an attempt to heal that separation. Lesbians attempt to heal their wound of separateness in loving relationships to women rather than men, and participants demonstrated remarkable variety in their choice of the partners they desired and/or idealised. They were consistent in their alienation of male-identified lesbians, and in their ambivalence towards bisexual lesbians, however. Male-identified lesbians were rejected on the grounds that they were wounded women who carried wounding masculine potentials. Bisexual lesbians, although considered attractive, were considered dangerous by virtue of their failure to commit to a lesbian identity, and their being sexually available to men.

These fundamental features that participants had in common hid: a wealth of diversities with respect to the issues they held responsible for the termination of their relationships; astounding fluidity with respect to the boundaries between erotic and platonic attractions: and, an admirable tenacity when seeking to understand themselves in relationship to their lovers. It would seem thus, as suggested by Hall (1998) and Ainley and Cooper (1994), that lesbians in general may be addicted to romance, and obsessed with the idea of relationship. Hall (1998) offers a lighthearted perspective of lesbians' obsession with relationships, and includes anecdotal accounts of how a lesbian relationship that promised everything in the beginning transforms into the most destructive relationship a lesbian had ever had. Hall claims that lesbians, by virtue of telling tragic stories about how they become 'relational road kill', reflect upon the tricky business of conducting serial and multiple relationships of varying intensity. In that sense, lesbians (like healthy heterosexuals) are always actively engaged in the process of coming to define and redefine themselves in relationship to others.

Lesbians' concern with intimacy comes as no surprise in the light of the social and political meanings that constellate around being lesbian, namely feelings of disempowerment as women and marginalisation as lesbians. From the outset then the category is loaded with possibilities for wounding, or the intense awareness of being separated from main stream society. For lesbians this dilemma rests upon that which constructs the wound in the first instance, i.e., being female, and their attempts to heal this wound through more playful expressions of sexual intimacy, i.e., being lesbian.

Burch (1993) makes a distinction between two levels of analysis with respect to lesbians. Her complementary thesis refers to lesbians' life histories, while her merger thesis refers to the sense of being



the other person. Burch's complementary thesis rests upon the fundamental assumption that lesbians can be distinguished on the basis of their life histories. This assumption could not be tested given the similarity in participants' life histories and their status as primary lesbians in terms of her definition. The complementarity thesis offered by Burch was born out in part, in so much as most of the relationships in which participants were involved conformed to a primary-bisexual configuration. At the same time however, participants fulfilled the roles ascribed to the masculine partner in one relationship and to the feminine partner in other relationships. Participants, it would seem, were far more versatile with respect to their gender identification than Burch imagined. What proved particularly interesting was that participants were critical of such configurations due to the heterosexual power-over ethic that characterised these relationships, and by and by virtue of this, the co-dependent dynamics that manifested.

Burch (1993) is correct when she suggests that both masculine and feminine potentials are projected by lesbians. Moreover, it was not so much that masculine and feminine were ever-shifting and fluid categories for participants, but that participants were ever-shifting and fluid in their relationship to these potentials. In addition, it was not necessarily true that all participants desired to know their inner feminine. For instance, while the feminine-identified participant regarded women as superior to men, and consistent with this thesis were focused upon coming to know and integrate her inner feminine, masculine-identified participants believed women were inferior. Not only did they demonstrate a more differentiated construction of their masculine potentials, but they also expressed the desire to come to know their inner masculine rather than their inner feminine. It would seem thus that participants were not necessarily focused upon their feminine potentials, and moreover, that they were diverse with respect to which aspects of their masculine and/or feminine potentials they desired to integrate and/or differentiate.

While Kitzinger and Perkins (1993) criticize the merger thesis as a simplistic, individualistic catch-all explanation for a wide diversity of problems, Burch's (1993) merger thesis suggests that merger is characterised by sympathy rather than empathy, and by attachment rather than closeness. She suggests that it is only prolonged and defensive merger that is destructive, since the desire for merger invites the illusion of sameness between partners, discomfort with separation, and an over-valuation of attachment. While it was true that all participants maintained contact with their ex-lovers, in so much as ex-lovers frequently became part of their social network, it was also true that participants often chose to live separately from their lovers, even when this cost them the relationship. As suggested by Kitzinger and Coyle (1995), lesbians may not, therefore, consider cohabitation as essential for maintaining a lesbian relationship. Indeed, they may choose not to cohabit in order to avoid the possibility of merger. In addition, and as discussed above, the danger of merger appeared to be a function of idealisation in relationship to another, rather than the sexualisation of a relationship with another.

#### **7.2.2.2 Lesbians and Co-dependency**

A common concern expressed by all participants was their fear of co-dependency. More specifically, co-dependency was seen to be a primary threat to a healthy relationship. The term 'co-dependency' was coined in the late 1970s, and described a person who tried to control an inherently uncontrollable situation. Redfield and Adrienne (1995, p. 221) list the "themes of co-dependency", or imbalanced relationships. Co-dependency, they say, can be recognised in relationships where one partner is expected to fulfill or be

controlled by the other's needs, an imbalance in the energy exchanged by the partners involved, and feelings of stagnation and being stuck on the part of the dependent partner.

Participants appeared to be acutely conscious, and critical, of the fact that most heterosexual relationships met these criteria on an interpersonal level. More intriguing is that, without exception, participants moved away from co-dependent relationships, on whatever level the co-dependency expressed itself. Whereas co-dependency in relationships of complementarity, i.e., heterosexual role playing, concerned the interpersonal arena, a more dangerous form of co-dependency for participants arose in the intrapersonal arena. This kind of co-dependency, or merger, implied an annihilation of self. Sarah's dream about her lover and their blending their genders speaks of a parasitic co-dependency, a feature she imagined that her biological mother and father expressed in relationship to each other, and that her mother expressed in relationship to her. It would seem that the mother-lover dynamic was generally considered destructive by participants, in so much as it was symbiotic, and confronted participants with their relational mothers' relationship to them, be the mother perceived as wounding or wounded. Participants, it would seem, chose not to relate to women who were like their mothers, i.e., they tended to move away from lovers who reminded them of their mothers. In this sense, they chose to move away from relationships that were emotionally symbiotic as defined by Fromm (1959/1975), and anaclitic as defined by Freud (cited in Benjamin, 1995). It would seem therefore that the desire for oneness and the simultaneous fear of its regressive pull was expressed as a fear of intrapersonal co-dependency. Gender complementarity and the heterosexual dynamics that these relational constellations evoked however, was expressed as a fear of interpersonal co-dependency.

Sapphic possibilities, or the possibility for lesbian companionship, were expressed in relationship to women who appeared to be empowered by virtue of their position and standing in the patriarchal power structure. Participants expected these women to teach them how to become empowered, and did not exclude an erotic component in their idealisations of these powerful women. These relationships conformed to what Vicinus' (1989) described as romantic friendships, and demonstrated the mother-daughter dynamic described by Carrington (1993), i.e., an unconsummated erotic attachment. At the same time as these relationships expressed a symbiotic component, therefore, these were not the women with whom participants overtly expressed their sexuality. Indeed, the vast majority of participants' sexual encounters demonstrated the dynamics associated with 'shadow relationships', as described by Carrington (1993), at least on the level of gender identification. More specifically, the majority of relationships described were those where a participant and her partner adopted complementary gender identifications and struggled with the issues of interpersonal co-dependency.

In contrast to sexual relationships in which participants faced their fears of interpersonal co-dependency, and idealized relationships in which participants faced their fears of intrapersonal co-dependence or merger, participants viewed friendship as a relationship among equals rather than as a relationship centred upon power differentials (Blieszner, 1994). As such, friendships demonstrated a 'standing in' love rather than a 'falling in' love, as described by Fromm (1959/1975). Sarah, for instance, was able to hold and express compassion towards a heterosexual woman who had been disappointed by her male lover, without sexualising the relationship or idealising her friend.

### **7.2.2.3 Is Lesbian Loving Immature?**

Distinguishing between platonic and erotic friendships was problematic for participants, in so much as friends became lovers and lovers became friends. The ambiguous boundary between erotic and platonic relationships for lesbians has been noted by Kitzinger and Coyle (1995), and they raise questions about what constitutes intimacy for lesbians.

This research suggested that the appropriation of a lesbian identity involved participants' relationships to women they desired and/or idealised, many of whom were not necessarily lesbian. For instance, Sarah was friends with someone who carried her 'lighter and less serious' side, and it was clear that Sarah differentiated in relationship to this platonic friend rather than either of her two lovers. In addition, participants appeared to differentiate in relationship to men and women in whom they had no romantic interest at all, or whom they even despised. Participants, it would seem, attempted to become like those whom they idealised, separate from those whom they feared, and relate to those who carried the potentials they do not wish to embody or express.

It was also clear that while participants consciously moved away from symbiotic or intrapersonally co-dependent relationships, they experienced difficulty escaping the interpersonal co-dependent dynamics expressed in relationships that were based upon complementary gender identifications. Participants' primary fear appeared to be that of being controlled by another in terms of their gender identity, be this person male or female, or indeed, society at large. It would seem that participants' considered lesbians to be wounded by virtue of their having deviated from the patriarchal imperative for women. In contrast, heterosexual women were wounded by virtue of conforming to patriarchal conceptions of women. Either way, participants considered women to be wounded. Paradoxically however, participants' wounding on a positional and ideological level, and in terms of this their social marginalisation, permitted them to explore the possibilities for healthy intimacy. Against the background of their fluid gender identifications, they defined and redefined their gender identifications in relationship to their lovers, and differentiated and integrated different aspects of their gender identity in relationship to their lovers, their friends and their enemies. In these terms, being lesbian would seem to express the willingness to negotiate the construction of their relationships, rather than take existing constructions for granted.

Participants' fears of being controlled by others therefore led to the pursuit of more equal relationships and the phenomenon of serial monogamy. In this sense, it is not that heterosexual or lesbian relationships are more or less healthy in comparison, but that lesbians are willing to risk playing with their gender identities and identifications, and by virtue of this, are able to question and move beyond the power dynamics that underlie heterosexual relationships.

## **7.3 THE ORIGINS OF A LESBIAN IDENTITY**

Jung (CW4, p. 301) suggests that mothers and fathers "by accident, so to speak", are the first human beings who impress the childish mind. Moreover, he suggests that experience teaches that the first signs of the later conflict between the parental constellation and the individual's longing for independence occur as a rule before the fifth year. It is difficult to establish a cause-effect relationship between familial relationships during childhood and the appropriation of a lesbian identity. As Plummer (1975) suggests,

individuals make sense of their history from a retrospective stance. Likewise, in this research it was difficult to assess whether Traci and Sarah sexualized what Lisa termed 'innocent hero-worship of older women' during their childhood prior to, or following, their appropriation of a lesbian identity. Arguably, Tatia's desire to see her teacher naked at the age of five spoke of her need for a 'second mother' (Benjamin, 1995) through whom she could come to know and integrate feminine potentials in the face of her perception of her mother as masculine-identified. At the same time, because human beings reinterpret their past in terms of their present, it was difficult to establish whether what participants recalled about their relationships to their mothers and fathers in childhood, or indeed, to their siblings and ex-lovers, reflected these relationships as lived. In other words, the stories' participants told about themselves were re-creations that reflected more about how they currently made sense of their lives as lesbians than about what really happened in their past (Baber, 1994). It was also clear that participants' relationships to their mothers and fathers had undergone change, and that some of these transformations occurred during the period over which participants recorded their dream-series. In addition, participants were at different stages in negotiating their relationships to their parents, and there was no consistency with respect to which parent was the focus of their attention. What is critical for the purposes of the research however, is that participants reflected upon these relationships from the point of view of belonging to a sexual category considered marginal.

### **7.3.1 LESBIANS AND THEIR PARENTS**

Traditional psychoanalytic literature in general suggests that lesbians identify with, rather than learn to relate to, their fathers. In other words, lesbians are understood to repudiate their fathers, and by virtue of transference phenomena, men as a relational possibility. While it was true that all participants identified personality traits in common with their fathers they also identified traits that they held in common with their mothers. It would seem thus that it is not identification with their fathers that distinguish lesbians from heterosexual women, but that they identify with both their mothers and fathers. The question raised, therefore, is what is the quality of their relationships to and identifications with their mothers and fathers?

Segal (1986) and Meltzer (1979) suggest that being lesbian reflects an envious attack against the heterosexual couple, and it was evident that participants' perceptions of heterosexual couples and coupling were primarily negative. Lisa's dream-series reflected conflict between married heterosexual friends, and this was congruent with her perception of her parent's relationship. Moreover, all participants rejected conventional sex-role activity, and particularly male sexual dynamics because of its power motive. For instance, Sarah and Traci were critical of men's inability to understand women. Traci was also critical of heterosexual women due to their fallen status, i.e., they permitted 'the Beast' of patriarchy to contaminate their purity. It would seem thus that participants tended to perceive heterosexual relating as a conflict-ridden arena that was damaging to women.

#### **7.3.1.1 Lesbians and their Fathers**

Participants' identifications with their fathers did not mean that participants necessarily repudiated their fathers, or excluded their fathers as a relational possibility during their childhood. Rather, their fathers appeared to be absent as a relational possibility during much of their childhood in a physical (Sarah and

Traci) and/or emotional (Lisa) sense. This finding appears to confirm McDougall's (1989) observation about the 'dead father' and the development of lesbian feelings. Perhaps more instructive, was that it was only later that participants' rejected their fathers ( and men in general) as irresponsible, primarily because their fathers (and by virtue of transference, men) failed to perform the role of father and/or husband adequately. This left participants feeling obliged to fulfill their fathers' responsibilities to their siblings and/or mother. It would seem thus that participants felt pressured into identifying with the masculine role of taking responsibility for their fathers' dependents, and rather than repudiate the father, they replaced him. For instance, Sarah rescued her mother from financial ruin, Traci cared for her mother after her stroke, and Lisa felt obliged to fill the gap her father left because he preferred being with his friends rather than his wife.

It would seem thus that participants felt obliged to fulfill the role of husband to the mother, and it is in this sense that they identified with the father. In Jung's (CW4, par. 379) terms, the archetypes of the father and mother stand behind the relational father and mother. Ideally, the relational father and mother respectively embody aspects of these archetypes. It would seem that participants' fathers could not meet their archetypal obligations towards their dependants, and in response participants took up and enacted these responsibilities. As such, they were not necessarily identified with their fathers, but identified with aspects of the archetypal father that their relational fathers failed to express. In other words, in the absence of their fathers' capacity to embody the role of protector and provider, participants embodied and enacted these aspects of masculine functioning in relationship to their mothers and siblings.

What was striking is that all participants stopped short of disclosing their identity to their fathers. It was assumed that their fathers knew. Participants' hesitancy with respect to disclosing their identity as lesbian appeared to be based upon their perception that their fathers' were unable to understand their relational choice, rather than their fear of non-acceptance and/or rejection. An underlying fear was that in disclosing their lesbian identities their fathers would come to an awareness of where they had failed both themselves and their lesbian child. It would seem that participants were reluctant to bring the father to an awareness of this failure. They were reluctant to wound a man whom they perceived to be already wounded in relationship to their mothers. It was also true that participants later attempted to, or expressed the wish to, establish a relationship with their fathers. For instance, Lisa was currently attempting to establish a spiritual connection to her father and Traci looked forward to the possibility of a more honest relationship with her father. Sarah had simply given up on the possibility of establishing a relationship with her biological father.

Reiss (1974) presented research which suggested that lesbians' negative feelings towards their relational fathers are not projected or transferred onto the category men in general. The current research contradicts Reiss. Lisa and Traci imagined that men, like their respective fathers, were ineffectual. Sarah offered further insight in this regard. Her initial images of men rested upon an absent and wounded father, and later upon her experience of her brother and her male therapist. She described the experience of her brother and male therapist as playful and healing, rather than as either cruel (wounding) or weak (wounded). It would seem thus that participants' constructions of masculine potentials were altered through their later experience of men. For instance, Sarah's being in psychotherapy with a therapist who carried healing masculine potentials offered her the opportunity to imagine that men, as a category of persons, could offer a healing relationship. More important perhaps, is that even where participants shifted from identification with their relational fathers, to relationship with their relational father, their sexual orientation remained consistent.

It would seem that participants' experience of fathering influenced their perceptions and constructions of masculine potentials, but that this construction was also mediated by their subsequent experience with men.

### 7.3.1.2 Lesbians and their Mothers

Psychoanalytic observations about lesbians' relationships to their mothers hold that lesbians have failed to establish sufficient separation from the hated mother (Klein, 1984a; and, 1984b). This observation was confirmed only by those two participants who were masculine-identified and whose mothers appeared to be narcissistically invested in them, i.e., Sarah and Lisa. More prevalent was that participants were actively engaged in the search for a 'good mother'. Lisa, for instance, sought a good mother in her ex-lover's mother, Traci sought a good mother in a spiritual mentor and friend, and Sarah sought a good mother in various female authority figures. What is striking is that participants did not seek a 'good mother' in their lovers.

What proves intriguing in Sarah's instance, is that after seeking and failing to find suitable female mentors she entered into therapy with a heterosexual woman. Here it emerged that it was not the therapist *per se* that enabled Sarah to feel held, but the moment of holding itself. More specifically, after terminating with her male therapist and going into therapy with his female supervisor, Sarah finds herself swimming with a big whale-like fish in whose *dark shadow* she can hide (#2). The whale, whom Sarah senses is a:

*Mother come to protect her young...says she must go because someone has a story to tell her...I hold on to her side looking into a deep dark eye and we shoot up into the air. We are supported in mid-air for a second as the story is told...There is just an empty moment when all is quiet and suspended and then we go down again.*

Sarah subsequently differentiated in relationship to a platonic friend, rather than either of her lovers and/or her heterosexual female therapist. More specifically, Sarah and her platonic friend *embrace and clasp each other's hands in a powerful salute up in the air* (#19), after which:

*A killer whale appears...It thanks me and we kiss. There is a deep love between us...We have to say goodbye. The whale says that it is going to leave us half the creche and then it leaves.*

It would seem that Sarah's developing a sense of autonomy with respect to the relational mother was dependent upon her success with respect to finding a woman who expressed healing (rather than wounded or wounding) feminine potentials in relationship to her. This interpretation is confirmed by Traci. Her access to healing feminine potentials was negotiated in relationship to Mystic, her friend and mentor, rather than in relationship to the woman with whom she was sexually involved. In analytical terms, where the relational mother is unable to actualize the holding capacities of the mother archetype, participants projected this desire onto older women. Moreover, until such times as participants experienced a sense of being psychically held by a woman, they remained bound to the hated mother. Where a participant found a mentor who could provide the qualities of a 'good mother', for instance Traci, she was able to separate from her relational mother and move forward in her passage towards wholeness. It would seem thus that primary lesbians are seeking a particular quality of relationship with women, the quality of being held, contained and then freed from obligation to the women who held them. Moreover, it was in relationship to friends, mentors and therapists, or women from whom participants were permitted to be separate, that this differentiation occurred.

Irigaray (Whitford, 1991) suggests that the fear of female sexuality is expressed as a fear of madness in Western society. In terms of this understanding, women who seek sexual relationships with

women, i.e., lesbians, must either actively seek and enjoy madness, or maintain an asexual stance in order to avoid their madness. Only Sarah demonstrated a conscious fascination for madness, in so much as she wanted to work in a mental institution. She was also aware that she confronted her madness in relationship to her second lover. More specifically, Sarah and her second lover were identified in terms of both being primary lesbians, but were differentiated in terms of their feminist stance. Her mother and her second lover were identified on the grounds of their wounding potentials in relationship to Sarah by virtue of colluding against her in her dream-series. Sarah's second lover therefore reminded Sarah of her vulnerability to being wounded. Identification between Sarah and her lover by virtue of their gender, between her lover and her mother by virtue of their wounding potentials in relationship to her, and between Sarah and her mother by virtue of *Snake Woman*, brought Sarah to an awareness of her of wounding potentials in relationship to herself. In short, the relationship confronted her with her capacity to self-destruct.

It would seem thus that the madness faced by lesbians is not that they desire the mother, and by virtue of this, express attachment love, but that they are bound to a mother who carries wounding potentials in relationship them. This is an intriguing possibility in the light of intersubjective theorists (Benjamin, 1995) observations about the mother-infant. More specifically, Benjamin suggests that:

When the dangers of guilt-inspiring separation are seen as real rather than fantasized, ...the symbolic equation holds sway: the mother's child 'is' the obstacle to her self-expression, and her self-expression 'is' a threat to her child (p. 110).

Perhaps because participants took up the father's responsibilities in relationship to their mothers, the opposite held sway for them in their efforts to come out. Here the lesbian's mother 'is' the obstacle to her lesbian child's self-expression, and the lesbian's self-expression 'is' a threat to her mother. Moreover, and in more analytical terms, participants also appeared to desire aspects of the mother archetype that their relational mothers did not demonstrate. They were not seeking a mother-other but a woman who is other to their mother, and by virtue of this, a different kind of relationship.

#### **7.4 THE PASSAGE TO WHOLENESS**

Traditional analytical literature poses questions about the possibility for lesbian individuation (Hopke, 1993). Jung's vision of wholeness, or *coniunctio*, assumes the binary paradigm of sex and gender. In other words, it holds that males are men who are masculine, and that they project their unconscious feminine aspects (*anima*) onto women whom they desire. Females are women who are feminine, and they project their unconscious masculine potentials (*animus*) onto men whom they desire. This understanding of human sexuality forecloses upon the possibility of lesbian individuation, since lesbian ways of being are understood as identification with *anima*, or masculine potentials, and that with which we identify cannot be projected. Traditional analytical understandings therefore assume that lesbians are masculine-identified women who desire feminine-identified women, and thus that lesbian relationships function according to heterosexual modes of relationship, or the projection of contrasexual opposites. Moreover, by virtue of their cross-identification, lesbians are believed to project their feminine potentials onto the women that they desire. Hall (1993), for instance, assumes that being a woman means being a mother, and that lesbians are drawn to feminine potentials in relationship to their more feminine lovers.

In the light of the research findings, traditional analytical constructions of masculine and feminine

potentials, appeared to be simplistic. First, both masculine and feminine potentials were shown to incorporate wounding, wounded and healing qualities. Secondly, participants appeared to identify with some aspects of their masculine and feminine potentials, and project other aspects. Moreover, there was little consistency with respect to which qualities individual lesbians identified with and which qualities they projected. All participants identified with wounded feminine potentials, however. In addition, Traci projected wounding feminine potentials and integrated healing feminine potentials, Sarah projected wounding masculine potentials and integrated healing masculine and feminine potentials, and Lisa identified with wounded masculine potentials, projected wounding feminine potentials and integrated healing feminine potentials. Finally, participants either integrated the qualities that they initially projected through relationship to the person upon whom they had projected these qualities, or participants projected these qualities in order to differentiate these qualities from their personality. The dynamics of integration and differentiation are fully explored with reference to Traci and Sarah in Section 6.1. Again, there appeared to be little consistency with respect to which projections participants chose to integrate into themselves or differentiate from themselves.

The research would seem to support more radical analytical theorists, such as Singer (1977), Schwartz-Salant (1992) and Whitmont (1992) who assume that both men and women carry both masculine and feminine potentials. Rather than questioning whether lesbians individuate, therefore, they ask: how do lesbians individuate? In order to answer this question, the binary paradigm of sex and gender was suspended for the purposes of this research, and participants' foci for integration explored. In other words, I assumed that being human involves the integration of both masculine and feminine potentials regardless of an individual's sex, and my question concerned which aspects of their masculine and feminine potentials participants were attempting to integrate, and in relationship to whom?

#### **7.4.1 LESBIANS AND INDIVIDUATION**

Participants' dream-series reflected the ongoing emergence and integration of both masculine and feminine potentials on both an intrapsychic and intrapersonal level of awareness, and that participants' access to these gender potentials both in relationship to themselves and in relationship to their lovers appeared to depend on the gender identity of their lovers.

Traci's focus for integration emerged as that of coming to know and integrate a healing feminine presence. This was a potential that her heterosexual, but nonetheless masculine-identified, mother did not embody. She projected this potential onto a heterosexual woman whom she chose as a mentor, and whom she desired. Participants who had not separated from the hated mother (Lisa and Sarah) appeared to focus upon the task of separating from the wounding feminine potentials that their mothers expressed in relationship to them without becoming identified with wounded feminine potentials. Without a conception of healing feminine possibilities however, these two participants opted to identify with healing masculine potentials. In this sense, they were inclined towards the possibility for androgyny, or the possibility for blending their masculine and feminine potentials.

Sarah and Lisa's understanding of androgyny differed, however. Sarah constellated the meaning of androgyny intrapersonally, i.e., she dreamed that she was absorbing her bisexual lover's feminine potentials, while her bisexual lover was absorbing her masculine potentials. This image appeared to confirm



conventional or traditional psychological understandings of lesbian relating, in so much as Sarah appeared to access her feminine potentials through her more feminine lover. Lisa, on the other hand, and in the absence of a relationship, understood androgyny as an intrapsychic phenomenon, as a blending of masculine and feminine potentials in relationship to herself. Her understanding of androgyny therefore appeared to present an attempt to transcend the opposition between masculine and feminine as constructed by patriarchy.

Whether lesbian relationships call for the differentiation of opposites or a refinement of sameness, as suggested by Hopke (1993), Cowan (1993), Carrington (1993), and Downing (1993), appeared to depend on the gender identity of a participant's lover. Where a lover expressed masculine qualities, participants adopted a feminine role, even when this left them struggling with feelings of self-contempt. Where a participant was dominant however, her partner was expected to express feminine potentials. In this sense, participants appeared to be versatile with respect to their gender identity. Moreover, participants were confronted by different issues in taking up the dominant and submissive roles implied by Western conceptions of masculine and feminine. Butch, or male-identified, lovers appeared to confront participants with the possibility of self-annihilation. Sarah faced her madness, and Traci felt she was caught up in a control cage. Where participants took up the challenge of choosing bisexual lovers, they faced the agony of being in competition with men, and tolerating the insecurity about a bisexual's level of commitment to the relationship by virtue of her lack of commitment to a lesbian identity. In so much as these relationships often mimicked heterosexual relational dynamics, participants were also confronted with the challenge of negotiating their gender role in relationship to their partner.

Participants' dream-series also demonstrated the spiritual and/or psychological awakening in which each was currently engaged. Traci sought spiritual enlightenment, and saw this as the awakening of her allegiance to feminine potentials. In her dreams, this realization came as a thunderbolt and alienated her from her bisexual lover. Sarah sought psychological understanding, and her healing occurred following a dream in which she felt held by a 'whale-like' fish, an image she accessed in relationship to her female therapist. Both began their dream-series prior to participating in the research, and both participated in the research for the purposes of increasing their self-understanding. Lisa, on the other hand, recorded her dream-series for the sake of the research itself. While her dreams expressed themes pertinent to her being lesbian, and more specifically the agonies she endured in coming out to her mother, her issues also concerned her competitive squash interests. For each participant, it would seem, the relationship between masculine and feminine potentials was played out against a background of equally important aspects of constructing an identity. Being lesbian was not necessarily the primary issue within their dream-series, and by virtue of this, neither was their construction of gender, and/or the consequences of its marginal position socially. This raised the question of the possibility for and nature of lesbian autonomy.

#### **7.4.2 LESBIANS AND AUTONOMY**

Stein (1994) suggests that being lesbian is an attempt to achieve sexual autonomy, and participants were aware of their being lesbian as a choice against becoming the victim of male, and pseudo-male, control of their sexuality. In other words, being lesbian is a question of sexual autonomy. Traci was the most articulate

in her description of heterosexual women as women who had fallen victim to male sexual control, and participants were unanimous in their contempt for heterosexual women on this basis. While being lesbian is an attempt to achieve sexual autonomy however, it is not necessarily an attempt to achieve autonomy only in terms of sexual expression. In other words, explication revealed several additional areas in which participating lesbians were seeking to achieve autonomy.

Psychoanalysis as a body of theory suggests that being lesbian is a consequence of the girl child's failure to separate from her mother. In other words, lesbians are women who are struggling to achieve autonomy in relationship to their mothers, and by a process of transference, mother-figures. This was true at some level for all participants by virtue of the fact that the mother was seen to obstruct the individuation process. It was particularly true for those for participants whose mothers were narcissistically invested in them (Lisa and Sarah). In essence, participants' autonomous striving in relationship to the mother reflected their desires to be someone for themselves rather than someone for their mothers. They desired to be a subject rather than an object relation for their mothers.

Being lesbian was also revealed as an attempt to find a spiritual place. Common inter-case concerns about lesbian spiritual understandings were unexpected, in so much as lesbians' attitudes towards their and others' spirituality has not been explored by contemporary theorists. On the one hand, this lack of scholarly exploration is not surprising, given that most lesbian studies are feminist in their foundation, and for Marxist and Socialist feminists God is dead<sup>47</sup>. On the other hand, the lack of inquiry into lesbians' spiritual understandings is surprising, in so much as being lesbian is defined in terms of a woman's sexual orientation. Freud, for instance, recognised that there is a relationship between religious impulses and sexual drives, and considered the former a side effect of the latter. Moreover, Jung maintained that sexuality is part of something larger and more universal, i.e., a vast life force that is both empowered and embodied in the craving for spiritual transcendence (Moody & Carroll, 1997).

Of some note is that all participants admitted that they were disillusioned with contemporary Christianity, and that participants demonstrated an affinity for more ritualistic spiritual practices. Traci appeared to be the most spiritually aware, and her stance could be classified as a transpersonal feminist stance, i.e., her discourse appeared to invert traditional Christian beliefs about women's inferior spiritual status. More specifically, it was male sexuality that was deemed evil. On this basis, she considered that women were superior to men.

Lisa and Sarah initially adopted a typical and consensual Christian stance, and suggested that men were superior to women. It was also true that both were invited away from the influence of their mothers through association with an idealised other who practised Christianity. As their lesbian identity matured however, they moved away from traditional Christian beliefs. Lisa, for instance, shifted her allegiance towards more ritualistic Christian practices, and then included Eastern philosophies because they acknowledged the complementarity rather than opposition of masculine and feminine principles. Sarah revealed a more interesting spiritual passage. She was attracted to Christianity until such times as she felt it could not accommodate her love for women, and thereafter turned to lesbian feminism. This belief system however,

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<sup>47</sup> As Daly (1978) suggests however, it is not God who is dead but our projection of God as out there that has been shattered.

also excluded her sexuality by virtue of its 'vanilla versions'<sup>48</sup> of sex, or sex *sans* penetration. Consequently she turned to psychology, and particularly Transpersonal Psychology for spiritual solace, but felt inadequate for what Transpersonal Psychology demanded of her fragile identity. At this point she turned to Forensic Psychology, a branch of psychology that permitted her to come to terms with, and express, her fascination for madness. It was true however, that neither Sarah nor Lisa could reject Christianity outright. To do so would threaten their underlying masculine-identification and their understanding of power in relationships.

What the contemporary literature fails to address therefore is the degree to which being lesbian is an attempt to achieve spiritual autonomy, and the intriguingly New Age discourses that lesbians adopt towards this purpose. Peck (1993) describes the New Age movement as a reaction against the sexism found in industry, the church, and in government. As such, it is a movement towards feminism, and particularly the kind of feminine-friendly feminism embraced by Traci. Participants achieve this more feminine-friendly stance by: pretending to adopt male values as women, or practice what Sarah termed 'lesbian camp'; or, reject male values and explore feminine potentials, and embody what Traci termed 'wild woman potentials'.

## **7.5 BEING LESBIAN AS AN IDENTITY**

The relative newness of the term lesbian identity (Epstein, 1992; and, Richardson, 1992, and 1993) suggests that while erotic love between women has existed throughout history, as an identity 'lesbian' is a modern invention constructed by sexologists such as Von Krafft-Ebing (1965) and Ellis (1927). This construction was taken up by psychological theory, and lesbians were deemed to be abnormal and pathological. In this sense, lesbians, as a category of women, are a unique creation of the late nineteenth century (Plummer, 1981, and 1992). Moreover, it is a category whose meaning has been subject to constant shifts of meaning.

Post-structural theorists such as Weedon (1987) suggest that the whole notion of any fixed kind of identity is problematic, for the category 'woman' is a constantly shifting signifier of multiple meanings, as is the category 'lesbian' if Faderman's (1991) observations are taken to heart. Lesbians as a category, or community of women who love women, are hardly unitary therefore. As Wilton (1995) suggests, it is a diverse, complex and conflict-ridden context of contested discourses. This was confirmed by the current research in so much as participants, despite their common primary lesbian status, differed with respect to their gender identity, gender identification, regard for masculine potentials, and adherence to feminist discourses. As Steele (1989) suggests therefore, reality is much more complex and multi-dimensional than ordinarily supposed. Moreover, it is often contradictory. What does ensure a lesbian identity as more researchable than being identified heterosexual however, is that lesbians disclose their identity. In other words, women are assumed to be heterosexual until such times as they publicly declare that they are not heterosexual. This public declaration provides a watershed moment that permits the development of being lesbian, as an identity, to be researched.

The primary assumption adopted for the purposes of this investigation is that lesbians are women. While this is true in terms of their assigned sexual category, the research suggested that while lesbians do

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<sup>48</sup> The suggestion by lesbian feminism that only de-sexualised images of lesbians be exposed and adopted implies an underlying discourse that sex, and particularly penetration, is bad. This view was criticised by sexual feminist because it assumed that affection was superior to sexual expression.

not deny that they are women, they do also identify with immature men, i.e., boys and adolescent males. In other words, while lesbians do not deny that they are female in terms of their sex, in terms of their sexual identity they are able to entertain the possibility that they are 'like little boys'. In so doing, they emphasize that they identify with more disempowered or wounded masculine potentials, and moreover, that they are not unambiguous about their sexual identity.

It was exceedingly difficult to categorize participants as any particular kind of lesbian. In terms of their history, all participants could be identified as primary lesbians. Participants all denied however, that they were male-identified or stereotypical butch lesbians. Lisa and Sarah, on the basis of their idealisation of masculine potentials however, could be classified as masculine-identified lesbians. For Sarah this implied being a 'femme-butch', or the product of a synthesis between her masculine appearances and feminine centre. Traci demonstrated still further diversity. She was not femme, in so much as femme lesbians are generally considered to be bisexual by participants. At the same time however, she identified with and integrated her feminine potentials to the virtual exclusion of her masculine potentials. In this sense, Traci was feminine-identified, but not with consensual or patriarchal visions of the feminine.

In the literature review it was argued that lesbians, as a category of women, must be understood in the context of the images and options available to women through history. Armstrong (1986) describes a variety of options with which women through history have identified in order to reclaim their sexual power as women. Clearly, although participants did not reject the possibility of giving birth to children, they did reject the Woman as Wife and Mother option by virtue of rejecting men as a sexual possibility. Moreover, while Armstrong suggests that contemporary heterosexual feminists opt for the secular version of Woman as Witch, or the *femme fatale*, participants were reluctant to identify with or relate to the contemporary Woman as Witch image because such women were considered to be bisexual, and were seen to carry wounding feminine potentials. Although it may be argued that the sexual feminist response to lesbian feminism provided the grounds for the contemporary Woman as Witch option, or what Hamer (1994) terms lesbian *chic*, it would seem on the basis of the data gathered and explicated that primary lesbians do not follow the trends adopted by heterosexual women. What image then do lesbians adopt?

In terms of Armstrong's (1986) options, Woman as Virgin and Woman as Mystic images were emphasized by Traci, in so much as she considered heterosexual women, or women who adopted Woman as Wife and Mother potentials, to be 'fallen' women. Moreover, her dream-series suggested that she embraced the possibility for being a witch in preference to being either a male- (butch) or masculine-identified (dyke) lesbian. At the same time, it was also clear from her dream-series that she did not reject her sexual possibilities, or at least not those in relationship to women. Moreover, Traci experienced relationships to women who expressed contemporary Woman as Witch options as dangerous to her welfare until such times as she had integrated her Woman as Mystic potentials. Thereafter it became easier for her to approach and relate to women who had adopted contemporary Woman as Witch potentials. It would seem thus that being lesbian expresses the desire to maintain rather than transcend female sexuality, while at the same time transcend the patriarchal imperative that women's sexuality is defined only in relationship to men.

This thesis is further confirmed by the remaining participants. Perhaps because of her masculine-identification, and because Woman as Witch options reminded her of her mother, Sarah avoided women who expressed contemporary Woman as Witch potentials. At the same time, she experienced such women as

compellingly attractive. Her ambivalence towards women who carried contemporary Woman as Witch potentials was based upon her vulnerability to and fear of being wounded by them. It would seem thus that participants were attempting to transcend the limitations of their sex as constructed by patriarchy (wounded), as well as the sexual feminist response to this construction (wounding).

In summary, Woman as Wife and Mother was rejected as a possible identity by participants, but so also was the contemporary Woman as Witch on the grounds of her wounding potentials. Earlier options for women, such as Woman as Mystic, Martyr, or Virgin were also rejected, primarily because these options were unable to accommodate active female sexual expression. In this sense, Armstrong's (1986) thesis fails when applied to lesbians. At the same time, in so much as participants refused to destroy the possibility of female sexual expression, or subjugate their sexual needs to male interests, they were Witches. Rather than endorsing the pre-Reformation or the contemporary Woman as Witch options however, their intention was that of exploring alternative sexual and relational possibilities, and they achieved this through their identification with and integration of healing masculine and feminine potentials. In so doing, they attempt to transcend the power dynamics that currently constitute heterosexual relating.

### **7.5.1 LESBIAN IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT**

Human developmental theorists direct their attention towards the process by which a woman realises and acknowledges her lesbian identity. Participants demonstrated remarkable similarities with respect to the process of disclosing their lesbian identity, or 'coming out', and there was indeed little that contradicted contemporary research in the area. This tends to challenge Rust's (1993) observations that most individuals do not progress through orderly stages, but rather switch back and forth between identities. It was only Lisa who tended to switch back and forth between stages, and then only in terms of her early self-definition.

Saghir and Robins' (1973) observations were confirmed in part. Participants were tomboys as children, and for all participants cross-gender identifications became sexualised with crushes on older women during adolescence. What the literature fails to mention is that participants idealised, and in some instances appeared to sexualise, women from a far earlier age than expected. In other words, all participants recalled having a crush on an older woman during early childhood. Traci, for instance, desired to see her nursery school teacher naked. It would seem thus that participants reported same-sexed attractions earlier than the age identified by Rust (1993), although this contradiction could be due, in part, to the presence of bisexual lesbians in Rust's research sample.

As suggested by the literature, lesbians do feel different, alienated and alone during their childhoods, and as suggested by Vertere (1982), Chapman and Bannock (1987), Rust (1993), Maggee (1994), and D'Augelli (1994), participants first imagined they might be 'lesbian' during early adolescence. Here again what the literature fails to describe is the initial response of shock that participants experienced upon naming themselves lesbian, although in retrospect they, like Downing (1993), Carrington (1993) and Cohen (1993), described discovering their lesbian identity as a 'homecoming'. Moreover, disclosure to others did not necessarily occur prior to socialisation in the lesbian community. Indeed, participants appeared to become involved with their first lover, separate from her, and then approach the lesbian community. It would seem thus that confirmation of a lesbian identity for participants required sexual involvement with a woman, and

a participant's first sexual relationship not only confirmed her identity but was considered a rite of passage into the lesbian community.

The primary obstacle to disclosure appeared to be participants' mothers, and more particularly when she was narcissistically invested in her daughter. Participants prepared for their disclosure to parents by summoning up heterosexual allies, most often a sibling, and failing this an authority figure whom they assumed would be empathic. In addition, participants appeared to create a crisis in order to disclose to the mother. Traci, for instance, waited until she almost killed herself in a car accident before disclosing her orientation, while Sarah waited until she was suffering from sun stroke before disclosing her orientation.

It is also accurate to suggest, as does the literature, that being lesbian involves a delayed adolescence. Initiation of a relationship with a woman generally occurred during late adolescence, and subsequent to earlier exploration with members of the opposite sex. Romantic liaisons with members of the opposite sex were described as boring and unchallenging in comparison to those with women. Moreover, and as suggested by Vertere (1982), the first lover was frequently a friend, and in Tatia's instance was her cousin. What the literature fails to mention is that the first relationship, particularly where a participant is bound to the hated mother, appeared to be a spiritual invitation away from the mother, and permitted the participant to initiate the process of separating from her mother. This dynamic was particularly clear with respect to Sarah and Lisa.

Under the onslaught of consensus reality's attempts to understand being lesbian as a pathology, Davis and Kennedy (1989, p. 429) suggest that the 'public bar community' became a "central arena for the lesbian confrontation with a hostile world". As an emerging community, they suggest that it not only created a public and supportive space for lesbians, but also organized sexuality and emotional relationships. In other words, it provided a space in which young lesbians could socialise with, and be socialised by, the lesbian community. The importance of social support and contact with other lesbians was confirmed by the research. More specifically, while Traci was the only participant who actively sought out groups of gay women while coming out, both Lisa and Sarah looked towards older lesbians for guidance and as role models. At the same time however, it was clear that as participants' identities matured they became increasingly critical of this arena.

This more critical attitude to the lesbian community as participants matured in their identity confirmed the process of detypification as described by Jenness (1992). More specifically, being lesbian is appropriated as a social identity, the contradictions between the social and lesbians' personal definitions of the identity are identified through interaction and resocialisation, and the category revisioned in terms of a positive rather than negative personal identity. Traci, for instance, after feeling more at home within the lesbian community criticized butch lesbians, and sought to redefine 'true lesbians' as real, or *wild*, women. In contrast, heterosexual women were *fallen* women. In other words, her identification as a lesbian did not prevent her from criticizing male-identified lesbians as unconscious of their 'wild woman' potentials. For Traci therefore, male-identified or butch lesbians were not 'true lesbians'. Moreover, she felt alienated by them because they could not understand why she was happy about being lesbian. She was expected to be unhappy about being lesbian, i.e., to play the role of victim. Likewise, Sarah considered herself to belong to a younger set of lesbians who did not define themselves in terms of butch or femme. Lisa, it would seem, was still in the process of appropriating a lesbian identity, and therefore still within the early stages of the process of

detyfication. She nonetheless denied that she identified with stereotypical butch lesbians, and for this reason preferred to describe herself as a 'gay woman' rather than lesbian.

Whether participants were still struggling to work through the suffocating fusion of their early lesbian relationships (Berg-Cross, 1988) remained unclear. Certainly, many of their ex-lovers remained a part of their social network, and all of them were attempting to address the issues that brought their latest relationships to termination. Moreover, all participants expressed a concern with both intrapersonal and interpersonal co-dependency, and demonstrated efforts to release themselves from relationships based upon either merger or heterosexual dynamics. Sarah's dream of her first lover, and their attempts to merge their gender potentials, as well as her image of her parent's relationship (and by virtue of this, heterosexual relationships), suggested that gender complementarity confronted her with the possibility of parasitic co-dependency. Tatia's comments about control drama were common to all her relationships, as were her issues with co-dependency. Lisa escaped the suffocating fusion of her first relationship by deciding she was not gay, and then making friends with her ex-lover once she decided she was gay. What appeared to be more pertinent were participants' attempts to process and separate from their previous relationship, often in the context of their current relationship, i.e., current relationships were jeopardized by the unresolved issues in past relationships. Moreover, issues around internalised homophobia on the part of their partner, and the enactment of heterosexual roles, appeared to be more critical factors for sabotaging early relationships than so-called suffocating fusion.

What the literature terms 'parental' homophobic reactions (Berg-Cross, 1988) can be more accurately rephrased homophobic responses on the part of the mother, at least in terms of this research. More specifically, participants avoided disclosing to their fathers on the grounds that he would not understand their choice. Underlying this was a fear of hurting the father so deeply that they would lose the opportunity for learning to relate to him. The intensity of their mothers' homophobia, particularly when she was narcissistically invested in her daughter, was evident with respect to both Sarah and Lisa. Both mothers remarked that they would rather see their daughters dead than in the arms of another woman. The research also confirmed that 'in-laws' perceptions and reception of the lover, as suggested by Berg-Cross, was problematic. Traci clearly despised her 'in-laws', Sarah blamed her 'in-laws' for her lover's ambivalence about disclosing as lesbian, and Lisa feared that her ex-lover's parents would reject her, despite her experience to the contrary.

Perhaps the most debilitating obstacle to the integration of a lesbian identity was the internalisation of negative stereotypes about lesbians, and self-oppression on the basis of this. It would seem however, that while lesbians internalise judgements on the basis of these stereotypes, they do not necessarily identify with these stereotypes, nor do they project these stereotypes onto their lovers. Indeed, enacting the stereotype was deemed destructive because it called forth heterosexual relational dynamics and interpersonal co-dependency. If a participant chose to be butch, it called forth contempt for her femme lover, and if a participant chose to be femme it called forth self-contempt. Moreover, stereotypical butch, or male-identified, lesbians were criticized by all participants regardless of whether participants were masculine-identified (Lisa and Sarah) or feminine-identified (Traci).

Perhaps most surprising in terms of the wealth of lesbian studies addressing the images of lesbians in film, was the absence of icons of gay and lesbian culture in participants' dream-series. Indeed, role models were generally women with whom participants had had the opportunity to interact, and through the

interaction, sexualise or idealise. As such, public heroines did not feature, and only Lisa dreamed of public heroes, thus confirming her tendency towards masculine-identification. It would seem that rather than relying on popular culture's construction of lesbians, participants were inventing themselves in relationship to lesbians whom they personally encountered.

The concern with relinquishing patriarchal norms and expectations (Groves, 1985; and, Sophie, 1982; and, 1988) was only evident for Lisa who regretted the loss of her heterosexual fantasies. This is not to say that the remaining participants did not feel the pain of this relinquishment, only that they did not recall the pain once their lesbian fantasies had taken the place of their and others heterosexual fantasies for them. The relinquishment of heterosexual fantasies also did not mean that they excluded the possibility of giving birth to children, only that they relinquished the possibility of being supported in doing so by a man.

### **7.5.2 LESBIANS AND GENDER IDENTITIES**

The primary theoretical issue that appears to confound any attempt to understand lesbian gender identities is the propensity to identify sex with gender. The binary paradigm of sex and gender was suspended for the purposes of this research, and in the course of establishing and untangling transference relationships between lived others, and correspondence relationships between lived and imagined others, masculine and feminine potentials were differentiated in terms of their wounding, wounded and healing qualities. This differentiation took the research beyond many traditional and feminist psychological readings of gender which restrict their understanding of masculine and feminine to a binary opposition. Leonard (1985), for instance, restricts her understanding of the feminine to the 'armoured amazon' and the 'eternal child', i.e., women are either masculine-identified (wounding) or remain children (wounded) in relationship to the father, and by implication men. Clearly, participants within this research differentiated between wounding and wounded potentials in relationship to others. They also described healing masculine and feminine potentials however.

Most revealing was that not all participants shared the same constellation of gender potentials. For instance, Lisa and Sarah differentiated between wounded, wounding and healing masculine potentials, but were able to access only wounding and wounded feminine qualities. Traci, on the other hand, differentiated between wounding, wounded and healing feminine potentials, while her masculine potentials were for the most part restricted to those that were wounding. These different constellations appeared to depend upon whether participants valued masculine potentials over feminine potentials, or feminine potentials over masculine potentials. In other words, where participants considered masculine potentials to be superior to feminine potentials, they became masculine-identified. Where participants considered feminine potentials to be superior to masculine potentials, they became feminine-identified.

The research did not support the idea that a tolerance for diversity and an affirmation of difference is emerging among lesbians. In general, participants were intolerant of stereotypical butch lesbians who identified with male roles, attitudes and expectations, and in that sense were male-identified rather than masculine-identified. Participants were also highly critical of bisexual lesbians. For this reason, they preferred to identify with more intermediate gender positions, namely dyke and femme-butch. It would seem thus that while lesbians do not demonstrate a tolerance for diversity, they do demonstrate tolerance for gender ambiguity. While this mood of tolerance reflects the main streaming of their lesbian identities, as suggested



by Hamer and Budge (1994), it also reflects lesbians' attempts to transcend patriarchal constructions of what it means to be a woman, and what it means to be a lesbian.

Participants' gender identities, or the roles and expectations they played out in their relationships, were not consistent for individual participants, or across participants. Romantic friendships, or the mother-daughter dynamic described by Vicinus (1989), were characteristic of adolescence. As adults, lesbians continued to have romantic friendships with women they idealised. These women were usually female authority figures to whom they looked for guidance, and their idealisations were not necessarily desexualised on an intrapsychic and intrapersonal level if Traci's dreams about her tutors were any indication. They were however, not sexualised on an interpersonal level. In addition, Boss's (1982) suggestion that being lesbian reflects the desire to be an adolescent boy was directly confirmed by both Traci and Sarah, and by implication, by Lisa. It would seem that lesbians regard adolescent boys as less controlling and powerful than mature men. Moreover, adolescent boys are permitted to be irresponsible, whereas mature men were criticized on this score. Even where participants regarded men as superior to women, and valued masculine potentials above feminine potentials, adult males were perceived to carry wounding masculine potentials.

## 7.6 CONCLUSIONS

The fundamental question guiding this research was one of psychological meaning. More specifically, questions concerned the psychological meanings that constellate around lesbian identity development and its diversity. In order to answer these questions, I adopted an inductive phenomenological and hermeneutic approach. Consistent with the hermetic spirit adopted, three lesbians' dream-series were amplified by focussing upon the lived and imagined others who inhabited their dream series. In this way, I was able access the ordinariness of being lesbian. In order to interpret the meaning of being lesbian as a psychological experience, I then appealed to traditional and contemporary psychoanalytic, analytical and existential understandings of human beings and their development.

The impetus for human development for Freud is primarily materialist (external), extroverted (relational) and embodied (sexual), i.e., human consciousness is motivated by the desire to procreate. Being lesbian challenges this assumption. By definition, lesbian sexual expression cannot give rise to the next generation. This then begs the question: by what is lesbian erotic desire motivated? Jung extended the meaning of *libido* to mean the impetus for remembering the source of being as the primordial spiritual unity from which psyche separated, and to which it must return in a more differentiated form. For analytical theorists, therefore, human development is motivated by the desire to individuate, to become whole and reflectively conscious. Existentialists such as Kruger (1979) and Boss (1977a; and 1977b) reject the Cartesian view that human beings are either spiritual entities bounded by a skin, or material entities whose behaviour is controlled by environmental reinforcements and/or processes of the central nervous system such as instincts. Human beings, from the point of view experience, are not encapsulated entities but are always out there in the world being revealed. Existential perspectives therefore hold that the world always appears as a context of meanings, and it is the manner in which these meanings are constructed that is important.

In order to understand the context of meanings out of which being lesbian is constructed access

must be gained to the ground out of which the possibility for being lesbian arises. Jager (1978; and, 1989) argues that both sleep and sexual expressions constitute passions. What distinguishes dreaming from sexuality however, is not the presence or absence of the body, but the degree to which an individual is involved in a world that is shared with others. As a purely subjective experience dreaming provided a relatively uncontaminated point of access to lesbians' vertical axis, in so much as while dreaming worldly relatedness is suspended. In other words, when dreaming psyche is less subject to the world of physical appearances, and to worldly relatedness and its constructions. Dream images or contents that appear during sleep however, are already interpreted with the telling of the dream, and thus already exist in a context of meanings that are revealed by the world of appearances. It is this context of meanings, or participants' amplifications and interpretations of their dreamed existence, to which I attended. In order to do so, I used existing psychological theories as a hermeneutic lens for accessing and describing the phenomenon without adopting any particular theoretical perspective of lesbian development. In this way, a deeper psychological understanding of what lesbian identity development means from the inside out, i.e., from the point of view of women who label themselves 'lesbian', was achieved.

#### **7.6.1 THE MEANING OF BEING LESBIAN**

Sophie (1982) suggests that lesbians are diverse with respect to their sexual and affectional history, life style and personal identity, and the current research confirmed this. The research also brought to light the possibilities that lesbians choose to live, and how these possibilities constellate around the meaning that each participant gave to her lesbian identity. Despite both social and personal diversity, participants who were lesbian seemed to share certain meanings.

Participants' dream-series spoke a rich tapestry of meanings, not all of which concerned the question of how they constructed and lived forth their gender constellations. Moreover, being lesbian was revealed as a multidimensional phenomenon. It involved intrapsychic components, in so much as the identity involved differentiation from and integration of different gender potentials, or archetypal patterns of masculine and feminine functioning. It was an intrapersonal phenomenon, in so much as socially constructed understandings of masculine and feminine were internalised and lived forth by participants, and an interpersonal phenomenon, in so much as participants' gender identities appeared to develop in dialogue with the gender identities of their lovers. It was also a political phenomenon. Participants were positioned socially in terms of this identity. Finally, it was an ideological phenomenon in so much as feminist ideology appeared to have had some impact upon how participants' thought about being lesbian.

In terms of the binary paradigm of sex and gender, lesbians are females who desire females. As such, lesbians' sex and lesbians' sexual orientation can be taken for granted. Lesbians' sexual identities are ambiguous however, in so much as participants imagined they are women who are also like adolescent boys. The ambiguity of their sexual identity not only permitted participants to challenge the binary paradigm of sex and gender, but permitted them to play with the possibilities for constructing their gender identifications, gender identities and gender orientations. More specifically, while all participants could be categorized as primary lesbians in terms of their relational histories, their gender identifications were dyke rather than either butch or femme. As such, they emphasized that their conduct constituted an area of play in which they were

expected to both please and be pleased in their sexual encounters with women. In so doing, they challenged traditional constructions of desire which depend upon the presence of an active partner and a passive partner, and adopted both active and passive roles in terms of their sexual expression and social functioning. It would seem that participants not only challenged the psychoanalytic narrative for understanding sexuality, but also the lesbian feminist narrative which understands sexuality as an area of power and control.

Participants also demonstrated remarkable flexibility with respect to their gender orientation, by virtue of their flexibility with respect to their gender identification. It would seem that where a participant and her partner adopted similar gender identifications the danger of intrapersonal co-dependency, or merger and personality dissolution, emerged. This was particularly true of those relationships in which both partners were identified with wounded masculine potentials and wounded feminine potentials. Where a participant and her partner demonstrated complementary gender identifications, the danger of interpersonal co-dependency emerged. It would seem thus that lesbian love relationships express three options. They can dissolve their identity in relationship to their partner, they can struggle with the power dynamics that are inherent to heterosexual relationships, or they can adopt attitude of play and consciously negotiate their gender identities in relationship to each other.

Participants' gender identities demonstrated diversity, and the identity adopted by an individual participant appeared to depend upon the extent to which she valued masculine as opposed to feminine potentials, as well as the extent to which she had differentiated her masculine and feminine potentials. Two primary gender identities were evident. Masculine-identified participants valued masculine potentials over feminine potentials, i.e., regarded masculine potentials as superior to feminine potentials, and demonstrated more differentiated masculine potentials. Feminine-identified participants valued feminine potentials over masculine potentials, and demonstrated more differentiated feminine potentials. As such, participants identified with what they considered to be the more powerful gender. It was also clear that even those lesbians who demonstrated similar gender identities chose to integrate and/or differentiate from different aspects of their gender identities. Again, this appeared to depend upon the gender identity and orientation of their partner. Lesbians therefore not only challenge traditional conceptions of gender and power, but also challenge how the relationship between sex and gender is understood.

Qualitative methods do not demand representative samples of the category of persons under discussion. Rather, they select participants on the basis of their willingness and ability to talk in depth about the experience in question. Qualitative research therefore does not pretend to find facts that can be generalised, and as such, findings do not lend themselves to statements such as 'most lesbians'. Rather, qualitative research emphasizes the psychological meanings that participants hold and the variations in these meanings. The meanings listed below are therefore tentative and explorative, rather than finite and conclusive. At least twenty-two statements of psychological meaning arose out of the inductive process adopted for the research. These are listed below. In the following chapter, these psychological meanings are discussed in terms of what they reveal about the essence of being lesbian.

- Being lesbian opens an individual woman up to the realisation that her sexual and gender identity is a rebellion against male control of female sexuality. As such, being lesbian reflects a desire for sexual autonomy, and expresses a socio-politically deviant position for women within a patriarchal society.
- Being lesbian exposes an individual woman to a woman's struggle against being wounded by virtue

of her social position. Lesbians identify with an inferior social position and consider themselves to be the victims of both wounding masculine and wounding feminine potentials.

- Being lesbian presents a challenge with respect to gaining access to healing masculine and feminine potentials, and reflects a commitment to become a healing rather than a wounding presence in relationship to themselves and others.

- Being lesbian does not necessarily mean that a woman embraces feminism in any of its forms, given that feminist discourses were implicit rather than explicit for participants. Moreover, even when explicit, participants criticised lesbian feminism from an implicit sexual feminist point of view, and sexual feminism from an implicit lesbian feminist point of view.

- Being lesbian suggests that an individual woman is attempting to transcend the limitations of her sex as constructed by patriarchy, as well as lesbian feminist and sexual feminist responses to this construction.

- Being lesbian means that a first lesbian relationship is understood as a spiritual invitation away from the hated mother. As such, participants' spiritual ideologies appeared to be more vital as forestructures for understanding their sexual and gender choices than their political stance in terms of a feminist framework. While Christianity was initially embraced by masculine-identified lesbians, it was later abandoned because it could not accommodate lesbian desire beyond the level of romantic friendship.

- Being lesbian suggests that an individual woman is identified with both her mother and father on a conscious level. On a less conscious level however, participants were identified with aspects of the archetypal father that their relational fathers did not express, and desired aspects of the archetypal mother that their relational mothers did not express.

- Being lesbian means that lesbians come to an awareness that their relational fathers did not fulfill their role as protectors and providers in relationship to their mothers, and this implied that they take up and fulfill the 'dead' or absent father's role in relationship to their mothers and siblings. This opened the way for a masculine identification.

- Being lesbian represents a healthy striving to separate from the narcissistically invested mother, or a mother that cannot let go of her idea that her daughter is responsible for her welfare. As a wounding feminine presence, the narcissistically invested mother is perceived to be a parasite and persecutor. In the absence of healing feminine potentials and the presence of the wounding feminine potentials that were carried by their mothers, participants were called to assert their difference.

- Being lesbian implies that a lesbian's shift towards relational autonomy depends upon finding a 'second mother', or a woman who expresses healing feminine potentials in relationship to her. The desire for being held and contained is often projected onto female authority figures.

- Being lesbian means that the first sexual relationship with a woman confirms an individual woman's identity as lesbian. This is viewed as both an initiation into being lesbian as a way of life and a 'coming home'. Being lesbian is not considered personally deviant, therefore.

- Being lesbian offers individual women the possibility for stepping beyond the limitations of the body and its appearances, and beyond the body's possibilities as defined by patriarchy. It means taking up the challenge of negotiating difference and sameness, and distance and closeness, in the context of physiological sameness.

- Being lesbian offers an individual woman the opportunity to achieving autonomy on a variety of levels. All participants were striving for sexual autonomy, in so much as they rejected patriarchal definitions of female sexuality. In addition, participants were seeking vocational autonomy, spiritual autonomy, and in terms of their common concerns with intrapersonal and interpersonal co-dependency, they were all seeking

relational autonomy.

- Being lesbian means coming to terms with the marginal status of lesbians as a category of women, or accepting that being lesbian is a socially deviant position. This presents as an obstacle to disclosing as lesbian. In order to disclose to their parents (and particularly their mothers), participants recruited sympathetic heterosexual allies, and were inclined to create a life or death crisis in order to facilitate disclosure to their parents.
- The role of the lesbian community becomes less important as a lesbian builds social support networks through her ex-lovers and friends. More specifically, through negotiating their gender identities and identifications in relationship to friends and lovers that they encountered, participants were able to differentiate their personal identity from the social constructions of being lesbian.
- Being lesbian means an individual woman makes herself vulnerable to social marginalisation and rejection by virtue of her choice to negotiate power, or the processes of dominance and submission, within her intimate relationships. Unlike heterosexual women, the power dynamics in personal relationships are not taken for granted by lesbians.
- Being lesbian opens the possibility for focussing on intimacy, in terms of both its triumphs and tragedies. Lesbians are persistent with respect to defining and redefining themselves in relationship to their lovers. As such, lesbians' gender identities are more versatile than many theorists are willing to admit.
- Being lesbian means that one's gender identity depends upon the gender identities of one's lovers. This confirms that the reality of gender identity development is much more complex, multi-dimensional and contradictory than theorists ordinarily suppose it to be, and that rather than gender categories being ever shifting and fluid, lesbians are ever shifting and fluid in relationship to existing gender categories.
- Being lesbian suggests that a woman is sexed, but not necessarily gendered, and that the living forth of loving encounters is based upon the assumption that being sexed does not necessarily mean being gendered.
- Being lesbian means that the adoption of dominant and submissive positions are not necessarily fixed on an individual level. At a superficial level, lesbians may be seen to be mimicking the heterosexual power dynamics of dominance and submission. At a deeper level however, lesbians are negotiating their relationships to wounding, wounded and healing masculine and feminine potentials that are carried by and projected onto both lived and imagined others.
- Being lesbian implies that behind a lesbian's spirited, or masculine-identified, appearance rests undifferentiated feminine potentials that are called into awareness through loving encounters with women. Likewise, behind a lesbian's focus on soul, or feminine-identification, rest undifferentiated masculine potentials that are called into awareness through loving encounters with women. It would seem therefore that both masculine and feminine potentials are differentiated in relationship to women.
- Being lesbian suggests that a woman's gender identity develops in dialogue with the gender identity of her lover. As such, individual lesbians demonstrate no fixed gender orientation, and may be exceedingly versatile with respect to which aspects of their gender potentials they identify with and/or which they project onto their lovers. It would seem thus that being lesbian has no constants. It is the recognition that human being, and human relatedness, is an experiment.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE LIMITS OF MEANING: CONCLUSIONS

What is required is a programme of research which takes lesbian...relationships as its starting point, drawing upon existing work in the field of personal relationships where appropriate, but remaining attentive to the heterosexist bias (Kitzinger & Coyle, 1995, p. 68).

The act of rejection shapes one's starting point, and one adopts an oppositional stance that unconsciously reverses the original coordinates of thought (Benjamin, 1995, p. 5).

The usefulness of a method may be assessed by considering whether interpretation uncovers an answer to the original motivating concern (Packer & Addison, 1989). The motivating concern with respect to this research was that of exploring the psychological meaning of lesbians' gender identity development and diversity. That there are diversities in lesbian experience was therefore assumed from the outset.

In the course of contextualising the category 'lesbian', perusing literature about how lesbians are portrayed in popular culture, and considering how they have been thought about within traditional and contemporary psychological theory, the broader concern with the psychological meaning of lesbian gender identity development and diversity was differentiated into specific questions. These questions concerned: the grounds for lesbian relating, and the impact this ground had upon later relational patterns; the construction of gender, and the impact that social constructions of the identity have upon the individuation process for lesbians; and, lesbians' appropriation and disclosure of their lesbian identity. While critical to understanding the psychological meaning of being lesbian, all of these concerns reflected being lesbian as a socially constructed category within popular and academic cultures. In other words, the literature review offered a great many insights about how lesbians are recognised and thought about, but it did not offer an adequate nonpejorative psychological understanding of the experience of being lesbian. The literature reviewed said little about how lesbians experience being lesbian from the inside out.

Given the emphasis on psychological meaning, the methodology adopted was qualitative, and three lesbians' dream-series were used as an empirical basis for further exploration. From the outset I took for granted the existence of what Husserl (cited in Durrheim, 1997) termed 'the transcendent self', what Boss (1977) terms 'Being', what Jung (cited in Brooke, 1991) terms 'Self', and what Kriele (1987) terms the vertical axis of human experience. By whichever label this mysterious realm that exists beyond time, space and a world that is shared with others is termed, it presents the primordial ground out of which the possibility for being lesbian arises, as does any other way of being in the world. I labelled an individual's relationship to this ground 'intrapsychic'. Ontologically, dreaming was understood as an individual's experience of this intrapsychic realm, in so much as dreaming reflects the vertical axis at a point where the horizontal axis of time, space, and a world that is shared with others is suspended. In this sense, dreaming was understood to reflect the least socially constructed form of human experience.

Using this basis as a point of entry to the quest for psychological meaning, these dream-series were

amplified with the dreamer. The amplificatory interview focused upon lived and imagined others in participants' dreamed existences. Like Benjamin (1995), I recognised that gender identity development is a relational process involving both identification and separation issues. In reading these interviews through the lens of gender, I suspended the binary paradigm of sex and gender, and assumed from the outset that masculine and feminine potentials are essentially different, and that lesbians identify with both masculine and feminine roles, expectations, and potentials.

Analysis of these interviews involved a more reflective stance, in so much as I recognised that the effort to share the productions of fantasy changes the status of the fantasy itself (Benjamin, 1995), and that this shifted dreaming from an intrapsychic expression to an intersubjective communication. The explication of amplificatory interviews therefore involved bringing social constructions about being lesbian to bear on upon the raw material, as well as analytical and psychoanalytic frameworks for distilling psychological meaning. Like Benjamin (1995), my defence of an 'overinclusive' and eclectic theoretical framework is inspired by developments outside of psychology. In addition, both social constructionist theories (Durrheim, 1997) and hermeneutic-phenomenology suggest that the truth is always subject to the perspective adopted to reveal it. If this is true, then the more psychological perspectives included in a systematic, methodical and rigorous fashion, the more chance for discovering a more whole truth than has been revealed up until this point. The intention was, then, to distill the psychological meaning of being lesbian, or identify the vital psychological significances that arise for women who love women.

The inclusive forestructure I adopted extended the intersubjective framework offered by Benjamin (1995), in so much as I posited an intrapsychic realm. With respect to the current research, what Benjamin terms the intrapsychic is in fact an intrapersonal realm. This realm holds the tension between the intrapsychic and interpersonal realms of being, i.e., between an intensely personal world and a socially constructed world that an individual shares with others. Identity, or the process of ongoing self-definition, was understood to be the dialectal interchange between the internalisation of social constructions of gender and the projection of gender archetypes. In other words, being lesbian is not only an expression of that which has been internalised. It is also an expression of a realm of possibilities that lies beyond worldly relationships.

Like any alchemical process, the attempt to distill essence involves bringing various elements to bear upon the raw material. This meant finding a psychological language for distilling participants' meanings. This language was carefully developed and documented in the foregoing chapters. It was also inevitable that in the decision-making process that constitutes all qualitative research projects, theoretical purity and methodological rigour were sometimes compromised. It was inevitable therefore that questions arose as to the validity of the meanings distilled with the application of the systematic, rigorous and methodical research process outlined in Chapter Five. In the following chapter I take a more reflexive stance with respect to the research process. In so doing, I highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the research, identify what is essential or vitally significant to being lesbian, consider the opportunities and challenges that being lesbian offers, and pose directions for future research.

## **8.1 THE SEARCH FOR TRUTH**

Social constructionist theories assume that all facts are similarly arbitrary. Researchers who adopt this

position do not deny that there are truths, however. Rather, they assume that facts are always perspectival and that interpretations can only emerge against the backdrop of socially shared understandings. Chapters Two and Three described the backdrop against which lesbians as a social category and as individuals are understood, as well as the social context out of which the possibility for being lesbian emerged. It was argued that this context was primarily pejorative with respect to psychological theory, with rare exceptions such as Chodorow (1978; 1992; and, 1994) and Benjamin (1988; and, 1995).

Freud and Jung, the fathers of psychological theory, founded their understandings of women on Victorian attempts to neutralize female sexuality, and assumed that women were essentially passive (submissive) and men essential active (dominant) in the expression of desire. Moreover, healthy desire was based upon genital difference, and this implied that heterosexual relationships, along with the power dynamics of dominance and submission, were the only healthy choice. Whether being lesbian should or should not be considered pathological was not a point of debate and discussion for this research. As Chodorow (1994) suggests, there is no reason to assume that heterosexual relationships are any less neurotic or immature than lesbian relationships, since 'normal' sexuality also depends upon a restriction in object choice and erotic attraction. In addition, empirical research into what constitutes a healthy heterosexual relationship is all but absent from the literature. The current research design is therefore limited in its ability to provide comparative data to that of so-called heterosexual women. In other words, it is unknown whether heterosexual women also demonstrate the presence of healing masculine and feminine potentials, or whether this is a product of lesbians needing to develop a third and transcendent position that offers them access to both masculine and feminine potentials. What was clear was that participants recognised their position as socially deviant, and that in spite of this, they continued to individuate or differentiate and integrate the masculine and feminine potentials that appeared in their dream-series.

Faderman (1991) suggests that sexual categories are dependent upon a broad range of factors that are extraneous to sexual orientation. This is in part a product of feminism having called the idea of appropriate gender behaviour and appearance into question, and the debate between social constructionist theorists (who believe that certain social conditions are necessary before being lesbian can emerge as a social identity) and essentialist theorists (who believe one is born lesbian). This debate could not be resolved in the context of the present research. Moreover, it was not possible to confirm or disconfirm whether particular grounds for being lesbian exist, since if psychology is to understand how early relationships contribute to the development of a lesbian identity, and to what extent lesbians sexualise their childhood idealisation of women, the research design would need to be longitudinal. In other words, a group of female children would need to be interviewed at regular intervals over a period of some thirty years, and the dream-series and relational patterns of those women who choose to be lesbian and those choose to be heterosexual would need to be compared.

What was clear on the basis of this research was that primary lesbian participants expressed several of the options for identificatory love noted by Benjamin (1995). Benjamin's work as an intersubjective theorist confirmed the possibility that lesbians, like women, may be entrapped by the mother. It would seem however, that lesbians are entrapped by the mother in a different way to that which Benjamin suggests of the infant. More specifically, in so much as lesbians feel responsible for their mother's welfare from an early age (rather than the mother being responsible for their welfare), the power relationship to the mother is inverted. This



creates the grounds for lesbians' feeling responsible for those to whom they are attached, and it is this inverted attachment that seems to obstruct their individuation process. Participants' dream-series suggested that, as primary lesbians, their attachment to the mother must die (even if only in fantasy) in order to give way to a relationship of identification with her. An interesting observation in this respect is that the younger the participant in her lesbian identity, the more she denied identification with the mother on a conscious level. In so much as this hypothesis is based upon only three participants, its truth cannot be stated with any degree of certainty. It does however, offer possibilities for further research. More specifically, lesbians' perceptions of their mothers, and changes in these perceptions at different stages in the coming out process, deserve further exploration.

The current research also confirmed Benjamin's (1995) observations that father love, or the belief in masculine superiority, may not be the equivalent of an identification with passivity, i.e., identification with the mother. Rather, and in the case of the lesbians involved in this research, identification with the father may represent an offshoot of a complex effort to identify with the father's younger self as a boy. All three participants could imagine themselves as boys or adolescents, but not men. In other words, they identified with masculine potentials that had not yet been empowered by the patriarchal imperative, i.e., the belief within a patriarchal context that women should be dominated by men.

Benjamin's (1995) work also suggests that becoming a subject demands identification with someone outside and different to the first love object, someone who is a subject and not a source of goodness. In traditional theory the first love object is presumed to be the mother, and the second love object the father. Benjamin observes that the second love object does not have to be the father, or indeed, a male presence. For instance, a girl's identification with femininity may be reflected in her love and admiration for someone who is other than her mother. Participants demonstrated this form of identification from an early age with their childhood crushes on older women. Benjamin also argues that adolescent girls often develop identificatory love for a woman who represents their ideal, and in that sense look for a 'second mother'. This was also true of all of the participants included in the research. Moreover, all three participants desired not mother-others, but lovers who were other to their mothers. As such, their desire was identificatory rather than anaclitic. Finally, Benjamin suggests that a girl's identification with 'masculinity' may reflect love and admiration of the father. This was true of those two participants for whom the mother was a wounding presence. A more analytical perspective suggested that lesbians identify with the archetypal aspects of fathering that their relational fathers do not express, and relate to archetypal aspects of mothering that their mothers do not express.

It would seem then that the primary lesbians involved in this research demonstrated the grounds for lesbian ways of being from an early age. Participants demonstrated cross-gender activities during their childhood and for the most part, were supported in these activities by their parents. Moreover, they all described childhood crushes on older and more powerful women, and in some instances, eroticised these relationships. At the same time, it was also clear that disclosing as lesbian was a conscious decision and choice, and that relating as a lesbian required confirmation with a lesbian sexual encounter, as well as initial support from the lesbian community. The meaning distilled would seem to suggest that being lesbian is both essential and constructed. In other words, the possibility for lesbian desire arises during childhood, and is shaped by popular conceptions of what it means to be lesbian at the same time as these understandings

are modified by individual lesbians' personal experience of loving women. As such, the detypification process described by Jenness (1992) was also apparent.

### **8.2.1 THE ESSENCE OF LESBIAN EXPERIENCE**

In so much as I based my epistemology upon hermeneutic-phenomenology, participants' experience of being lesbian was given priority. I took for granted, therefore, that being lesbian reflects a personal identity that has psychological meaning, and that this psychological meaning can be accessed within an individual's intrapsychic realm. This realm is not often acknowledged (and sometimes even denied) by social constructionists, as if being a subject does not involve an intensely personal world that lies beyond a world that is shared with others. At the same time, I also took for granted that internalising the shared world is an essential and necessary part of human experience.

Social constructionist approaches try to analyse conscious and unconscious subjectivities as the products of discourses, of structures of knowledge, that are embedded in particular historical and social relations (Squire, 1989). The literature review was therefore devoted to distilling and identifying the kinds of social constructions that might be used by participants to make sense of their lesbian identity and development. In other words, I assumed that being lesbian is not only an identity that is constructed through the internalisation (intrapersonal realm) of a world that is shared with others (interpersonal world), but is also an identity that is reflected in archetypal patterns for being (intrapsychic). It is through and in this realm that I chose to seek for the psychological meaning of being lesbian.

It was noted above that statements of certainty could not be made with respect to the psychological grounds for lesbian relating. What was certain however, is that participants confirmed many of the options for relating to the mother and father that were noted by Benjamin (1995), and in this sense, demonstrated a multiplicity of possibilities and motives with respect to their gender identities, identifications and preferences.

A spontaneous and unexpected theme in terms of the literature reviewed was the emergence of being lesbian as a spiritual invitation away from the mother to whom participants were attached through an inverted power relationship. While this invitation was initially a Christian invitation, participants later abandoned traditional Christian understandings for more New Age discourses that honoured rather than controlled feminine potentials. It would seem thus that these lesbians, in their commitment to heal the wound that being sexed means within a patriarchal context, were seeking a way of being and seeing that existed beyond both patriarchal and feminist images of women and their loving expressions.

In the course of distilling the psychological meaning of being lesbian lived and imagined others were gathered into clusters on the basis of the qualities of relationship they evoked for participants. What emerged were wounding, wounded and healing qualities that were carried by masculine and feminine presences, be these lived or imagined. The wounding-wounded dichotomy was to be expected in a social context that is organised according to patriarchal principles. Patriarchy's understanding of power as 'power-over' ensures that societies are organised in terms of people who dominate (men) and people who submit to domination (women).

This research suggested that there is a third and transcendent position, a position that attempts to

play with and heal the tensions between aspects of human experience that are constructed in opposition. As suggested above, whether this transcendent position is evident in heterosexual relating is unknown. It is possible that lesbians, by virtue of their deviant position, are more easily able to access and express alternative ways of relating. Their willingness to experiment with these alternatives may be the result of primary lesbians' failure to internalise conventional constructions of masculine and feminine relations to the same degree as heterosexual women, as suggested by Burch (1993). Perhaps this is how lesbians can regard sexuality as an area of play, and move beyond sexuality as an expression of power. More specifically, in so much as lesbians challenge conventional understandings of the relationship between sex and gender, and live this challenge forth in their everyday ordinariness, being lesbian presents as a choice to negotiate gender roles, identifications and preferences in relationship to a partner. In essence, lesbians cannot take heterosexual gender constructions for granted in their relationships.

In so much as being sexed is a wound that reflects our separateness (Jager, 1989), and lesbians are defined in terms of their sexuality, being lesbian means being labelled in terms of one's woundedness. This comes as no surprise. Traditional psychology understands being a man as active and dominant, and therefore capable of wounding, and being a woman as passive and dominated, and therefore capable of being wounded. In other words, by virtue of being women, lesbians suffer from the internalised oppression common to the category women (cf. Wehr, 1987). By virtue of being women who are also lesbian however, they suffer from the deeper wound of internalized homophobia, paradoxically at the same time as they are struggling to transcend their internalised oppression as women by choosing to be lesbian. Moreover, lesbians are acutely aware that they do not belong to mainstream society, and that their not belonging ensures them as more vulnerable to persecution. Thus, while being lesbian opens up opportunities for negotiating a gender identity in relationship to a partner, and in this sense is personally authentic, the difficulties associated with negotiating gender roles from a marginalised social position complicates their possibilities for achieving sexual, relational, vocational and spiritual autonomy.

Participants were consistent in their rejection of men and male-identified lesbians on the basis of the power-over sexual motive expressed in such relationships. In essence, participants felt disempowered within these relationships. They were also consistent in their ambivalence towards bisexual lesbians, in so much as bisexual women pressured them to conform to the power-over motive in sexual relationships. If being lesbian concerned only the issue of sexual orientation, i.e., the decision to be lesbian was based only upon the genital form of a sexual partner, then whether a partner was male-identified or bisexual would not matter. That being lesbian depends on more than a partner's genital form, i.e., that it also depends upon a lesbian's gender orientation or a preference for partners with a particular gender identity, suggests that lesbians understand sex as play rather than power. It is in this sense that being lesbian constitutes a primary challenge to the patriarchal organisation of relationships.

What complicated the possibility of statements of truth about lesbian sexuality was that lesbians have no watershed moment for distinguishing between erotic and platonic relationships with women. More specifically, lovers become friends and friends become lovers. Kitzinger and Coyle (1995) note that the fuzzy divide between the sexual and non-sexual with respect to lesbian relationships is an area deserving further research. This research goes some way towards clarifying the distinction.

More specifically, Benjamin (1995) suggests that identification plays a key role in love and desire

for all forms of sexuality, that the wish for identification often appears as erotic, and that identificatory love remains associated with certain aspects of idealisation and excitement throughout life. In other words, identificatory love for the other is both idealised and eroticised. This research suggested that erotic idealisations were not necessarily sexualised by participants, and that it was the very lack of sexualisation in these relationships that permitted participants to differentiate from the women they idealised, and in so doing, claim an autonomous identity. This most often occurred in relationship to a heterosexual 'second mother', but also occurred in relationship to women whom participants described as friends. Idealisation of lesbian women appeared to confront participants with their fears of merger, particularly where the erotic idealisation was sexualised. It would seem that lesbians' recognition that the object of their desire was also socially marginalised rather than powerful, i.e., wounded and victimised, evoked the intensification of their internalised homophobia. In other words, rather than just a loss of boundaries, merger involved an intensification of their fantasies of being persecuted. The other alternative, i.e., loving a lesbian who was different, involved the risks involved in adopting of complementary gender positions. In so much as participants recognised that the patriarchal power-over motives characteristic of heterosexual relationships meant co-dependency, they resisted being trapped in either masculine or feminine ways of being by leaving their gender identity fluid and looked for partners with fluid gender identities.

It would seem that participants preferred to negotiate their gender identities in relationship to their partners, rather than adopted socially constructed roles. In this sense, being lesbian seems to mean being open to the possibilities of playing with and exploring a multiplicity of relational constellations based upon gender identity variations. This exploration inevitably involved concerns about interpersonal co-dependency with respect to gender difference, as well as intrapersonal co-dependency with respect to gender sameness. Moreover, in so much as friends become lovers and lovers become friends, participants played with the possibilities for intrapersonal and interpersonal co-dependency in relationship to the same person at different times, and different people at the same time.

## **8.2            REFLEXIVE ANALYSIS**

Kitzinger and Coyle (1995) suggest that good psychological research and practice would bracket assumptions and models derived from a heterosexual starting-point, be sensitive to the social context, and derive its questions from the concerns of lesbians and gay people. While hermeneutic-phenomenology suggests that it is not possible to bracket research assumptions entirely (only become more aware of them and take responsibility for this), the spirit of the first requirement was met. The research took three lesbians' experiences of their relationships as its starting point, and the binary paradigm of gender and sex was suspended for the purposes of conducting the research. In so much as I reviewed literature concerning images of lesbians and how they are thought about, the second requirement was met, i.e., the research remained sensitive to the social context in which these lesbians found themselves. Moreover, in so much as the source of my understanding was based upon the dream-series of individual women who labelled themselves lesbian, questions were derived from the concerns of lesbians. In so doing, the third requirement was met.

As suggested in Chapter Five, it is best to view the methodology as a series of spirals within spirals,

of processes within processes, that are guided by the question of lesbian gender identity development and its diversity. First, I adopted dreamed existence as my point of entry into lesbian participants' psychological worlds. This involved taking a particular ontological stance towards dreamed existence. Arguably, there are other less esoteric stances that could have been taken to dreamed existence. Secondly, on the basis of the literature review, I focussed upon participants' relationships to lived and imagined others in their dream-series. This not only established a relational focus for the research, but involved bringing psychoanalytic and analytical forestructures to bear upon participants' amplifications of others in their dreamed existence. Moreover, it assumed a link between these two bodies of theory. Although this choice further compromised the principles of theoretical purism, psychoanalytic language opened the door to understanding the quality of relationships between lived others and participants (interpersonal realm), and analytical language opened the door for understanding the quality of relationships between imagined others and participants (intrapsychic realm). The dialogue between these lenses permitted me to focus on participants' intrapersonal worlds. It also served to make the data more manageable, and protected others in participants' social networks from being inadvertently 'outed'. More specifically, images could be grouped in terms of the quality of their relationship to participants rather than their formal relationship to participants. In bringing these discourses together the dance between what individual lesbians imagine and what they live could be accessed.

Decisions, or steps taken in the course of making sense of the lesbian identity development and diversity in a manner that is meaningful, inevitably involved compromises. Several procedural questions are raised. For instance, the time lapse between recording and amplifying participants' dream-series meant that their intrapersonal dialogue was retrospective rather than immediate. Moreover, because the case synopsis for the first participant was completed prior to amplifying the dream-series of the second participant or third participant, the focus of the interviewing and reading guides were progressively refined. It is possible therefore that some divergences between participants were glossed over, i.e., in the effort to distill common inter-case concerns, contradictory themes may have been lost.

### **8.2.1 LIMITATIONS OF THE METHODOLOGY ADOPTED**

Clearly, as Addison (1989) suggests of all hermeneutic projects, the meaning of being lesbian emerges in a particular socio-political context and it is based upon a background of shared cultural practices. In the case of lesbians, this background is patriarchy and its dependence upon the binary paradigm for understanding sex and gender. Armstrong (1986) explores patriarchy as practised in the Christian West in order to identify the historical emergence of systems of male domination and the origins of women's subordination. I adopted this understanding of being lesbian when I suggested that being lesbian is a marginal phenomenon that must be seen in the context of the options available to women in general. In other words, the meaning of being lesbian is not assumed to be the unique privatised property of the participants interviewed. At the same time, the meaning of being lesbian was sought in participants' ongoing, ordinary, everyday interactions with others in their wakened and dreamed existences. It is in that sense that the meaning of being lesbian was contextually grounded (Brown, Tappan, Gilligan, Miller & Argyria, 1989). This context was not necessarily a feminist context. Indeed, participants were either ignorant, or highly critical, of feminism.

By virtue of suspending the binary paradigm of sex and gender, I adopted a contemporary analytical viewpoint and assumed that being human involves the integration of both masculine and feminine potentials

regardless of an individual's sex. Questions thus concerned which aspects of their masculine and feminine potentials participants were attempting to integrate, and in relationship to whom. Like Singer (1977), Schwartz-Salant (1992) and Whitmont (1992) therefore, I assumed that both men and women carry both masculine and feminine potentials, and that rather than questioning whether lesbians individuate, I asked: how do lesbians individuate?

In order to ensure a focus upon diversity of psychological meaning rather than diversity in lesbians' social and political expressions, an as homogeneous sample as possible was selected. The homogeneity of the sample with respect to their life histories, and by virtue of this, their coming out process, implied that Burch's (1993) complementary thesis could not be tested. Moreover, the deliberate exclusion of lesbian feminists may explain why feminism was not a prevalent forestructure or discourse with which participants made sense of their being lesbian. Given that all the participants included in the research vehemently denied that they were male-identified lesbians, statements about lesbian gender identity development and its diversity that arose out of the inductive process must be restricted to white middle-class feminine- and masculine-identified primary lesbians between the ages of 22 and 24 years. At the same time, the fact that such an homogeneous sample demonstrated diversity with respect to their gender constructions suggested that being lesbian may not be the central organising principle of the personality. A more important organising principle may be the gender that a lesbian values, i.e., whether she considers masculine potentials to be superior or inferior to feminine potentials.

A particularly intriguing question on the level of methodology was the extent to which the original question asked by the research influenced the content of participants' dream-series. As suggested by Jung (Mattoon, 1984), participants' dream-series reflected their vocational contexts. It also reflected their motivation for recording their dream-series. Two participants initiated their dream-series prior to engagement in the project, primarily for the purposes of their own personal development, and their dream images appeared to reflect this intention. Traci's dream-series, for instance, demonstrated feminine-friendly spiritual themes that arose in response to her attempts to integrate healing feminine potentials in relationship to the woman she chose as her friend and mentor. Likewise, Sarah's dream-series demonstrated her psychotherapeutic passage, first with a trainee psychologist and later with his second supervisor. The dynamics of each of her therapies was reflected in her dream-series, i.e., differentiation from her relational mother and integration of healing masculine potentials with respect to her first therapy, and access to the 'good enough' or holding mother archetype in the second. Through this process, Sarah gained a sense of original connection to and containment by the feminine potentials to which she had access. Lisa, on the other hand, initiated her dream-series for the purposes of the project itself, and her images appeared to be more clearly related to the issues that the research question brought to their awareness, i.e., the disclosure of a lesbian identity.

To say that lesbians' dream-series reflected the conflicted nature of their relationship to the world confirms psychoanalytic understandings of dreamed existence (Sloane, 1979). It was the nature of the conflict and the choices participants made in order to resolve these conflicts that proved particularly illuminating, however. Clearly, lesbians' unfulfilled sexual wishes and instincts were explicit rather than repressed within their dream-series, and were a source of pleasure rather than of guilt. Participants' vocational contexts, on the other hand, were a conflicted realm in which they strove to gain and maintain

a sense of autonomy. Sarah was struggling to extract herself from a field of psychological study that endangered her boundaries, and left her feeling confused about who she was as a person. Lisa was struggling to resist the expectation that she take up where her sister had failed, and thus struggling to release the expectation that she embody a way of being that implied burn out on the squash court. Participants' desire for an autonomous existence therefore went beyond the purely sexual aspects and implications of their being.

From the outset, the reading, organisation and interpretation of the text was guided by my interest in gender identity development and its diversities. On the basis of the literature review, the binary paradigm of sex and gender was suspended, being lesbian was assumed to be a relational phenomenon, and participants' possibilities for intimacy were assumed to be grounded in their early relationships to family members. The interview guide was therefore limited to the actors who appeared in participants' dreamed existence. Moreover, in order to group actors, a language with which to speak about the relationship between participants and actors within their dreamed and wakened existence was necessary. In adopting a psychoanalytic perspective of dreamed existence, attention was focussed upon participants wakened experience of lived others, and the manner in which these relationships to lived others were internalised. This permitted transference relationships to be identified, and the quality of participants' relationships to lived others to be explored. In adopting an analytical perspective of dreamed existence, attention was focussed upon participants' experience of imagined others. This permitted relationships of correspondence between lived and imagined others to be identified, and the qualities that participants projected onto lived others could be explored. Moreover, the extent to which participants either differentiated from or integrated these qualities could be established.

It is important to note that in bringing psychoanalytic and analytical forestructures to the case synopses in order to group the actors in each participant's drama, the presence of wounding, wounded and healing potentials emerged. This revealed that participants were in the process of transcending conventional dualistic understandings of masculine and feminine potentials in terms of good or bad objects, or parts thereof. The constellation of these potentials provided the basis for distinguishing between masculine- and feminine-identified lesbians. It also suggested that participants not only understood women (and lesbians in particular) as more vulnerable to victimisation, but constellated wounded potentials as the target of persecution by both masculine and feminine wounding potentials. Healing potentials appeared to be an attempt to transcend the persecutor-victim dichotomy. The dangers of becoming part of the lesbian community, in terms of its demands for conformity (Krieger, 1982) were thereby confirmed, in so much as an important part of expressing a healthy lesbian identity seems to be that the individual lesbian release herself from the victim status of lesbians as a category.

Theories pertaining to the psychogenesis of being lesbian were helpful with respect to establishing and refining women's original motives for taking up a lesbian identity, but were unhelpful in so much as they focussed almost exclusively upon male-identified lesbians, i.e., upon women who adopt socially prescribed male roles, functions, and conduct. Clearly, being lesbian holds wider possibilities than this, and participating lesbians revealed several of these possibilities. More specifically, participants were diverse with respect to what they chose to integrate into themselves, and from what they choose to differentiate. Traci identified with and integrated healing feminine potentials, and differentiated from wounding feminine potentials, as well

as women who carried wounding masculine potentials. Sarah identified with and integrated the more healing masculine potentials of her male therapist, and learned to relate to the healing feminine potentials of her female therapist. Likewise, Lisa identified with and integrated healing masculine potentials. Healing feminine potentials however, were absent from her world until her last dream. It was also apparent that participants' dream-series demonstrated the ongoing emergence, integration and differentiation from both masculine and feminine potentials. This suggested not only that lesbians individuate, but that negotiating their gender and its implications for intimate relationships was a critical and ongoing aspect of lesbian individuation. There are, therefore, a myriad of possibilities that present for a lesbian's passage to wholeness, and each lesbian constellates her gender identity in a manner that optimises her opportunities for personal growth and her understanding of what it means to love someone. These possibilities are negotiated in relationship to others whom a lesbian encounters both platonically and erotically. This brought ethical reservations to bear upon the research, in so much as the research method demanded consultation with participants.

### **8.2.2 ETHICAL RESERVATIONS**

Participants were chosen on the basis of their having come out within their immediate social context. This prevented participants and/or members of their social network from being accidentally outed by the focus of the research and their involvement in it. More important however, was that participants were also chosen on the basis of their willingness to reveal their intensely private worlds. Thus, while patients and ex-patients were excluded for professional reasons, the criteria selected did not exclude participants with whom I had previously established a relationship of trust. Without this level of trust the empirical basis for the research would have been severely compromised.

Initially, four participants' amplificatory interviews were brought to the point of synthesis. Subsequently, Photo was excluded from the final write-up on the grounds that had been my lover some five years before I initiated the research, and then during the course of recording her dream-series became involved with a patient of mine. Photo's initial inclusion in the research proved useful, in so much as it cautioned me about assuming that dreamed and wakened existence necessarily mirror each other. It seemed rather that dreamed existence exaggerated and distorted the issues of concern to participants in their wakened existence. The exclusion of Photo also simplified the process of creating the final synthesis, but at the cost of some interesting diversities. She was (like Traci) feminine-identified. Unlike Traci however, she was attempting to differentiate her masculine potentials rather than feminine potentials. Her exclusion implied that this difference could not be explored.

A related ethical concern was that my participants and I had become acquainted in terms of a lecturer-student relationship. While this was a purposeful choice for the sake of deepening rapport with participants, it brought a possible power differential to bear upon the amplificatory interview and subsequent analysis. It also introduced the possibility of transference relationships, by virtue of my presence in two participants' dream-series. In order to address these concerns, I not only gave participants the authority for interpreting their dreams during the amplificatory interview, but I ensured that by the time of the amplificatory interview none of them was a student of mine. In this sense, the time lapse between recording the dream-series and conducting the amplificatory interview worked for the research, at least in terms of the ethics of



conducting such intensely personal research.

Benjamin (1995) suggests that to be seen involves recognising the other's power. Participants' sense that they were seen or recognised in their uniqueness through the research thus involved the question of power. What emerged from the inductive hermeneutic-phenomenological analysis was that participants saw me not as a mother-other but someone who was other to the mother, i.e, an idealised 'second mother' who, like them, was also lesbian. This raised the possibility of the double trouble noted with respect to relationships based upon sameness, i.e., the intensification of internalised homophobia through collusion. It also raised the possibility that the relationship between participants and me, should it become sexualised during the amplificatory interview, would lead to merger, or the collapse of boundaries between participants and myself. In order to avert this possibility I maintained my focus upon the actors in participants' dream-series, and avoided questions about participants' sexual conduct. While these omissions reflected my own discomfort with talking about sexual conduct, it also demonstrated my respect for participants. What participants did in bed was not central to the research question, although as noted earlier, lesbians do seem to have a broader definition of what constitutes a sexual act than do heterosexuals<sup>48</sup>. Moreover, I refused to share my own dream-series with participants, or my thoughts about my own gender identity construction. This stance posed the danger that the research focus would collapse into a therapeutic focus, i.e., that I would become the mirror in which participants would see themselves reflected. In consistently maintaining the research rather than a therapeutic focus, and by directing participants to books that would assist their self-understanding, the possibility of merger on participants' parts was avoided. Indeed, the amplificatory interviews expressed a sibling rather than either parental or lover dynamic. I was a supportive confidant, rather than either an attachment figure who was responsible for providing them with goodness, or a lover in relationship to whom they negotiated their gender roles.

Finally, the themes elicited suggested that in contrast to sexual relationships in which participants faced their fears of co-dependency in the face of complementarity and/or their fears of merger in the face of sameness with an other who was the same as them, participants' idealisation of me as a healing presence (at least initially) was associated with the fear of being disappointed. Their fears were not unfounded. It was an inevitable product of maintaining the research rather than a therapeutic focus. At the same time, in so much as all participants felt they had gained something of value to themselves through being involved in the research, their expectation that they be healed through their involvement in the research was met, at least to some extent. In other words, as a researcher I was not insensitive to the issues with which they struggled. Indeed, this was the aspect of their existence in which I was particularly interested.

### **8.2.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING SELF-REFLEXIVE**

Allen (1994) considers self-reflection to be an essential part of any form of qualitative research. More

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<sup>48</sup> This has intriguing implications for lesbians who are molested or sexually harassed. In terms of their definition of sex, have they been raped?

specifically, it is not as if a researcher does not have a life beyond her research project, and as much as participants can and are changed in the course of their involvement in research projects, so too is the researcher. In other words, qualitative research, and particularly those using feminist frameworks for asking questions, are excruciatingly self-conscious (Stacey, 1988).

It is true, as Allen (1994) suggests, that any research question is motivated by the researchers' own concerns. At the time when I initiated my research I occupied a tenured position at a fairly prestigious university in a small town. One of my more enjoyable academic tasks was that of teaching students' about dreams. Together we looked at dreams through various theoretical lenses, and played with the possibilities for working with dreams in a respectful, mindful and healing manner. Accessing the vertical axis with consciousness was (and still is) my passion. In the course of both my teaching duties and through recording my own dream-series (every single one since 1993), I had noticed patterns, or unfolding processes, with respect to the relationship between my own masculine and feminine potentials. For instance, unlike Traci's *Cat Woman* and Sarah's *Snake Woman*, my wounding feminine potentials were carried by *Sea Witch*. I also noticed, with some alarm, that images that carried wounded masculine potentials (be these lived or imagined) in my dream-series all too often committed suicide. Even more alarming was that in the course of writing up my research I discovered that two of the men with whom the possibility of desire arose did commit suicide. While I was not responsible for their very personal and in many senses tragic decision, I was led to wonder about the dialectic between dreamed and wakened existence.

At the time of initiating the research, therefore, I defined myself as lesbian, a lecturer in psychology, and a clinical psychologist. As a lesbian I was, as Hall (1998) suggests, obsessed with relationships. It was a focus that was compounded by my interest in psychological *praxis*, both as a practitioner and teacher. If it takes two women to make a lesbian however, as suggested by Teresa de Lauretis (cited in Hall, 1998), then as a singular individual who was married to my work my lesbian status was somewhat tenuous. Nonetheless, like participants, I was not sexually naive, at least with respect to women. My circle of now heterosexual friends (both men and women) suggest however, that I have only ever fooled around. In the ordinariness of the heterosexual world sex means penetration. In the ordinariness of the lesbian world there is no such watershed moment.

Unlike Kitzinger (1987) and Hollway (1989), I resisted the temptation to include myself in my research, despite having tested the methodology upon my own dream-series prior to submitting my proposal. Like Hollway (1989) however, my conclusions were based upon participants' accounts of their experiences, and I also chose participants of whom I had some knowledge. As a methodological principle this would be considered unscientific by more conservative researchers. Zukas (1992) notes however, that subjectivity is the object of psychological study, and that psychology uses 'subjective' individuals to investigate its subject matter, even where the methodological rigour of quantitative methods separates the researcher from the individuals being explored. More conservative views therefore not only ignore the origins of psychology, i.e., that both Freud and Jung used their own dreams to develop their theories, but also ignore a continuing theme in feminist psychology, i.e., the necessity of excruciating self-reflection in the course of coming to conclusions about a phenomenon (Stacey, 1988; and Allen, 1994). Like Finchilescu (1995), I believe that qualitative methodologies have allowed women's experience to be articulated. In this research, it is lesbians' experience that is allowed to be articulated. As Kitzinger and Coyle (1995) suggest, it is time now.

As Duberman, *et al* (1989) observe, my efforts to explore and articulate lesbian experience did not occur without consequences. In the course of writing up the research, I fell foul of my own rage at the lies that patriarchy perpetuates in order to prop itself up, and relinquished my tenured position. Arguably, my rage was the product of having immersed myself in feminist critiques about how the category lesbian was constructed, a product of having immersed myself in participants' intensely personal worlds through the dream-series while on six months sabbatical, and the product of the isolated existence I lived as a budding metaphysician. My interest in metaphysics is reflected in my adoption of a hermetic understanding of dreamed existence, and in my choice of a feminist theologian (Armstrong, 1986) as a means for organising the many faces of women, and by virtue of this, the faces of lesbians. Arguably, there were better and more pertinent lenses that could have been used for the purposes of organising the literature review. At the same time, it is also true that feminism, in its attempts to focus upon the social context of lesbians (cf. Kitzinger, 1995; and, Benjamin, 1995), tends to ignore the psycho-spiritual context in which being lesbian is located.

In the course of writing up the research, I also fell foul of a danger pointed out by Golden (1994). As a therapist and teacher I encouraged students and patients (where appropriate) to consider the possibility of sexual fluidity and choice with respect to their own and others' sexual orientations. On the basis of this I was accused (by a patient's mother) and found guilty (three years later) of trying to recruit and convert a patient to a lesbian lifestyle. The patient, of course, refused to have anything to do with the whole business. The result was that I retreated from psychology as a profession. This initiated what lay persons would term a 'nervous breakdown'. Having trained and practised as a psychotherapist however, I was aware that ego-disintegration is not always a bad thing. In being thrown back into my adolescence I rediscovered and reclaimed creative gifts that I had compromised for the sake of academic excellence.

It is clear from the above that my personal and social context, my status as a lesbian, my interest in relationships, and my passion for establishing patterns in dream-series, influenced my research decisions. It was also true that undertaking this project with its particular focus on the psychological meaning of lesbian gender identity development and diversity changed me. Being immersed (and lost) in feminist clatter and clutter about lesbians, traditional psychological theories' pejorative views of my orientation, as well as participants' wounds in the face of patriarchy's prejudice, highlighted my own internalised homophobia and self-hatred. In my dreams I was stabbing at my own image in a mirror. Using dreamed existence as an empirical basis also meant that the foundation for the research could not be validated, and implied an excruciatingly self-conscious methodology for exploring psychological meaning. In whipping out just about every intellectual carpet from underneath my feet, I came to realise in the end that social constructions around being lesbian, and feminist critiques of these, only provide a language with which to speak. Finally, focussing upon what is healing about being lesbian at the time of writing up the research, i.e., its opportunities and challenges, arguably left me less sensitive to mainstream society's homophobic attitudes, and demonstrated the professional consequences of my living in ignorance of this. The search for the truth, it seems, does not come cheap.

### **8.3 DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Packer and Addison (1989) list criteria by which the success of a hermeneutic enquiry may be evaluated.

These criteria concern the research findings' consistency with other material in the same field, the response of participants to research findings, the communicability of the findings, the possibility for entertaining alternative perspectives, and the practical implications of the research.

The discussion above suggests that previous research about lesbians is refined, rather than contradicted. For instance, unlike heterosexual women, what defines a woman as lesbian is that she discloses her 'deviant' identity. It is a public declaration of her intent to negotiate gender in relationship to her lovers and friends rather than take gender roles for granted. As a primary lesbian she makes her declaration in a particular way. Similarities with respect to the appropriation and disclosure of their identity as lesbian, suggested that being lesbian was not only a personal and psychological phenomenon, but also an ideological and political artifact that circumscribed participants' interpersonal and intrapersonal arenas. If being lesbian was not considered deviant by consensus reality, there would be no need to disclose. By virtue of the fact that being lesbian is considered deviant (at worst) and a problem (at least) by mainstream psychology, women belonging to the category are separated out from the main stream, and moreover, situated politically. This creates a situation in which lesbians feel they are expected to declare their deviance and differentness, or 'come out'. In declaring themselves, they demonstrate that they do not belong and become vulnerable to persecution. While this initially promotes entry into an exclusively lesbian subculture, subsequent to their declaration and through the process of detypification, lesbians are able to accommodate and be accommodated in their difference, and to negotiate the complexities of loving women. Disclosure is therefore a watershed moment that differentiates lesbians from heterosexual women, and ensures the label lesbian as a central (but perhaps not the most important) organising principle in her personality. Furthermore, lesbians appear to demonstrate a broader definition of what is considered sexual conduct than do heterosexual men and women. Lesbians do not have the watershed moment of penetration. This also differentiates lesbians from heterosexual women. Clearly, the dynamics of disclosure - to whom, when and why, as well as how lesbians define sexual conduct, offers rich possibilities for further research.

Despite the primary lesbian status of participants, their broad definition of sexual conduct and the similarities noted with respect to their disclosure of their identity, the explication also revealed a great deal of diversity between participants, particularly with respect to the relational grounds for their relationships, their different emphases within the individuation process, and the gender identities they adopted in relationship to their lovers. Nonetheless, several themes of importance to psychotherapeutic *praxis* with lesbian patients deserve mention. For instance, lesbians seem to look towards those whom they idealise, rather than their sexual partners, for healing. As pointed out above, the sexualisation of idealised relationships confronted participants with their fears of merger, and participants tended to avoid relationships that evoked this possibility. This has particularly important implications for psychotherapy with lesbians, and would need to be explored within this context. Moreover, lesbians do not seem to desire mother-others, but women who are other to their mothers. In addition, while they are identified with their fathers, they are identified with what he failed to express rather than what he did express. What they identify with first and foremost however, is their status as the victims of patriarchy, or how they are wounded by male definitions of female sexuality. Loving women is understood to be a means for healing this wound, and transcending the binary paradigm of sex and gender through access to healing masculine and feminine potentials would therefore seem to constitute the foundation for lesbian individuation and healing. A particularly intriguing direction for further

research is thus that of exploring how therapeutic intervention with therapists who hold different constellations of gender potentials would affect their lesbian patients' constructions of their gender identities. For instance, the presence of a male therapist who expressed healing masculine potentials appeared to be central to Sarah's capacity to imagine that both men and women carry healing potentials, rather than only wounded or wounding potentials respectively.

In terms of Packer and Addison's (1989) second criterion, all participants experienced their involvement in the research process as enlightening and useful. As such, the researcher fulfilled her ethical obligations towards her participants in Allen's (1994) terms. As Ullman (1999) suggests however, this may have been a function of their maintaining a dream-series rather than their involvement in the amplificatory interviews *per se*. More critical in terms of the self-reflexive exercise disclosed, is that lesbians who conduct research about lesbians need to be cautious, not only with respect to protecting their participants' confidentiality, but also with respect to protecting themselves. Even in a country where alternative sexual choices are constitutionally protected, being a lesbian who understands lesbian experience as a normal and rather ordinary variation of human sexual fluidity ensures a researcher (and psychotherapist) as vulnerable to persecution by those who hold opposing views. It is possible that triangulation with other like-minded researchers on an intense and ongoing basis may have obviated some of the more unfortunate events that took place in the course of doing this research, in so much as a support group would have been constituted. On the other hand, it might just have meant the destruction of a few more academic careers.

In terms of Packer and Addison's (1989) third criterion, the project constituted an attempt to link analytical and psychoanalytic perspectives. Psychoanalytic understandings were helpful for understanding how lesbians internalise and use their relationships to lived others in the creation of their lesbian identities, while analytical theory was helpful for understanding how lesbians project archetypal patterns onto lived others in order to differentiate from and/or integrate these potentials into their identities. The merits of this approach were demonstrated in Crowley (1992) with respect to understanding psychotherapy with a patient who suffered from a borderline condition. In the current research, the approach was extended for the purposes of understanding the link between lived and imagined others in participants' dreamed existences. Including both schools of psychological theory is not epistemologically pure, but does prove heuristically useful in the pursuit of psychological meaning, particularly when dreamed and wakened existences are assumed to have an equal, if different, ontological status.

Finally, the practical implications of the research, besides offering rich possibilities for further research, suggest that psychology as a body of theory needs to move beyond dualism when thinking about masculine and/or feminine functioning. The possibility for constructing and expressing healing masculine and/or feminine potentials for and in relationship to others offers a transcendent position that is not emphasized by contemporary psychological thinking, perhaps because psychological thinking is focussed upon pathological rather than healthy functioning. The implications of this suggestion go further than the focus on so-called lesbians, however. Access to healing images and potentials, and transcendence of the wounding-wounded dichotomy, would also assist heterosexual men and women with negotiating their intimate triumphs and tragedies.

As suggested by Sardello (1975) a genuine dialogue is enacted whenever there is the experience that "there is much more to be said". The wealth of information generated by the research, and the

sometimes difficult decisions made with respect to what information to include and what information to exclude, was witness to the genuineness of the dialogue at all levels. Amplificatory interviews were difficult to terminate, the explication gave rise to still more questions, and consultation with participants yielded still more information. It was also true that in creating the synopsis for each participant's amplificatory interview, the final synthesis of their wakened and dreamed existences, and the dialogue between this and the theoretical literature, the data was paraphrased in order to minimize repetition. As such, some of the diversity was lost. It was also inevitable that the process of paraphrasing was guided by the questions asked on the basis of the literature review, in so much as these questions were used to construct the interview and reading guide, and to organise synopses of participants' experiences. Nonetheless, and contrary to expectations, lesbians' understanding of their spirituality emerged as an unexpected and spontaneous theme. This is clearly an aspect of lesbian experience that deserves attention.

In conclusion, Kitzinger and Coyle (1995) suggest that it is not enough for researchers to investigate heterosexual relationships and then explore the extent to which their findings apply to lesbian relationships. To do so, they suggest, means that heterosexual relationships generate the research hypotheses. This poses the danger that processes and dynamics that are unique to lesbian relationships will be ignored. The current research takes up this opportunity by offering a lesbian-centred understanding of relationships. The foundation is experiential, and the conclusions are based upon a dialogue between this and existing research. Moreover, rather than providing answers to questions about what constitutes healthy lesbian gender identity development, the research focus provided a theoretical and methodological foundation for asking questions about whether constructing relationships according to fixed and complementary gender identifications are necessarily indicative of health. What is unique to being lesbian is that gender is not taken for granted, but negotiated, in intimate relationships on every possible level except that both partners definitely female. Moreover, in so much as lesbians are committed to play rather than power dynamics in their sexual relationships, they experiment with a multiplicity of gender variations. It would be interesting to see if, when the same methodology is applied, heterosexual women are able to access the same freedoms. Have heterosexual women embraced the post-modern possibility for co-creating their identities? And indeed, on an intrapsychic level, would this be possible for heterosexual women?

#### **8.4 SOME FINAL OBSERVATIONS**

Qualitative questions, and the methods developed in order to ask and come to conclusions about any human experience (even if this experience could be contained by theoretical parameters), are necessarily open-ended. In this ever-widening spiral of exploration, final conclusions are not reached, for the objective of the method is to encourage the right kinds of questions. Asking these questions on the grounds of a dream-series revealed a field of possibilities that present to women who love women.

Social constructionist theory highlights the social, historical and collective nature of human consciousness (Durrheim, 1997). The current research focussed upon the psychological meaning of being lesbian, and in order to achieve this, developed a theoretical perspective that included intrapsychic, intrapersonal and interpersonal components. At the same time, the researcher acknowledged that psychological meanings develop within a context of social meanings or constructions that individual lesbians

appropriate and internalise in order to make sense of their experience. Due to the focus upon psychological meaning, rather than the social construction of being lesbian, the point of departure was dreamed existence. It started with the mystery of Being. The research also extended understandings of the grounds for lesbian relating beyond the mother-child dyad to include participants' relationships to their fathers and siblings, and then later with lovers, friends and mentors. As such, the focus of the research was relational (in so much as it attended to the familial grounds for lesbian relating and the implications of this for later relationships), and developmental (in so much as it attended to lesbians' disclosures of their being lesbian).

It would seem that participants recognised their socially deviant position and its implications. In spite of this, and perhaps even because of it, they continued to individuate. A primary challenge and opportunity for these lesbians appeared to be that of moving beyond the role of victim in both their personal and social identities. While participants' desires for an autonomous existence went beyond the purely sexual aspects and implications of their being, with respect to gender they demonstrated a great deal of diversity about what they chose to integrate into their idea of themselves, and from what they chose to differentiate. Idealised identificatory love relationships, when not sexualised, permitted lesbians to differentiate. Attachment love, and sexualised identificatory love, confronted participants with their fear of merger. The former involved merging with a narcissistically invested mother-other who wounded them, while the latter was associated with an intensification of their internalised homophobia.

Feminist psychologists have been profoundly affected by psychoanalysis. Some have rejected it in its entirety, and others have attempted to engage with the androcentric and misogynist aspects of the theory in order to evolve a new woman-centred approach (Benjamin, 1995). To my knowledge, no psychological theorists, feminist or otherwise, have attempted to engage with psychoanalysis in order to evolve a lesbian-centred approach, although Kitzinger and Coyle (1995) call for such research programmes. The current research goes some way to establishing a foundation for such. Moreover, in most traditional psychological approaches the role of the mother-child relationship in the development of psyche has remained central to the understanding of development. In making the mother responsible for the psychological development of the child, the mother has been blamed for a child's deviant identification and subsequent gender relations (Finchilescu, 1995). The current research extended this understanding of psychological influences to include other family members, particularly the role of the father and the role of siblings. As Benjamin (1995) suggests however, each 'love object' embodies multiple possibilities of sameness and difference, or masculinity and femininity. Furthermore, she suggests that one love relationship may serve a multitude of functions. What emerged on the basis of this research is that lesbians feared, and by virtue of this tried to avoid, the possibilities of *both* merger through gender sameness *and* conflicted relationships based upon gender complementarity. Instead, they attempted to create win-win relationships through playing with the multitude of possibilities for defining their gender identities and identifications in relationship to a lover.

Despite their status as primary lesbians, two gender identifications emerged. Masculine-identified lesbians held masculine potentials to be superior, while feminine-identified lesbians held feminine potentials to be superior. Moreover, the gender considered superior was more differentiated, i.e., it demonstrated wounding, wounded and healing qualities in relationship to participants while the gender considered inferior demonstrated only wounding qualities. It would seem that in contrast to patriarchy, the capacity to wound others is considered to be an inferior quality by lesbians. Moreover, the source of their healing lies in their

accessing and expressing healing potentials, i.e., to heal the wound that being sexed means for them on both a personal and social level. In so much as lesbians challenge the binary paradigm of sex and gender, and are willing to risk being fluid with their gender identities in relationship to both themselves and others, being lesbian offers women the freedom to play with and negotiate the multiple possibilities for sexual expression in their loving relationships. Being lesbian, even in the late 1990's however, is still a position that invites persecution, paradoxically, at the same time as it challenges the grounds for that persecution. An important part of expressing a healthy lesbian identity seems to be that the individual releases herself from the victim status of lesbians as a category. This release can be understood as a lesbian's willingness to embrace sexuality as an area of play rather than power, and implied that lesbians challenge the patriarchal organisation of relationships and the power motives that underlie such relationships. In this sense, lesbians were feminist even if they did not consciously adopt a feminist stance and/or its accompanying rhetoric. What makes lesbians different from feminists is that they live the post-modern reality, rather than just deconstruct patriarchy. It would seem that the gift offered in being marginalised, victimised and persecuted by the wider society is that lesbians can take up the opportunity to play at the edges of human sexual expression, come to understand their gender multiplicity, and then let go of the social constructions that limit their sexual freedoms. This allows them to extend the possibilities for constructing what existentialists call loving-being-with, or sexual intimacy.

Certain debates could not be resolved within the context of the current research. First, it was not possible to establish whether particular psychological grounds for lesbian relating exist, simply because participants' recall of their early experiences was retrospective. The information given could also not be validated in the light of parental objections to their being lesbian and issues of confidentiality with respect to their lovers. My more 'objective' knowledge of their personal contexts, and by virtue of this some of their lovers, did permit some degree of reality testing as well as an assessment of their honesty in amplificatory interviews. It would seem that participants were surprisingly honest about and aware of their relational issues. Second, in recognising that the research dealt with perceptions of reality, and moreover, that it was impossible to be truly objective when using a qualitative methodology, the research called for greater reflexivity in conducting and reporting the findings. It is through this reflexive process, and the intense and excruciating self-reflection that the research focus demanded, that I was able to take ownership of the research and the consequences of conducting it. The truth did not come cheap; but it also could not be denied once it was seen with clarity.

Finally, in so much as lesbians express some of the same identificatory options as heterosexual women, it is quite conceivable that heterosexual women hold similar views of men as do lesbians, that they have experienced their fathers and mothers in a similar way, and that they show similar and equally diverse constellations of their gender potentials. In this sense, the meanings that constellate around being lesbian as an identity cannot be said to be either unique to lesbians or conclusive. Rather, the meanings distilled provide a starting point for further exploration about sexuality and its polymorphous expression whatever an individual's orientation.



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<sup>1</sup> Due to the number of times most of Jung's *Collected Works* have been published, these are referenced by volume number and paragraph number, and are listed here in terms of their volume number and page numbers. The volume number is bolded in order to assist readers in locating the volume referred to.

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### **PREAMBLE**

I am presently conducting an in-depth investigation which focuses upon lesbian individuation, and particularly the interface between the imaginal and actual relational realms. I was wondering if you would be interested in participating in this research. Your involvement in the research would constitute the following:

- 1) completing the questionnaire provided;
- 2) recording your dreams for a period of six months, or until you have recorded a series of thirty dreams;
- 3) in-depth interviews focusing upon both male and female persons to whom you have felt attracted and/or with whom you have had an intimate relationship; and,
- 4) in-depth interviews focusing upon your relationship to your mother and father, from the first image you can recall to the present moment.

Given the sensitivity of the topic and the personal nature of the information you will need to reveal, you will be requested to provide your own pseudonym, as well as pseudonyms for those men and women to whom you have felt attracted. This is in order to protect your anonymity and confidentiality.

The data collected will be analysed such that a case synopsis for each individual can be constructed and then compared across individuals in order to identify common themes. You will also be consulted during the various stages of analysis in order to clarify your experience and contribute your understanding to the analysis.

The investigation is being conducted primarily for the purposes of a Doctoral dissertation, and in the hope that it might serve to increase lesbians' understanding of themselves as well as mental health professionals' understanding of lesbian development and individuation. It is likely that your involvement may also enable you to make sense of and understand your own personal journey.

Your participation in this investigation would be very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Michelle L. Crowley

SECTION A

Please answer the following questions in as much detail as possible.

1. Please indicate your chosen pseudonym: .....
2. When were you born? ...../...../19.....
3. What is your present occupation? .....
4. What is your highest educational qualification?.....  
.....
5. How would you personally define 'being lesbian'? .....  
.....  
.....
6. Would you say that you have 'come out'? (please circle the appropriate answer)  
                  Yes                  Unsure                  No  
Why do you say this? .....  
.....
7. Which of the following people have you told that you are lesbian? (please circle the appropriate answer)  
a) Family members:     all                    some                    none  
b) Colleagues:            all                    some                    none  
c) Friends:                all                    some                    none
8. What is the duration of your longest lasting intimate relationship with a woman?  
.....months
9. How would you rate the quality of this relationship? (please circle the appropriate answer on the scale provided)  
constructive 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 destructive

Why do you say this? .....  
.....  
.....

10. Have you ever been sexually involved with a man? (please circle the appropriate answer)

Yes                      No

11. How often do you remember your dreams? (please circle the most appropriate answer)

- a)      at least three times a week
- b)      at least once a week
- c)      about once every two weeks
- d)      at least once a month
- e)      never

12. Would you be prepared to record each dream you remember over a period of six months, or until you have recorded at least thirty dreams? (please circle the appropriate answer)

Yes                      No



**SECTION B**

The following is an informed consent form. Please read it carefully and sign the form as indicated.

I, the undersigned, understand the nature of the project being undertaken by Michelle L. Crowley for the purposes of her Doctoral dissertation. I hereby give her permission to use the information supplied above, as well as that collected in subsequent follow-up interviews. I understand that my identity will remain confidential.

Full name: .....

Signature: .....

Contact address or number: .....

.....

.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

**DREAM ONE**

I dreamt that Crush1 and her folks came to visit. A very sexual dream. We were both naked and warm; I was holding her as we discussed how long it had been since we had seen each other and how different it was now that I was at University and an adult. There were lots of people driving around in the city. Then I dreamt LoverC and I were with my Dad in Cape Town. He was busy working. I remember eating and drinking at different restaurants and spending lots of money. This coloured man tried to seduce LoverC, thinking she was the sales representative. I told her to assert herself and said to my Dad as he watched that this is the reason why women are not taken seriously – whether they are at work or not. He agreed. He allowed LoverC to drive us all back home, she kept on taking the wrong turns because we were in Cape Town and she did not really know her way around.

**DREAM TWO**

I dreamt about Affair1. I was with Affair1's father and Aunt1 on our way to Masavingo to visit Popeye because he was very ill. Aunt2 (Affair1's mother) had had the same idea, so her and Affair1 flew over from the UK. They did not want to see S and C. V just wanted the car registration sticker, which would prevent S and C from travelling any further and so that she could claim the money from it. Affair1 and I just wanted to see each other. So I stuck the sticker on the sliding door so nobody could have it. We held each other and it felt really good to just hold her again. I also remember telling her how great she looked. I did not greet Aunt2 affectionately at all.

Then I was cycling around an industrial area when I saw this man beating his wife/secretary who then saw me watching him and threatened me. So I cycled off. He chased me in this huge truck because he wanted to kill me. But I won.

**DREAM THREE**

I dreamt that I had to return to Ght for the Festival. The first day there was a welcoming procession. I saw the A (friend from school) and B (Friend2 and her sister) clans. Friend1 pointed out Friend3 (Friend2's sister) and her lover to me. Friend3 noticed me without greeting. Instead she started showing off for my sake – playing the drums and then running off into the procession. The guys in the procession were all wearing their jocks and white shirts. The setting was unlike Ght, more like CT or PE, because there was a freeway bridge near a harbour. I remember hugging A, both of her (there were two) but nobody else showed much interest in me being there. Idgie (my dog) was there with me, just doing her own thing until she needed some water. I remember using one of T's bowls.

**DREAM FOUR**

I dreamt I was in Jhb at M and S's house with my folks. I kept on seeing a beautiful woman in a black cat suit. She had longish dark brown hair. She was evil and was chasing me. Nobody else could see her. When she wanted to attack or try to kill me she would quickly change into a small fox/dog and then race towards me with force and determination. She was never successful though, because I would kick her away from me, causing her to shoot off even faster than when she tried to attack me. But she would bounce back and this is what frightened me most. Because she was an animal I lost trust in animals for a few moments. This is when she would change into a fox and slip through the gate before coming at me.

Then I dreamt that LoverC met me somewhere to tell me that she had recorded us making love when I had last visited her in Zim and was about to show me the tape. Just before she put the tape on she told me that on one occasion she had worn finger-cots (finger condoms) without me even noticing. She was very tense and seemed quite ashamed, it was as though she had done this to get even with me for some reason. I was uncomfortable with the way she was behaving and upset about her motives; but curious to see the tape, so I just let things happen. Then she told me that the movie was for her boss and that our whole relationship had taken place so that she could make a movie for him. She had been fucking him all along without me knowing – the same way she had recorded us making love.

**DREAM FIVE**

I dreamt I was in Jhb at M and S's house. I was walking through their garden and everywhere around me were the most beautiful birds of all colours, shapes and sizes. They were all singing the same song and did not fly away when I walked under their branches. There were lots of parrot colours. At the most joyous moment, when I was truly amazed by all this, an enormous purple-crested Loerie flew up to one of the top branches and broke into song. It was more like a welcoming speech and I wanted to make sure that it was a Loerie. So I waited until it flew and showed its red feather under its wings. Truly one of the most beautiful

dreams I have ever had.

#### **DREAM SIX**

I dreamed I was in a white landrover with my Dad and some other guy who was driving it. We were chasing two thieves, but lost them. During the chase we went off the road damaged the landrover a bit, so stopped to put some missing bolts back on. While they were fixing it I noticed a perfect pair of brownish eagle wings which had been left behind by a dead eagle. I admired them and picked them up. Then the male mate arrived and started pecking at my Dad on his neck as he was climbing back into the landrover, as if to say leave my wife's feather alone, she has only just been killed. Then whoever it was who was driving said that he did not like the feathers which I had chosen and asked whether I like the landrover – knowing that my Dad wanted to buy a landrover. Then all of a sudden my Dad was driving my Mom and I along the same road in our white landrover. We were on our way to a restaurant at the top of a hill. Instead of parking outside my Dad drove up the restaurant stairs and asked the waiter if there was a table for us. After sitting down I noticed this woman immediately, sitting alone just smiling at me, as if she had been expecting me. So I went over to her and put Idgie outside. LoverC appeared from nowhere, although I was expecting her. We had not been able to say hello because my parents were there though. Anyhow, this woman told me how lucky I was to be so young and beautiful. And how I just glowed. Then I asked her how her back was, because somehow I could feel her discomfort and touched her back a little. Then I showed her these seeds I had dried out and whatever was inside them had dried out. She took one from me and opened it up to show me how beautiful the worm/pupa inside was. LoverC was very quiet through all of this. Someone from yoga was also there watching me from time to time. This woman and I just spoke about magic until my parents called me over for dinner. LoverC went first while I said goodbye. It seemed as though we had been away for quite a while and they asked whether I had been doing something. It was as if they knew about the magic. I had ordered a bean dish. My Mom was quiet throughout the dream except when she was alone with my Dad.

#### **DREAM SEVEN**

I dreamt that someone had given me this lovely suede and sheepskin coat and a pair of black boots. Then I remember finding this little spot/bite on the left of my body. I scratched it and this insect started hatching slowly from inside, similar to a butterfly when it emerges from its cocoon. I think I even helped it out at one stage. It was similar to a wasp – long, thin and black. It cleaned its legs slowly and carefully before moving. Somehow it knew that I was watching it and that it had been inside my body. It had this really sweet little face, with eyes that looked at me quite shyly.

#### **DREAM EIGHT**

I dreamt I was travelling on a train with some other women. The day was sunlit and the night was through a tunnel. The conductor kept on throwing bodies off the train and onto the tracks. And because we were travelling at such high speed the blood and guts would spray back through open windows and air conditioning. Blood and dead flesh was just everywhere – inside the train and all across the tracks.

#### **DREAM NINE**

I dreamt about "dark" women dressed in their leathers who had their arms tied up in such a way that their hands had gone blue. They were all pacing around in a trance, up and down the verandah between these two pillars, speechless, almost unconscious. I tried communicating with them but had no luck. Then I was with my sister and B (from yoga). S cared for B very much. S showed me her new bicycle and which had a motor and special tyres before I rode it around the tennis court. Her and B started playing tennis, but B suddenly turned pale and had to sit down. Then she began putting bright yellow paint on her face to cover her paleness. S sat with her and I asked where M was. She said he now slept in another room, and that all she wanted now was to get out of the relationship. She just shook her head and said she needed to leave him. Then I dreamt about LW's sister, D. She recognised me somewhere and we both recognised the "witch" in one another as well. We spoke about how we used to admire one another at school and we could still both feel the attraction because we just wanted to touch and hold each other.

#### **DREAM TEN**

I dreamt that the JMB sent me this enormous certificate/cheque which was really my exemption and R2400 to use for studying the following year. This was all because I had written that blunt letter telling the JMB to basically stop fucking around and send me my exemption fast so I could get on with my life.

#### **DREAM ELEVEN**

I dreamt that Mystic put my purple Levi's on and asked me what she had to do to make me want her – did

she have to wear my Levi's for me to be attracted to her? I remember telling her no, she did not need to do anything because I was already attracted to her.

#### **DREAM TWELVE**

I dreamt I felt this incredible pain and tension in my hips. I cannot understand it because I was sleeping on my mattress again. Also dreamt of the Aunt3 (mother's other sister and her husband) in their home – how they needed money, and so were now selling and buying a smaller house. Remember staying in their upstairs bedroom, which did not have enough space for a double bed.

#### **DREAM THIRTEEN**

I dreamt that these headaches Mystic has been complaining about caused her to have a stroke or commit suicide. Basically she was dead. She was trying to tell me in this dream before she crossed over into spirit, about my dream house, about S (her son) and her male friend who likes wearing dresses but loves women. She wanted me to find her body the following morning, because she had a letter for me explaining how I would live in her house until S was 21 and then he would take over unless we wanted to live together because we would have a child together anyway and get married, but had to both love each other. I would also have an affair with her friend and have a child with him. This was the reason why Mystic had been showing me most of her photo's recently and complaining about having lived too much, that it was her time to move on and die. I had to choose between my dream house and Mystic's life. I chose Mystic's life. Then she told me that only once she died, would I get this dream house. She wanted all of this to happen.

#### **DREAM FOURTEEN**

I dreamt my re-occurring dream. This time it was not an external presence but instead within me. It did not stay for long, but I managed to bring it back, before it went again. It felt as though I was a mummy inside this tomb.

#### **DREAM FIFTEEN**

I dreamt I was in this huge house looking for Mystic, but before I could I had to find these four other people. The first one was Leatherette who was dressed in a black cat suit, she terrified me so I did not find the other three or find Mystic either. Also dreamt that Idgie had a litter of puppies. There were lots of brown-woody colours in the house.

#### **DREAM SIXTEEN**

I dreamt this woman was following and watching me. She did not realise that I knew she was watching me. I was watching some other women who I thought were attractive. I thought this was why she was watching me – she found me attractive. Later on she showed me three book titles on a sheet of paper and recommended that I read them even though they were by unknown authors. I had to choose one of these books and thanked her anyway. We spoke about her following me. I told her that I knew she was but was not entirely sure why. She was Mystic's age and dressed just like Mystic, but had a long plait and these beautiful diamond eyes. When I noticed her eyes she gave me the booklist. Her eyes sparkled and she looked as though she was from another world. I just could not help looking at them when she stared at me. I remember her wearing this large pendulum/cross around her neck. She looked a lot like J (the architect who does natural healing).

#### **DREAM SEVENTEEN**

I dreamt about keys to different doors. The doors kept on changing, so I needed different keys.

#### **DREAM EIGHTEEN**

I dreamt about an accident or plane crash. Then I was woken up by this huge bang as the plane crashed in the dream. The bang was so real and close to me. Then it was my recurring nightmare again. I was a solid presence, almost like stone and statue like, and this sensation woke me up as soon as I recognised it and tried to keep hold of it. And then I watched myself crack and crumble down to dust. I was very aware of watching myself as this statue. I also dreamt two women told me they were pregnant. I remember feeling very happy for them, as opposed to others who judged them.

#### **DREAM NINETEEN**

I dreamt that E (house mate) and M (house mate) were having this boerewors and horse party. Yecch. They asked me and told me about it and I said it was okay as long as they cleaned the kitchen afterwards. I went to Mystic as soon as they started cooking the meat. Then I dreamt I had to hand in this poetry essay for Tutor1. She was panicking at the time. Eventually I gave her my essay, both of us went to admin to

hand it in. There we were chased by this man. The secretary spoke in English, even though this was somewhere in France/Russia. Then I was with L (she does sculpture) on our way to a rock concert. Somehow I lost her while trying to change money for a ticket. So I left the concert and met Tutor1 (H) on the road. Also remember seeing Tutor2, who was amazed to see me there. H just wanted me to touch her and said that she would if I would. So I touched her softly between the thighs and she melted. Then I remember being down on her and teasing her with my tongue – she loved it but then became quite aggressive when I stopped, so I just carried on. We were both wearing these really short and tight dresses because it was a hot summer's night. I remember I called her LoverC in the middle of this, but she did not notice.

#### **DREAM TWENTY**

Dreamt I had caught a taxi to Zim with two other women, but had no money to pay the taxi driver. So my Dad met me at the border and paid him by cheque without even asking me why I decided to visit. The driver even tried to over-charge me, stupid fuck!

#### **DREAM TWENTY ONE**

I dreamt that I had been asked by a family to work for them and look after the children because the mother worked during the day. The father had a bushy, blonde beard. I never met him because he was always supposed to be sleeping. Until one day I watched him molesting his son in the bath. The daughter had called me to see this and we just watched in horror. The father saw us watching him, but he was about to cum and could not stop so carried on without looking at all concerned. After he had cum, he just climbed out of the bath and ran outside to the pool where he washed off. The son ran behind calling: "dad, wait for me". After a while he came back to the house where we were watching from and behaved as if nothing had happened. Instead he seemed quite proud because he had just shared something really intimate and sacred with his son. Also remember dreaming about swimming in beautiful, warm and soothing water.

#### **DREAM TWENTY TWO**

I dreamt I was teaching my 3 year old self to swim and live, etc. Remember taking my young self to a hostel and everyone fussing over the young me. We both had the same "mind" and I recognised the naughty child in my older self as well.

#### **DREAM TWENTY THREE**

I dreamed I was running at night with LoverC, along this path to somewhere when all of a sudden this incredible lightning bolt started to accumulate energy from other smaller bolts which were close by and connected. It was thick with energy and mainly purple-red, black, white and a bit of yellow. The cloud below was pitch black, with red and purple at the top. LoverC was terrified, but I was really excited and just wanted to watch the bolt crack. LoverC ran off and left me to watch it alone. As soon as the storm broke and the bolt cracked, the dream ended.

#### **DREAM TWENTY FOUR**

I dreamt about beautiful Nina, the pretentious artist. She was dressed in this leopard skin body suit and took me back to her house one night. We spoke quite intimately and it turned into quite an erotic and sensual dream. I remember her smoking many cigarettes and telling me she was from Jhb.

#### **DREAM TWENTY FIVE**

I dreamt that Tutor1 and Tutor2 came with LoverC and I to a holiday cottage. Tutor1 kept on touching me even though LoverC was holding me. Also remember taking assembly at school. Friend1 had given me this speech which I had to deliver about the pupils having to sit according to Rhodes res. I told her never to do that to me again because it was really arbitrary. Then I heard the Indian man on Mystics's door walking around the house and he eventually came into the room to wake me up. I could actually feel him near me and woke up feeling afraid. Then dreamt about Aunt3 and her husband. He had begun his spiritual path and was wearing these weird glasses.

#### **DREAM TWENTY SIX**

I dreamt about the head student. Her and some other girls and myself all went down to K's Beach Cafe in Fish Hoek. She had to give her dad R1000-00 float to open up the cafe while we waited in someone else's res. This place was similar to Fish Hoek beach. I had my bicycle with me.

### **DREAM TWENTY-SEVEN**

I dreamt D came back to see me and we made love. I had to introduce her to my folks as well as P and C. A bit awkward. It felt good to be with her again. We picked up where we left off – the past did not really matter. Then I dreamt Mystic arrived back in the middle of the night and had woken me up because I was sleep-walking and talking to the Huzur Maharj Charan Singji. She was laughing at me and could not wait to wake me up to tell me what I had been doing. Also dreamt of J with the crystal eyes, she was talking to me. Then I dreamt about a public swimming pool. I went there with someone and bumped into someone else who had special membership and invited us to sit and swim with them in the private area. We all had to wear these gold necklaces

### **DREAM TWENTY EIGHT**

I dreamt I was on this huge bus travelling to visit Sarah in Fish Hoek. Just before we arrived, this enormous whale started swimming next to the road and then bumped the bus as if it was chasing us away. I did not even greet LoverC and slept in another room until my last night there. I asked LoverC if I could sleep in her bed and she said yes and we fell asleep. Also dreamt about Mystic, she was also in this house in Fish Hoek and kept on telling me not to worry that the man with the blonde bushy beard who molested his son was naked and just smiling to some people who knew about his habit.

### **DREAM TWENTY NINE**

I dreamt about Tutor1 again. This time we were really lovers. We were walking home and I told her that I was going to miss her next year. She said she felt the same way. Then I told her that I thought she was absolutely gorgeous and asked whether she would like to have an affair with me. She just kissed me and we began making wild passionate love at there house.

Then I was in town and dealing drugs on the street. I had to walk past some police with this enormous stash of drugs on my way to Tutor1's house. I managed to pass them even after they chased me. I went to see Tutor1. She was a bit freaked out about being my tutor as well as my lover but not for long because we were soon in bed making love again. I remember one of her house mates walking in on us, but we still had some of our clothes on. My parents were also there. We had been in love for a while before all this, we were beautiful together when making love and wanted to be together as long as possible.

### **DREAM THIRTY**

I dreamt Mystic and I were at lunch together when this beautiful eagle flew and hovered above us. I pointed it out to Mystic and the others. It was brown with stripes and flew really low down.

### **DREAM THIRTY ONE**

I dreamt Mystic and I were builders or land surveyors, working together in the bush and driving around in a big white truck. We stopped to check a site and I took off my shirt and danced in the back of the truck without realising that there were two drivers in the front. As I climbed off the truck, I found Mystic looking very stressed. We went back to the house on some farm and I offered to rub her feet because I enjoy rubbing people's feet and she should not worry. We just chatted and flirted as usual.

### **DREAM THIRTY TWO**

Mystic and I were still flirting, this time at my house. I asked her to come up to my room and see the view from my window. I took her hand and when we reached the window we kissed each other. Then we were living together. Mystic was not as comfortable about touching as I was, but she changed suddenly and could not keep her hands off me, even at work.

### **DREAM THIRTY THREE**

I dreamt about Tutor2, Tutor2 and my sister. Someone told my sister and I that Tutor2 had a new job selling clothes. We went to see the place which had a painted cloth sign. Tutor2 and Tutor1 arrived. My sister and I were both naked and dancing around with pieces of fabric wrapped around us. R felt uneasy and left. Tutor1 stayed and was quite fascinated by our bodies. My sister and I were just loving this, being able to flaunt our voluptuous bodies in front of someone thinner and perhaps envious of our courage. Then this guy arrived, Tutor1's friend. She was flirting with him to spite me for flaunting my body in front of her.

### **DREAM THIRTY FOUR**

I dreamt I went up to this cabin which was up on this wild mountain. I later realised this was an enormous tree. I remember the roots. They were similar to thick rope which ran twisting alongside each other. Some woman took me up this tree. I remember stopping along the way to have a look at the view. But I soon realised how huge the tree was and could only look along its branches and not down. Then the wind blew

with such force. I remember not knowing whether to feel afraid or excited. The wind seemed to welcome and yet warn me at the same time. I cannot remember exactly how we managed to climb up this tree, but when I looked across the valley of branches it was so fertile and beautifully green everywhere, just like in Hogsback. Then suddenly I had a husband who was waiting alone in the cabin for me. He was not afraid of the wind. He had been watching a video when I arrived. He grabbed the television and just held it in his arms. He had greyish hair and was about 40 years old. The others disappeared. I was not really interested in this man. Instead I could not stop wondering how the cabin could possibly have electricity. The cabin was made from the same wood as the roots. The next day I discovered that a whole community were living there, basically camping and living off the land. There was no hot water or much cold water to bath. Also, I was the only one who drank milk up there, so I had as much as I wanted. At times I was this woman without the husband and then I was also a young boy who always seemed to have a grubby face. At one stage I was both at once but somehow detached and watching myself and them. The woman gave the boy water in a cup to wash his face.

Then things changed. I was with two other women. One reminded me of LoverC. We were all sleeping in this wooden bed together. The next day we all had an exam. The two of them kept swopping places during the night. I started off on the edge and ended up in the middle because they both wanted to sleep next to me. The other woman was Tutor2. I missed my exam because I overslept, so I went to campus to try and organise a leave of absence from MB for my Sociology exam. I remember needing a tampon, but only had a dusty one, so I decided to rather just bleed than run the risk of an infection. Also remember dreaming about my grandpa F (mother's father). I went to their house for some reason. Nobody but F was there. I was about to leave because I did not really feel like seeing him, but stayed. He was glad because he knew I wanted to leave. We spoke about death. He told me how afraid he was of dying yet really wanted to die. I told him that I did not know what to say to him. Besides, I could only partially understand the feeling of being afraid of death. Perhaps it was really just as frightening as life is at times. I remember thinking this was the first time he had spoken to me as an adult and asked my advice. Also remember looking right into his blue, blue eyes.

#### **DREAM THIRTY FIVE**

I dreamt I was with Mystic and some friends. We were driving in two buses on a hunting/safari trip. I was driving the second bus because the driver could not relax. At one point I could not see anything in front of me, not even the bus ahead, so I just closed my eyes and hoped for the best. Mystic was next to me and saw the windscreen of the bus ahead. It was shining with a blue light. When we stopped for breakfast it was daytime. Mystic and I were flirting as usual. She offered me some of her vegetable. I can remember touching her in front of my friends without either of us being worried.

#### **DREAM THIRTY SIX**

The dream began with my parents coming to fetch me. We stopped later at a restaurant on the road. I knew this place and it had been converted into a restaurant. We then drove past one of LoverC's father's houses. He was selling and showing it to people. I told them who he was and we went into to have a look around. His wife was inside showing someone the fireplace and the elevator. She then took me to see the elevator, knowing who I was and telling me how funny it was because I did not know how to use the elevator. We left after that and said goodbye to LoverC's father. I remember phoning LoverC because I had arrived back in town. She asked whether I could fetch her in 5 minutes from their house. Also remember their being their rich beautiful princess. For some bizarre reason her parents liked me and were planning a party. LoverC phoned some guests while I spoke to her father and some other snobbish man. They spoke about people with money - unlike them. It did not take much for me to tell them that my parents had nowhere as much money as the two of them, but our family was so much happier and I thought that I was probably better adjusted than LoverC. Her father just smiled and seemed quite surprised, but somehow agreed with me. He had white hair and smiled for most of the dream. I told LoverC about this but she did not comment. I also spoke to her mother. She really liked me, possibly even found me quite charming. I remember feeling sorry for her because she was a rich, bored housewife. The idea of LoverC being part of all this money left me feeling uneasy. Then I was back in Ght in bed with this woman from campus (she wears a nose ring and has long blonde hair). We were at first just talking and laughing. Then I kissed her. She carried on talking and then kissed me. It was incredible - as if I had explored her body and mouth before. Suddenly she was gone, but came back to ask if I had any bread - smiling and happy. Then I was back at LoverC's house preparing for the party. We were not interacting and communicating and at times it seemed as though I was not even there. But she did tell me she missed me in the end.

#### **DREAM THIRTY SEVEN**

I dreamt about Mystic's best friend M. He was dressed in veldskoen, long socks, shorts and a cute shirt.

LoverC and I met him at Mystic's house. Mystic was quite uncomfortable around him, but we started chatting and discovered that he knew my father and uncle from the Rhodesian independence war. Mystic was not sure who to entertain, M or us. She felt awkward for a change. Then I dreamt that LoverC and I had definitely broken up and were both getting used to the idea. Also remember going back to see Mystic and telling her that M was really not for her.

#### **DREAM THIRTY EIGHT**

I dreamt I had moved into this room which belonged to the National Monument. The woman who had lived there had died and left me all her belongings except this old wardrobe. These two men came to look through some old things. One shook out this old green carpet and all these spiders ran out across the room, as well as this rat who changed into a cat which began chasing a mouse. Eventually the rat caught and killed the mouse. I killed the spiders and chased the rat out of my room. As I was cleaning up the mess I discovered a new section to the house. A bedroom and a bathroom. There was a beautiful woman sleeping on one of the beds. She woke up and explained that she had nowhere else to go, then apologised for not realising that this was my place. I told her not to worry, she could stay if she wanted because there was plenty of space and I had only just inherited it. I left her and returned to my room where I began looking through the previous owner's things. I found an ancient medallion which was made from beautiful heavy silver. I remember thinking how precious it must be and probably belonged to an Arab or Indian prince because it had "prince" engraved on it. Somehow this made sense. He must have been a Master/Guru. I remember wanting to look through all the other little boxes in case there was more. Then my thoughts suddenly crystallized and I realised what death meant to me. The vision and profound wisdom answered my question about death. I was really happy because now I understood about life. Then I went walking about. I took my mattress and Idgie without really knowing where and why I was going. We were on a very narrow country road with lots of flowers and moist grass everywhere. I put the mattress down on the road and slept for a while, until this woman and her three dogs came along in a Mercedes bakkie. She stopped for me to move the mattress. These three puppies, which looked like they belonged to Idgie suddenly appeared and were running around. She warned me about them being dangerous on the road because it was difficult to see their black fur against the road surface. I told her they were not mine but agreed with her. She drove off leaving one of her bitches behind. The bitch then told me she felt sore around her vagina and back leg. I told her that her "mother" had just driven off without her and she should catch up. She stood up and walked off with Idgie and the puppies playing around her. Then I was back in the life/death dream. I was telling my friends about my realisation on life. How we needed to save the earth. There was quite some urgency within me in trying to make them understand this. Life was not about finding answers to questions concerning the meaning of life but rather in the understanding.

#### **DREAM THIRTY NINE**

I dreamt about a young blonde hitchhiker. He came to visit again and I made him porridge for breakfast. That was all he wanted to eat. Also dreamt about Mom, Gran, Popeye. They were asking whether I had learnt a lot at University. I told them that I had, but hesitated before continuing because they would never know how much. PL was also there. Then I was explaining to this boy how women just knew when they were about to bleed, trying to use intuition as a way of making him understand. But no luck. I also dreamt about Tutor3. She was watching me and fantasizing about me.

#### **DREAM FORTY**

I dreamt I was allowed to interrupt a lecture on a foreign in campus to ask the woman lecturing more about Human Movement Studies. The Dean and other male senior staff were not impressed and she did not really answer my question either. Then I was off to visit two gay men somewhere overseas. Once I had arrived, one went off to study at the library, while the other stayed and entertained us. Then T and I were exploring the garden together. It was enormous and very luscious and fertile. There was an open greenhouse in one corner which had some beautiful shade plants growing inside. I had never been to this part of the garden before. I remember being quite amazed by all this and wanting to hang a hammock up in the open greenhouse. There were also visitors and tourists wandering around admiring these plants. They seemed to be staying in my huge house as well. I remember swinging the roof poles to balance the structure for where I put the hammock up. On our way back to the house Friend4 had her finger pressed exactly on my coccyx, to try and alleviate some of my tension. Then I was with Friend1 and Friend2. Tutor2 was about to arrive back from Greece. Friend1 was sleeping like a baby in this yellow beach buggy. So I said I would take Friend1 home and leave Friend2 to see her mom.

#### **DREAM FORTY ONE**

I dreamt my folks came to visit me in Ght. My Mom came to a psychology lecture with me. K (doing



Honours) was lecturing and gave some exam tips as well as the question paper. Big bald J offered to give me the answers if I went to her house for drinks along with the others from the course. My Mom and I went and had dinner with K/H. When I went to fetch her though she had already left because the food was awful. She had tried the mutton. My Dad in the meantime had been with Mystic because we had had an argument about colonialism and apartheid. Basically, he was not ready to change his blatantly racist attitude yet. He had left Mystic feeling completely intimidated and guilty about being racist. K/H showed me around her home and her beautiful garden, which was enormous. She mentioned something about a herb garden. She was being quite suggestive about wanting me to stay. Then I went to this coffee shop in Zim, which was more like a women's bar. Because I was the new babe in town they wanted to meet me.

#### **DREAM FORTY TWO**

C was organising a surprise birthday present for S and needed me to help her make it, using tippex and stencils. S was younger than 22 and so was the whole theme. Then I dreamt S was away on holiday and had organised some dope to be sent to M. The dealer phoned but my Dad answered before giving the phone to M. He told M he was aware of what was happening. I was on the other phone pretending not to know what was going on. My Dad said not to worry, he believed me.

#### **DREAM FORTY THREE**

I dreamt I was visiting and staying with a woman in her house. The English Department secretary was the domestic worker. She showed me to my room and how to use the bath. There was going to be a party for someone later on but the guests were waiting for the hostess to arrive. The women wanted to go fishing, and did. I remember being part of a team with these women at Troutbeck. Friend1 and I were showing them the difference between trout and tiger fishing. Afterwards we all went down to the lake, but there was only one boat available so KD and myself went fishing while the others played volleyball and tried to cycle boats. We were still waiting for the hostess to arrive. When she did, she joined us at the lake with another boat. The two boats were on either side of the long jetty to prevent the fishing lines from getting tangled. One of us caught an enormous fish.

#### **DREAM FORTY FOUR**

I dreamt I went to visit Mystic at work. She was busy interviewing T who eventually got the job because Mystic liked her curves. Then I spoke with Mystic. I remember being really anxious about something. Mystic just put her hand on my solar plexus and it disappeared. Not because she touched me, but because she recognised my anxiety/pain. We flirted for a while in the library which was also a coffee shop on the end. Mystic asked me to do something on the computer for her but I heard an ambulance outside and ran to the door to see. When I returned she wanted to know why I was so freaked out.

Then my Dad was giving me this list of things to do for my Mother. She stood up to meet someone coming in at the gate because she was giving piano lessons. She walked without a limp which was weird because it still seemed as though she had had a stroke – I could sense a change within her.

#### **DREAM FORTY FIVE**

I dreamt Rhodes was a prison. A progressive prison – we were not in cells but we were not allowed off the property. I remember being this independent mysterious woman who nobody really knew at all even though some of them wanted too. NH worked in the library/cafe. I asked her what people did besides study and have plenty of good sex in prison. She told me there was nothing else to do. Then we spoke about her mom being overweight, how she could not exercise even if she wanted to because she would strain her heart. I remember moving around a great deal within this prison and something about dropping English.

#### **DREAM FORTY SIX**

I dreamt I was looking after Mystic's house but it was a different house. People kept on arriving to fix things or collect items. I remember a dog being there and I was in her garden picking tomatoes. The garden was quite overgrown. There were three snakes in the garden, they would surround me before trying to attack me. But I was quicker than them. Mystic's friend, the art lecturer, came in through the bottom of the garden gate to fix something. The others asked me whether I lived with Mystic. I said yes – this made them think we were lovers. Then I dreamt I was making porridge but did not add enough water.

#### **DREAM FORTY SEVEN**

I dreamt of beautiful gentle A. I was massaging her on my proper table. She was naked but I only remember her head and face. When I had finished, I reached over and kissed her softly to tell her I had finished. We carried on kissing for a while. I took my clothes off for her to massage me. I remember her dog being there while I massaged her.

### **DREAM E**

Me and Sword are in a dark room. Annelien Kriel is there and she wants to do something to us. I am naked from the waist up and Sword is saying that I have no breasts because they just hang. She lifts one and lets it fall. I crossly reply that I know I don't have pert firm breasts and that I'm sorry. Annelien is going to make my breasts smaller which also has something to do with making me more masculine. It is understood that whatever is about to take place will happen to the both of us. We are holding hands and then Annelien does something. It seems as if there are two coils of steel that each of us is holding in our hands and through which a current is passing. I experience a searing, fixating kind of pain and have to clench my teeth and for myself to hold on and let go. Eventually it is over and it is Sword's turn. While we have both been holding one of the coils (and holding hands to share the current) it seems that each coil directs a current which is specifically aimed at one of us. I was first and although the understanding was that I was somehow to become more masculine, I receive a feminine current. A masculine current is now directed as Sword and she holds on. From what I'm receiving through her hand, I think that is not as painful as mine was – perhaps each one is more painful for the one directly receiving. Then it is finished and I'm more masculine and she more feminine. She is startled to find that my breasts are smaller and firmer.

### **DREAM F**

I am at university but there are many of my old school friends. I see Water and Lion. I have to go to church and I'm not happy about the idea. I am dressed in a black dress/robe with a huge pillow stuffed down the front. It is crowded – there are lots of boys crowding and bustling about. One presses his finger to his lips and shows the number nine to his friends. We have to walk through the church ten times carrying the pillow in our robes before we can sit down. It starts to rain and because I have arrived late I can only walk around three times before the service starts. I don't want to walk around while everyone is sitting down, so I go inside and sit down with the feeling that I have committed a transgression. Rat is next to me and he starts taking out ten bags of tea from a clear packet of tea bags. I realise that I also have one and must do the same. I watch him. He realises that he will have hardly any tea bags left if he takes out ten, and takes out another packet from within the first. This has miniature tea bags with labels on it. The packet is labelled Caffeine. Then I am outside the service searching for my car which is a white station wagon. I can't find it anywhere and I hear that some cars have been stolen. There are some people with me. We go into what seems like an underground parking lot. Someone is convinced that they have heard a noise. They are all listening at a separating wall-like structure. I go around and see somebody hiding and shout to the others. They react slowly but one of them has a gun and shoots the man, wounding him.

### **DREAM G**

I am with a Sherlock Holmes type figure (detective) and we are in the study upstairs and I am looking down at the wooden floor boards. The detective places the floorboard down over a hole and presses down on two spots, almost like round wooden pegs on either side of the board in order to shut it down permanently. I realise why he is doing this – there is a sense of relief. We have killed Dracula and shut him in. He is trapped down there and mustn't be allowed to strike the young spirits of the house.

Then we are outside walking in a field of mud. The earth is brown/black and soft and wet. I am afraid – it is as if we are checking for him to make sure he is gone. I keep thinking only a little more to go before we get to the gate that marks the entrance of the field. Just as we get out we hear a wolf-like howl/laugh in the distance and the dark surrounding is shattered by a rippling light. Then I see my mother. I am happy to see her and we embrace. I feel safe.

### **DREAM H**

I am in an old fashioned room with Dracula and an old man. The old man is bleeding and shrinks back with fear as he realises that he is in danger. Dracula leans down and begins to drink the old man's blood but there is a sense in which we both know that he cannot satisfy himself, he must not kill/drain the old man. He pulls himself away with difficulty.

We are walking outside. The earth is red and dry, barren. Out of sympathy for him I let him drink from my thumb. He is very hungry and carnal. I feel dizzy and have to rip my thumb away. The scene shifts to an open space and there are hundreds of naked toddlers standing and running around. Me and Sword stand and watch them at the opposite end of the crowd. Water and Object are sitting in chairs watching. Object is knitting.

#### **DREAM I**

I am swimming in the sea but the sea is within the walls of a room. The water is lukewarm and there is a light switch on the wall which I put on. I am teaching a young boy how to swim. The atmosphere is stifling and oppressive. The off-cream sheen of the walls and the warmth of the water makes it unpleasant.

#### **DREAM J**

I am in the bath and the room is quite dark and shadowy. I move forward to pull out the plug and suddenly water starts moving slowly forward but it is coming from the floor behind the bath and spilling over the side into the bathtub. All sorts of objects start floating along that have come from behind the bath. There are also broken radio's and things. I carry each one out and stack them in a corner where there is a huge intricate structure that looks like the inside of some machine which I recognise as my mother's computer.

The scene switches to myself as a child. I am sick in bed in our house. Water comes to visit me because I am sick. She holds my hand. She goes away and comes back. I know she has come back because I see her car outside the house but I cannot find her. I see that my duvet had been moved to under the bed. I look at the bed and see somebody lying under the sheet. I pull it slowly away and discover her hiding there. She sits down and shows me photographs of her family and of a little boy who is her son. I am sad but happy for her.

The scene shifts to a cobbled street and I am with my mom and her boyfriend. He has been drinking in a pub and she is shouting at him. I am angry with him but also sympathetic – he is downcast and in a way I understand why he has been drinking. I am furious with both of them but especially her – I shout at them and walk away up a different street by myself.

#### **DREAM K**

I am outside our house in Ght, lying on the lawn facing the street. It is night. I am with a man who is dark and of indeterminate age. He is mischievous and I am trying to hide him from the neighbours. We are lying in the shadows. There is a playful, sexual air about him and about our exchange

#### **DREAM L**

I dream I am in a house which is quite big and open and which I don't recognise. It is quite ramshackle. I am with a lot of friends and about to eat. I go outside to get a plate. There is a plate next to a little wooden shack. I pick it up but people tell me not to eat off it because it is evil. I am irritated by them and take it inside. As I look at it, it changes into a number of different pictures all of which feature an old prophetic looking man in different poses.

#### **DREAM M**

A friend and I are scouting around outside. Suddenly we come to a huge old tree that has thick leaves which hang down to the ground. There are huge oranges on the trees that look like melons that would burst if you touch them. I know that this tree can talk and that people think it is evil. I go inside it. Later I am telling people what has happened. The tree has spoken to me – it tell some that it is very old and asks me to write its history. I feel sorry for it but also slightly afraid of it.

#### **DREAM N**

There is an ethereal young woman who is blonde and light and has a beautiful white horse. She has left me with the along with the horse and I know I can't live without them. I go to what seems like a town fair (rustic and in the country). There is a long queue of people with horses next to them. She is at the head of the line trying to sell the horse. I go up to her and say: "you can't sell the horse it belongs to me" knowing she won't be parted from it. She agrees that the horse does in fact belong to me. There is a sense in which I have won both of them back.

#### **DREAM O**

There is a young coloured woman who has to take me to the airport. I am a lot younger. We undertake this journey on a blue tractor and move slowly along dust roads. It is night and there are trees around us and stars above us. I am sitting on the side of the tractor over the wheels and playing with a yo-yo. It is very still. I feel safe and secure. Eventually we get to what looks like an aircraft hanger. There is a lot of artificial light. I say goodbye to her and get on the plane. When we are in the air a stewardess comes around with cool drinks. I think I recognise her and when I taste the drink I realise she is the woman who had brought me to the airport as only she knows how to make that kind of drink.

### **DREAM ONE**

I am with Hop's family at a picnic somewhere. There is a lot of noise, they are raucous. Suddenly they decide to leave this place and go somewhere else. I don't want to leave, I feel secure and happy where I am. They all decide to go in different cars and I end up having to go with Hop's grandfather who is ancient and I know that he is a very bad driver. I am very nervous and as we leave I see that we are the only people leaving. The others have remained sitting on the grass. They laugh as we drive past. We are driving along, I am in the back seat behind the old man, it seems like an old fashioned type of car with an open roof, more like a carriage. The old man is driving terribly, the car rattles as if it is about to fall apart. As we head down one road I see that it is a dirt road covered with huge rocks and boulders and that instead of avoiding these, he seems to be heading straight for them. I keep leaning over to shout instructions to him. Suddenly Hop's father is on the back seat next to me. He says: "leave him alone, he knows what he is doing". I am angry at him for interrupting and not being able to see how badly the old man is driving. I say: "are you crazy, he'll kill us both". Suddenly we come to the end of the road which is grassy and the rest of the people are there to welcome us.

### **DREAM TWO**

I am in the swimming pool at our house in Vereeniging. There are three little boys, they all look alike but I think one is my brother. I am older. We play – they have to catch me, we go underwater and suddenly they turn in unison straight towards me. For a moment they seem dark and menacing, strong and supple. They are like little fish as they move, their eyes are dark and their hair flows in the water. But then we come up and I am bigger and it's all a joke. Then we are underwater again swimming around and a big fish (whale-like) moves beside me. I have a sense that it is a mother come to protect her young. I can swim underneath her and hide in the dark shadow. We move to the other side of the pool. She says she must go because someone has a story to tell her – it might be a warning of sorts or something might be coming. I hold on to her side looking into a deep dark eye and we shoot up into the air. We are supported in mid-air for a second as the story is told (I am not sure what it is). There is just an empty moment when all is quiet and suspended and then we go down again.

### **DREAM THREE**

We are staying somewhere in an apartment (me, my mother and brother). We are looking at two photographs, they are old-fashioned looking, kind of brown tones. One is of a young group of men and the other of a group of women. In each photograph they are all sitting on a long bench or four of chairs but on closer inspection they are almost collapsed together. The photographs were taken because these people have been the victims of a serial killer. He had taken sharp thin flexible rods and driven them through the eyes of each victim using one rod so that it had to be driven in and out to pierce both eyes and join all their heads together. The same thing was done with their genitals – woman were connected by rods driven through their vaginas and rectums and men through their penises and testicles. The photos are incongruous. At first glance they may seem like an old club meeting of some sort. In more detail the horrible expressions on their faces and the stuck togetherness. We know who the killer is and are terrified because he lives next door to us.

There is a knocking at the door that joins our apartments and the next thing that happens is that me and Sword are on the run from the killer who has become a woman. We are walking down the street in Cape Town, there are a lot of people and all of a sudden I hear a kind of buzzing metallic noise and smell something like hair burning. In some way the woman can transform herself into a swarm of bees that look like a dark moving mass in order to get to us.

Then we are in a shopping centre trying to avoid the bees and moving to the opposite end of where we can see them in the air. We move out into the street again looking for somewhere to run or hide. I go into a building which has business offices in it. I am allowed to go up the stairs to the offices because I know the man who works there. I glimpse somebody coming up the stairs behind me, I look to see if it is Sword but it is another woman. I move on and come too some offices with names on them – I wonder whether to go past but I know I've had this dream before and must go in for the dream to unfold. Before I enter I know what their faces will look like.

It is unclear but I think she is there when I get inside, sitting around the desk with other men, dark, cold and calculating. There are windows on one side of the wall and at their backs and I see another door which has some threat attached to it. Somehow I escape from the building. I'm not sure who I'm with but we look up and see a dark patch starting to form over the roof of the building next door and start to run away.

I am home again with my family and she (the serial killer) is in the house. My mother has a little gun which looks like a toy and shoots little snakes – the woman laughs because they are ineffectual and scurry away. There is one big snake but it poses no threat to her and she smiles mockingly. My mother pulls the trigger again and again – only noise. I'm not sure what happens but the woman crawls under the blankets of my bed to get me and forgets that the big snake came to me there. It bites her and she dies.

#### **DREAM FOUR**

I am at our old house watching from what seems like a balcony or tree. There is a sense of hiddenness. My mother is down below. She is dressed up and looks smart and executive. As the manager of a business she is receiving a party of people from another business. In some way she has triumphed over these people, they owe her an apology. They begin to arrive in large expensive cars and get out looking smart but also sullen and sheepish. Smear (a doctor) is among them. She stands out as the most important or central figure in her party. They come in through the little door in the hedge and advance in a horizontal line towards my mom and the other people who stand waiting in a similar line. It is twilight and the lights of the house are shining, without seeing it I know there is a pool somewhere to the left of all this, in the garden. There is some sense in which my mom is white or light and Smear is dark.

Next I'm sitting on the balcony with my mother and there are three drums of different sizes on the floor next to us. I start trying to play one. The sound is high and frenetic and I can't get a solid rhythm going. She tries to join but we are unable to meet. After a while I move on to the biggest drum which makes a large vibrating bass sound. Just as I get going the drum falls over the balcony – I look to see if it is broken and go down to fetch it. It is fine but there are all sorts of problems when I try to play it again – I pick up the wrong one or it keeps shifting or falling.

#### **DREAM FIVE**

I have cycled somewhere and end up in the doorway of a classroom or lecture theatre. I pass an unknown man along the way. The room is packed with people, there is a huge racket and the floor is covered with straw. There are mice or rats on the floor with babies. I have come to see a friend. She is sitting near the back and comes to talk to me. The man I had seen earlier is there and I am a little surprised to see him and not entirely glad that he is there. We go outside and it is pouring with rain and then suddenly we are in a different area of campus. I say: "where should we sit?". And she says: "well where would a boyfriend sit with his girl?". We sit on a little concrete bench behind the overhanging branch of a tree. There is an issue we need to talk about but which we both don't want to bring up – it is about our mutual attraction to each other, or my attraction for her. I say: "I wasn't holding out on you today", smiling broadly and sheepishly and referring to the talk we had earlier in which she felt I was avoiding something. She says: "Don't lie, I know that you were". There is quite a feeling of intimacy between us. I want to reach over and touch her but we were interrupted.

#### **DREAM SIX**

I am at a party somewhere and talking to a group of friends when suddenly someone pushes me from behind. I stumble and turn around and see Smile. She smiles openly – an invitation. I push her back and then we start to dance quite closely turning around and holding hands. There is a kind of aggressive sexual tension between us and we are both aware of it and playing with it.

#### **DREAM SEVEN**

I am travelling with the drama students who are performing somewhere. We stop at a desolate area which is completely barren and empty and there is concrete on the ground. The sky is the same sort of grey as the ground and there is a sickly kind of sunlight. Sword and somebody have to do a brief acting/dialogue piece and I have to be the sound/boom operator. They are standing with their backs to the fence and I am slightly to the side. I have to shuffle around a lot and make a lot of noise because the boom has an electric current flowing through it and will electrocute me if it touches the fence. There is also a petrol tank on the other side of the fence which will electrocute me if the boom touches it. It keeps pulling towards the fence or the petrol tank and I struggle to keep it in the middle and still. Finally they finish. The director is a woman and she is pleased with their performance. We go into a hotel or building where we are staying and as I look out of a high window I see a man down on the ground. He shouts up that he was very irritated by my fumbling around and all the noise I was making while holding the boom. I feel bad and shout that there was a reason for this. I try to get the window open to tell him before he goes away. I tell him what happened and he just glares at me and turns away.

### **DREAM EIGHT**

I am somewhere with a close friend. We have just read something together that is of personal significance to us and makes us happy. We smile at each other and I have a feeling of warmth, happiness and great well-being. She comes forward and hugs me, kissing my head and shoulders. She tells me that she loves me. I hug and kiss her neck and hair. I tell her that I love her too – using a nick name that I have for an ex-girlfriend. As I move her hair to kiss her neck, I see she has hieroglyphics tattooed in fine brown all over her neck and shoulders.

### **DREAM NINE**

Delta brings a friend of his home to sleep over. He is very drunk and stoned. I hear a noise and go downstairs. I am looking around and hear somebody call my name plaintively. I look around and she is standing there in a long old-fashioned starched white nightgown, her red hair is accentuated by the white. She is upset and says that Delta is unable to deal with it. She says she needs to be held for a long time and that she needs intimacy. I tell her that she is welcome to sleep with me upstairs as there is plenty of room. She nods in agreement. There is nothing sexual about the interaction but it is quite intimate. I hold her for a long time.

### **DREAM TEN**

I am in bed and discover that there is mould growing on the wall in front of me. It is thick and mossy looking and moves as I move my head to look at it – as if it is rippling in the mind. I am repulsed and lift my pillow to see how far it has come up the wall. The pillow is black and on the underneath I can clearly see the early growth of mould. I am horrified and go downstairs to the kitchen. I discover that there is mould growing on the wall behind the counter and stove as well. I get a bucket with hot water and detergent and start scrubbing it off with a mop. I go about this in a painstaking thorough way moving each object away from the wall and then cleaning, rinsing and drying. I feel relieved by the process and some of the horror is starting to diminish. My mom and another person (a man) come in while I'm busy. There are some people (family) staying at the house and rubbish from buckets in their rooms has spilled out onto the kitchen floor. My eye catches an empty box of condoms and I think that it probably belonged to a young couple that are staying with us. I'm surprised that they haven't concealed it.

The scene shifts to a living room of sorts and I am lying reading a newspaper on a beanbag. There is a black woman next to me doing exactly the same thing. I am cramped for space and keep involuntarily nudging her with my foot. I am reading about an artist who paints and decorates interiors. Suddenly it seems as if the room becomes elongated and my mom and family are there. They are discussing this artist and what a wonderful job he has done. While they speak he is in the room painting. There are patterns on the floor that have a three dimensional quality about them. There are animals (cats) lying on these patterns and they are completely unnoticeable until they move and get up. At this point I think that I've dreamt about this artist before and tell my mom and family about a room he did for 'our religious thing'. I remember there were many candles and black and gold leopard spots on the floor – a real leopard lay camouflaged in them. It got up and moved lazily along as I watched.

The scene shifts again and I'm walking along the bottom floor of my old residence. I am visiting a young girl who I know quite well and who is ill. I think that she might have some kind of eating disorder. My mom as well as her mom and sister (who keeps changing into my sister and niece) are there. They are relying on me to pressure her into doing things she doesn't want to do in order to get well. I am refusing so far and trying to stick to her wishes as much as possible. I am quite close to her. I return later in old clothes – baggy tracksuit pants and a shirt with no shoes. I go into her room and she has lost a lot of weight. Her family want me to argue that she should go onto insulin as she is refusing to do so and will only listen to me. She trusts me and is unaware of this pressure. She says: "The doctors think I should go onto insulin." I feel them staring and nudging me and I say: "Yes, I think you should". The tensions breaks and I have a sense of having betrayed her.

### **DREAM ELEVEN**

I am in town and have just come out of a party or movies. I have to walk home and it is very dark. The darkness has a strange sort of intensity – it is black-bluish and kind of smudgy around the edges. I am struggling to see where I am going and stumbling over things on the ground. It seems as if there is a path I have to follow rather than walk in a general direction. There are many people but I feel very alone. I walk past a group of gathered people and there is a dead man's body lying on the ground. I feel very ill at ease and spooked. I move quickly but soon come across another dead man. He is lying on his back, legs spread

wide on the floor, and has already gone blue and cold. There are a large number of people gathered here because of a gate we have to pass through so I can't get away from him. I look up and see the Cathedral has been barricaded by huge towering gates. There are many little houses around it which have also been barricaded. I know that is to protect them from a serial murderer who is killing these men. Eventually I manage to get through these gates and move along. Before I reach where I am going I pass another dead man. I am shocked and horrified. I have a feeling of intense unease and fear.

The scene shifts to me with Hop. We are in some sort of props room or wardrobe but these clothes belong to her. I need to borrow a jersey from her, she gives me one. I think she looks disgruntled and wonder what I could have done to cause this. The feeling from my walk is still with me.

#### **DREAM TWELVE**

I meet Sword on Mountain Drive. She asks if I want to come with her and explains she is following Jumpy and her boyfriend who are on a Harley Davidson because they can't get up hills. There seems to be some sort of problem with the bike. Except that now it is Sword who is on the bike and Jumpy and the man are in an old long powder-blue station wagon. I can only see the back of their heads but I know that the man is paralysed. One leg is down one side of his body. I think this is quite strange and wonder what Jumpy sees in him as her primary interest in men is always very sexual. As we watch them (we are motionless – Sword on the bike and me standing talking to her in the middle of the road) they are attempting to drive up an incline and the car starts moving slowly and heavily backwards. I panic a little and move out of the way. She wants to know if I'm coming with. I don't really want to but feel obliged to – not wanting to hurt her or make her feel isolated. Then we are all driving in the car – us at the back of the station wagon. It is beautiful, spacious and scenic. I have a feeling of familiarity with the place – I am not suddenly moved by it but know it from before and appreciate it. Sword says: "it is so spacious up here and so cramped down there (meaning Grahamstown) why can't we just live here?" As we round the corner and see the town before us she sighs and complains: "I really don't feel like going back there." I feel contemptuous towards her – she doesn't know that the two places are not separate, that both are terrifying and beautiful if given a chance.

#### **DREAM THIRTEEN**

I am with Lion and we are staying at some resort. There are many winding concrete trails that lead from our 'house' to various places. One of these leads past the pool. It is night and as we walk I feel the urge to swim. It is cold outside but the water is warm and inviting. Lion suggests that we swim but even although I have my bathing costume on underneath my clothes I say no. I explain that I don't have a bathing costume and the what I'm wearing is actually part of my dress. We go to a shop that looks like a chemist.

Then I'm with my brother in a little room. He has come from the shower and has no clothes on. We are playing and insulting each other. I am lying on the bed. He comes and stands over me. There is a sexual atmosphere and I assume that his penis is right above my head. I fight the urge to move towards it and turn my face away and cling to his leg. We banter and all of a sudden he leans down and pushes the tip of it into my mouth. I am very aroused by this but try to be disgusted. I push him away and we play for a few minutes longer. He is clothed suddenly but I still make a few attempts to touch him. I end up looking into his eyes and stroking his face lovingly.

#### **DREAM FOURTEEN**

I am at a dinner party which is quite formal and in honour of some occasion. At the table next to me is Hop and her father is at a table in front of me. As I sit down I realise that my plate of food is on the table in front of me, next to Hop's father. I am unhappy at having to get up and squeeze past people to get it. Part of this grumpiness is due to my embarrassment of being 'noticeable' at such a formal occasion and the fact that there is a middle-aged snobbish socialite woman sitting next to me. I realise there is something wrong with all my cutlery and move down the table to fetch more. As I try to work it all out I am frustrated and flustered and reel myself going red under such close scrutiny. Above all I don't want to embarrass myself in front of Hop. Eventually I get it right but the woman next to me has gone and fetched a whole tray full of absurd cutlery used for dishing up, etc., and I put it on the tray next to me. She shakes her head and sends me a mocking smile. I am angry and upset.

#### **DREAM FIFTEEN**

I am driving somewhere in a car with Sword and Knot. We pull up to the pavement in High Street and a truck passes next to us. I have a sense of foreboding as it towers above us and we can see the cold grey underside. We get out. It is Festival time and we are going to see something, but before we go I see a stall

on the pavement with a pair of shoes that I want. I go and look at them – they are old men's boots. When I try them on they look different, like awful 70's platform boots and they don't fit at all. I take them off. I'm about to leave but I'm suddenly in a room with the man from the stall who seems to know me. We are standing in the shop's doorway facing outwards and I'm about to walk out when he starts to speak to me and tell me how well I look and how glad he is at how I have turned out. He tells me he's watched me grow up and shows me all the photographs he has taken of me over the years. He has been watching me. He puts his arm around me from behind and I hold onto them with mine. There is a sense of familiarity but I begin to feel very uneasy because I don't know or recognise him. I say: "don't lie, you don't know me – when did we meet?" He says that he took photographs of me at my matric farewell. I know this is a lie because I didn't go to my matric farewell and I tell him so. He shrugs and says maybe we met at the Fort (Fort England). We are playing but I let him know that I don't believe him – I am a little afraid of him but charmed at the same time.

#### **DREAM SIXTEEN**

We are lined up in an alley running off High Street wanting to talk to Professor about our research projects. As I begin talking he looks at me with detachment and disapproval. Suddenly I am talking to Boots and we are walking down High Street. I am telling her about a scientist – Christopher Adenase – who is an expert on nature. Suddenly we see him across the street and he is carrying all these animals on his shoulders – a monkey and a python and others.

#### **DREAM SEVENTEEN**

I am lying on the ground in High Street in the middle of the road. It is night and I'm lying in some sort of gutter or on a ledge. I watch the stars in the sky. A little way down a side road Boots is talking to my mom. They are talking about me and making jokes. I am obstinate and remain in the middle of the road until a truck comes along with people who move me away.

#### **DREAM EIGHTEEN**

I am with Boots at some lecture and Jinx is sitting in the same row as us. The lecture hall is packed and Pump is giving the lecture. All of a sudden there are tremors and I'm filled with a sense of foreboding. Our side of the lecture theatre starts to slip down and it feels like an earthquake is taking place. At the end of it I am relieved that we are all fine. Nobody screams or seems hurt and we start filing out of the door at the bottom of the hall in a very orderly civilised manner. There is no hysteria or tension that nobody wants to break because it will become hysteria. Me, Pump and Boots move into the next room. Boots looks out of the door which is on the brink of collapsing and falling down. I am afraid for her and pull her back. I am angry that they are fooling around in such a dangerous situation. I move to look over the edge and Pump pushes me forward. I am startled and frightened but also angry. I turn around and slap him very hard.

#### **DREAM NINETEEN**

I am on a boat or yacht with Hop and some other people who are divers. We are struggling to get something done, something urgent. At the same time there is a feeling that this has already taken place and I keep going back to scenes where I'm with my mom in a Mall somewhere. We are walking along and she stops to check how much money she has. I get impatient because her hands are full and she is fumbling around with her purse but it is only a mock impatience and I hold her purse for her so that she can count the money. We walk further and my mom says: "I know what I'm going to do with my money – buy an Edgars' card and open an account". Now I really get angry and tell her that she must buy something concrete or decent for herself for a change. Then I become wheedling and declare that if I had enough money I would buy some diving gear. I get an inevitable long suffering look in return but smile back with determination. Then we're back on the boat and somehow we have got it right – victory – me and Hop embrace and clasp each others' hands in a powerful salute up in the air. I look down into the water and it seems to be getting darker. This has something to do with what we are doing. Suddenly a killer whale appears and I leave Hop to talk to it. It thanks me and we kiss. There is a deep love between us. I am still talking to it when a man arrives next to us in another boat and positions it right up against the whale so that it can't escape or go away. We have to say goodbye. The whale says that it is going to leave us half the creche and then it leaves. I am very sad and weep.

#### **DREAM TWENTY**

I have a baby in my arms – I don't think it is mine. I have to take care of it for somebody and I am afraid of



it and not knowing how to take care of it. It talks to me and tells me I'm not holding it properly. I am embarrassed and afraid and so I try to hold it differently. It turns into Boots' rat with baby clothes on.

#### **DREAM TWENTY ONE**

I am with a friend (might be Boots) and we have been captured and put in an institute somewhere. The more we try to convince people that it's all been a mistake the more convinced they become that this is part of our delusion. We are like two schoolgirls in this dream – young and small. We manage to get into a dining hall area with lots of tables. We sit down and my friend discovers an intercom hidden in the wall next to her. Through it she can talk to a doctor who may believe us (we haven't been allowed to talk to any of the doctors). She whispers into it and the doctor whispers back. She tells us that the more trouble we make the more we'll be confined and disbelieved. We decide to try and escape and do so by stowing away on a truck that collects sewage. We are driving along and open the door of the truck to see the road stretching behind us and the hills in front of us where our homes are. I am busy watching traffic and thinking how angry our parents will be – they won't let us go back there.

#### **DREAM TWENTY TWO**

I have to go on some kind of class expedition. We travel there on a bus and I don't recognise any of my classmates or what it is we are supposed to be studying. We're going to see the Owl House and my classmates seem more like a group of tourists. We get there and look around the museum. We are supposed to be following some structured or guided tour but I wander off by myself, looking at old arranged rooms. The way I'm going is filled with obstacles – the house is strangely built so that I have to climb beneath half suspended walls into some places. I step down into the kitchen which is surprisingly modern and filled with appliances and utensils. It is in disarray and I wonder if it is in private use. Perhaps the people in the museum use it. I am joined by other people and we walk through the other rooms. At some point I find a little yellow and black square device that is a phone and I phone Boots who I am missing. It seems as if I phone her from every room and place I visit. I wonder when we are going to see the Owl House itself. I then find myself on the bus again and my main concern seems to be whether I will get through to Boots. I am almost frantic about this. As the phone dies I feel a sense of relief. I look down to see that I don't have a seat but that I am standing on the seat below my level (double-decker bus). I manoeuvre myself down and take the seat.

#### **DREAM TWENTY THREE**

I am in a chemist to buy a birthday present for my mother. I don't know what to get her. The woman helping me is an acquaintance of my mother's and points to a 'magnum' box consisting of a huge lighter and canister of lighter fluid. The woman says that my mom had wanted one of these. I had been looking at the lighters and wanting to get one, not knowing if this was an appropriate gift as my mother had given up smoking years ago. I eventually decide to get one and say: "it will be a reminder of all that's past and what is to come in the future". I walk out with it.

There is a young boy sitting on the pavement. He takes the lighter from me to look at it. Suddenly it is a can of coke. While I am still talking to the woman who is standing in the doorway of the shop, the boy opens the can. I am instantly furious. I grab it from him, shouting that it was supposed to be a gift for someone. I slap him hard across the face a number of times, drawing blood.

#### **DREAM TWENTY FOUR**

I am at some sort of outdoor concert or gathering. There are a lot of people walking about and sitting or lying down. I am with Boots and the usual group of people. As always I am slightly intimidated and uncomfortable around them. I get up to go somewhere. There is a group of people playing music and I go to them. A young man is drumming and then I begin to drum. I am surprised at how good I am. There are cameras filming people and a huge wall of TV screens displaying the images. I appear on these, drumming. As I walk away I wonder if the others saw me and hope they didn't. I walk back and find them sitting watching a movie. I watch with them and when it ends we start to watch another. It is a horror movie and I am pleased because this is one of my favourite types. It starts and I find it particularly scary and disturbing. This surprises me because I don't often find horror movies frightening. As I watch the movie it begins to transpose into reality. There are no people or recognisable images, just unrecognisable shapes that I know are evil. I reach out my hand and touch one of these which is dark red in colour. As I touch one it is warm and soft and yields with a squelchy sound. Blood starts to pour over my hand, hot and bright red. I call Boots to come and look. I am no longer afraid but watch in kind of abject fascination as the blood continues to trickle down my hand

and arm.

#### **DREAM TWENTY FIVE**

I am still at school. A school teacher who I love (a woman) is accused of sexually abusing a chicken. There has to be a court case. I am driving with her and one of her friends to town. They live on a farm and on the way we stop to let the chicken in (which is quite tame and sweet and looks more like a dog than a chicken). As we travel I think it is quite possible that this woman had sex with a chicken but that I would still love her as much.

Then I'm in a room that is stark and white. It is an FBI room and there is a man interrogating me about whether I've enjoyed sex with a chicken. It seems that I must be punished for finding the idea of the woman having sex with a chicken quite a turn on and not being repulsed by this.

Next I am naked and have to get on a man's racing bicycle. The man puts a pillow over the long bar. I straddle and I am meant to rub myself against this while cycling in order to see if I would enjoy having sex with a chicken. I am aroused by the softness of the pillow and thoughts of the woman. After a while the man leaves. I suspect that there might be hidden cameras observing me but I don't care. I get off the bike and begin to masturbate. I go to the window and there are men outside who are shocked. I smile and turn away and lie down on the floor.

#### **DREAM TWENTY SIX**

I am with Hop and she shows me a pair of Doc Martens which she has bought. She has been meaning to buy a pair for a while and I am impressed as she has bought a pair with 18 holes. She has laced them the wrong way and I jokingly reprimand her and fix them. We both laugh.

Suddenly I am in a field with bees which are swarming around my feet. I stand still. Hop says: "You have two options, you either move forward (towards the bees) or you move backward (away). I'd go for the first one." I know she thinks this is best because it will frighten them away but I think it will just bring them closer to me and make them angry so I move my foot back and they don't move. I am relieved.

I am in Hop's kitchen and Pop is there. We have just eaten and they are busy cleaning up. The kitchen is tidy and clean but Pop keeps saying "it doesn't look like it did before" and Hop agrees. This finally becomes a bit much and I say: "you're both so retentive". Afterwards I feel a little guilty for being so forceful.

#### **DREAM TWENTY SEVEN**

I am going out with a man who is thin and dark and has a strange brooding air about him. We have a strange bond. It is not what one would conventionally consider to be 'in love' but rather taking for granted that we have to be with each other. His mother is a very strong presence and her presence always seems to be hovering in the air whether or not she is there. She disapproves of me and it seems if anybody who tries to get close to her son. He tells me about his father and it seems this is an important step that he must carry out. His father was in the war and is now dead. There is a sort of representational model of the father on which he places different objects (to represent bullets and bombs) in different places to show how his father died. He first demonstrates with the upper torso and then the lower. After this we are somewhere else and he gives me two black roses wrapped in yellow serviettes. As I unroll the serviettes the roses transform into two women dressed in black with blonde hair – I don't see their faces, but only their backs.

#### **DREAM TWENTY EIGHT**

I am at university and have to go to the Anthropology department to see the aquarium they have there. It is a long trek and I have to walk through ruins of castles to get there. When I get inside there is a huge tank that has whales in it. I am mesmerised by the gigantic creatures and feel very drawn to them, particularly to a killer whale that swims in front of the glass. Whispering the word 'Orca' I crouch down and jump up, wanting the whale to leap out and up onto the air but it doesn't.

#### **DREAM TWENTY NINE**

I am in a hospital. There is a man – Dr Sturgis – who I am afraid of. I meet him and he tells me to go to his private room which is in the hospital and get ready. He is detached and menacing. He has a reputation for cruelty. I am afraid but go anyway. As I walk away to go to his room I enter the Psycho Dept. It has been spruced up and has decorations jutting out from all of the doors in the downstairs passage. I think to myself that these won't last long when groups of people rush down the passage. I move from the passage back into the hospital corridors. I try to find his room but can't. I walk past his office twice while he is busy with a patient. I am afraid that this is going to make him very angry with me. He tells me curtly which direction

to take. I sit in his room on the bed and only have my underwear on. I hope that he will only fuck me and not torture me afterwards. He comes in and is casual, he has changed into sports wear. I tell him it looks like African climbing gear, trying to please him. He sits down on the floor and begins stretching and putting one leg behind his ear.

#### **DREAM THIRTY**

I am in the middle of a part looking for Sword and the others. It is night. Suddenly three men walk towards me – they are wearing jester costumes and face paint. They stand around me so that we form a circle and begin to sing or chant in tune. Each takes a turn changing the note slightly and making up words. When it becomes clear that it is my turn I say no and try to walk away saying that I would prefer to watch. They refuse to let me go and encourage me, telling me how easy it is. The chanting sounds and words are nonsensical and almost magical sounding in a comic way.

**DREAM ONE**

I had returned from the vacation and had moved into digs with the squash group, In, D, G and myself. I was the only girl and was really worried that the guys would just ignore me and my opinions and wanted just to take over the digs. I felt really inferior. But then when we were deciding what rooms each should get the guys insisted that I get the bigger one because I deserved it. I was quite surprised but was not going to argue.

Then we all went out to do the shopping and I thought we would just buy junk food so was getting ready to argue against junk food. We all walked around the shop not putting anything in the trolley so eventually I started putting in things that I liked. They all seemed quite happy with my choices. I eventually asked them if there was anything they were not happy with regards to the food but they all said no I was doing a good job and knew what foods to buy. They did not make me feel inferior at all and seemed to respect what I felt and said.

**DREAM TWO**

Myself and a friend of mine, S, went to fetch L to come to an Xmas Party that was being held in the Residence. It was pouring with rain and we were in our smart clothes. We were getting sopping wet. We got to her house and called her, so she joined us in the rain. At the entrance to her complex of houses we noticed there was a race going on and we were caught in the middle of it. The winning line was just down the road from where we were and the first runner had finished so I went down to congratulate him. He just ignored me and then In, this squash player friend of mine, appears behind me and smacks this guy in the face. A fight breaks out and I get caught up in it, trying to get out the way but the group fall on me trapping me underneath them. I start screaming for them to get off me but they are not listening and do not hear me. Eventually G pulls them off as he sees I am in agony and I just feel this pain in my legs and realise they are crushed and I cannot move.

**DREAM THREE**

A big group of us are involved in a play and I have a big part but not the main lead. There is another girl who has a main lead and feels really threatened by me and seems jealous of me since I seem to be getting on really well with everyone else. So she continually tries to get me down and undermine me. I seem to get lots of attention from everyone else and this peeves her.

We are driving along this highway and are being chased by another group of people who want to attack us. We are considered a good group, the heros, and the other group are the baddies. We all start arguing how we should approach the situation but there is conflict within our group.

Then we are on land, no longer driving and we are fighting with people of the other group. My kitchen knife is being used as a weapon and people are trying to stab each other with it. We get away from this group and go to my old house. We all jump in the pool and I end up having a fight with the lead girl. I have a packet of notes in it that document my life and my past. I want to destroy them but the girl wants to get them and use them against me. I throw them in the pool and she tries to get them before they all get wet. I go after her and she starts to drown me. Everyone else jumps in the pool and they all start fighting with each other. All of a sudden everyone stops fighting and we go into this formation, still in the pool. It is like we are ending a performance. We form a tower, everyone standing on each other's shoulders. There is myself and two others at the bottom holding up the whole formation. I can feel my shoulder aching and then everyone starts jumping off onto the grass.

Before the fighting in the pool, we were all sitting on the grass being given a lecture about gay rights and it was like a gay education lesson. We discuss the issues and some people are really anti-gay while others are really supportive of gay rights.

**DREAM FOUR**

I was out on a huge lake with a bunch of people and some SA cricketers. On two occasions we were attacked by crocodiles. Dave Callaghan was fishing by himself in one of the boats. A crocodile toppled it over and attacked and ate him. I was in another boat which was also toppled over by a crocodile. As it was about to take a bit of me I managed to pull myself onto the bigger boat with the help of other people on the boat.

**DREAM FIVE**

You (the researcher) was taking an aerobics class in one of the dining halls. After the class we had a discussion on your thesis and you were asking people questions about various issues regarding the

university and their opinions on the university. Then everyone went back to do aerobics but I went off to play squash and watch one of the other girls. One of my lecturers came down to pay and started chatting to me.

We finished playing squash and went up to the dining hall where you were finishing up the aerobics class and then we sat down and food was brought to us at the tables. Everyone was laughing and joking around. A food fight broke out and there was food everywhere. Someone warned us that the sissies were coming and we thought we would all be in the pooh. But they just wanted us to sign a petition so that their sons would not be taken away from them when we all died. Everything died down and people went off to do their own thing. We sat down and started to discuss the dreams but one of the sissies came back and said you had a really important phone call to take.

#### **DREAM SIX**

I was running a 10 km race but the course was just up and down this track. I started off with everyone and as the race went on people started dropping out and it was just myself and P left. I was winning by quite a long way but knew P was a good runner and of course very competitive and would not want to lose to me. I could feel my legs getting heavier and eventually it was like they would not run. I would try to move them forward but they were just getting stuck. The harder I tried the worse it got. I was one minute ahead of P with one length to go of the track and all I could do was a pathetic walk. I was almost over the line but could not lift my leg and P passed me on the line.

#### **DREAM SEVEN**

One of my friends had murdered someone and we were on the run. We were running through this really crowded part of town and she had put the blame on me for some reason. We reached this really packed part of town and decided to split up and meet back at my house. There were cops after me but I managed to get away from them and make it back towards my house. As I got to my house I noticed it was swarming with police and I had been set up. I approached the house normally and pretended to be with the police because they did not know what I looked like. So I found out that they already knew about me, but then someone recognised me. I started running again but found it very difficult to move. I was trying to force my legs to move again. I managed to get amongst the crowds again and everything became an effort. Eventually I got into the clear and called a taxi. I got into the taxi but discovered it was stuck in the traffic and was always stopping and starting.

#### **DREAM EIGHT**

My family thought I had murdered someone. I remember seeing this body in the bushes that had been really gruesomely murdered but it was not me but they would not listen. They shoved me in this 4x4 car so I could escape and they would help me. We were all in the car except my dad. It was raining really heavily and it was a dangerous drive. My middle sister was driving but I knew her eyes were bad and she was a bad driver anyway. But she and my mom refused to let me drive. It was just out in the middle of nowhere on this long road. They did not trust me to drive but my eldest sister wanted to know why they did not trust me. They said I would stop somewhere and leave them there and drive off because I did not want to be with them. I said that is ridiculous and L also could not believe it. Then they said I did not have my licence. I tried to show them I did have it in my ID book but the two of them refused to look or listen to me. I was getting extremely irritated.

We eventually stopped. It had stopped raining and I convinced my eldest sister to let me drive down the road and back to prove to them I could drive. She convinced them to let me take the car and came with me. We drove quite far down the road and were talking about my mom. L was saying she was just struggling to deal with me being gay and thought if she took me away it would help. She wanted the whole family with her. We turned around to go back but got stuck in the mud.

Ages passed and we both started panicking because my mom would think we had gone off and left her and L2 and it would justify her not trusting me. It started raining again and making it worse. I told my sister I would run back to where we left them to prove to them we had not left and show them they did not need to mistrust me.

#### **DREAM NINE**

I was having coffee with Kim in a huge shopping mall. I had to meet my mom later to go shopping but first draw money downstairs. I wanted R200 but got R2 000. It was all money out of my account. I did not want it and tried to deposit it. Although the ATM gave me instructions that I had re-deposited it, I was unsure. I told a man about it, but he was uninterested.

While shopping with my mom, I bumped into an old friend, V, and a squash player, C. V was going to France the next day. I organised to have coffee with her the next morning but forgot I had made an arrangement with Kim for movies the next morning at eight, and I did not know how to get hold of V. I went

back to the ATM and discovered that my envelope of money had not been properly deposited and was out in the open to be stolen. So this time I made sure it was deposited properly. While walking to look at the shops with K I saw V. These two did not say a word to each other (ex's). I told V I could not make coffee at 8 so she suggested 7:30 the next morning. I could not make it at that time so I suggested 7:45. I said I would phone her to confirm. She said I would not, I was lying, I would not make the effort.

So I phoned her and saw her at 7:45 but it was all very rushed. I had to get her to C before a certain time or else she would miss her flight to France. We were running around the shopping mall madly, and eventually see C but then she disappears. I am on my bike and V is walking next to me.

Then we get outside into this huge parking lot. V cannot remember where her car is parked, stressing with me like it is my fault she is late to meet C. Eventually we find her car, a Volksie, but she still needs C. She remembers her cell phone and calls C on her cell phone. C is already on her way home and V must meet her there. I get angry because I think I will have to go with her to show her how to get to C's house but it's K's birthday and I am already late to meet her, so I just tell V I have to go and goodbye. She just glares at me.

#### **DREAM TEN**

I had to go to PE for a squash tournament. The people I was going to stay with were D and D. I phoned D who said it was fine I could stay with them with pleasure. When it came to leave for PE I was sleeping and could not wake up. My eyes would not wake up. Then D came into my room, woke me up, and said come on, she would give me a lift. I said OK, but let me pack some clothes first, so I packed one outfit and took my squash racquet, threw it in the boot of her car and say I just want to run inside to get another outfit.

While inside I decide I cannot get a lift because I must take my care to PE because I must get back to Grahamstown on Sunday. I run outside to tell her and now see her husband is by the car with a video camera, filming us. There two kids are running around crying.

I tell her I cannot take the lift and we laugh about it. I take my stuff out of the boot and she drives off to a main house just up from my room with D. The kids stay with me. So I go in and pack more clothes and can hear D and D fighting. The kids are trying to ignore the fighting and draw my attention away from it by asking questions about squash and my racquet. Eventually I am in the car, in PE at the courts, and I am about to go on and see I have left my squash racquets in Grahamstown.

#### **DREAM ELEVEN**

A squash tournament was cancelled over Easter which was to be used for selection purposes but none of the selectors informed me when trials would be. Eventually I phoned and they said trials would still be the following weekend in East London. I was sarcastic on the phone, saying thanks for letting me know and asked if they were going to let me know.

I arrived on the courts on time and some other girls who I had not seen before were also there. There were four courts but one of them had scaffolding, chairs, posters and all kinds of junk on it. Then the other three potentials arrived, T, A and C, with the selectors, busy schlooping. So we were all standing around while M explained the procedure and then told those three, as everyone was walking off so they could not hear, not to worry they can just play amongst themselves on the first court seeing that they would probably be in the team.

Then this one selector, S, starts laughing, saying, hey you must be careful, you might spill the beans that we've already decided on the team. So I throw my toys privately as usual, not saying anything, but was clearly upset. The others go off to challenge each other except me. I'm just left like the selectors are not bothered. So I walked past them and said I could not understand why they were bothering with trials, that I knew what was going on, that they had already selected the team, that it was the same always, when would it change that they would give everyone a fair chance, and walked off. The other girls could hardly hit a ball.

Then we were all on the court with junk on it, busy stretching except the other three who did not have to do drills. There had to be four to a court, so myself and some other girls started hitting about but the others are still on the floor stretching and I am on the side of the scaffolding leaning against the wall trying to hit a ball. So I ask the others to please move to the other side of the court. I get this weird look, like who do you think you are.

Eventually they move, but there's so much junk on the court that the ball keeps hitting things and deflecting. So I get irritated as well as the fact that girl I am practising with cannot hit the ball straight. I throw my racquet off court and start taking the junk off. The other girls have gone to the better courts but I was told that this is where I was to play. No one else helped me and eventually three other girls started helping.

All this time the selectors are huddled together busy whispering and giggling, so eventually I walk past and just said take you and your game and your selection abilities and shove it because I am not interested anymore.

## **DREAM TWELVE**

A whole bunch of people, including my Mom, Dad and one sister, decide to go on a camping weekend over Easter to get away. Quite a few people have their own houses or little flats out in this huge park-like area and others just bring tents or sleep under the stars. We all decide it is going to be a huge drinking weekend and my squash buddies are there as well as another friend of mine, P.

We arrive there and there is a whole bunch of squatters around the park and some have moved into the empty houses. As we arrive, everyone has to run and claim a spot or a house. However, a number of people are worried that the park is just going to get messed up with litter and beer cans. People are shouting about not to mess up the park but no one is listening.

So I go and with a stick write in some open grass and sand: In previous years the place has always been left untidy – please leave it neat and tidy, please. But this attracted a whole lot of media attention as well as attention from both black and white. My Mom was furious I had attracted so much attention to myself and was trying to hide me away.

The spot we had claimed was really difficult to find and anyone who asked to speak to me, especially girlfriends, was told I was not around. All my guy squash friends were shown where I was staying.

Then that night everyone just starts taking out beer and wine and lighting fires and its one huge party that begins to develop with everyone drinking. Our family is sitting around a fire and everyone is looking at me with a disappointed look and my mom keeps saying we have to talk and I keep saying talk. But she will not because other people are in the vicinity.

So P comes to visit and we are chatting a bit and having a few drinks. My Mom is getting uptight and fidgety, and so tells me to go and play squash with my sister who has not said one word to me and who is dying to beat me. I say I have had a few drinks so I do not think it is a good idea. My Mom says its just because I do not love my sister and I do not want to spend time with her. I say fine, and off we go to this court.

We play and I am really uptight. I just lose to her quickly and walk off. I say congrats, you beat me, you are a better player. When we get back everyone wants to know who has won. I smile and say: oh no, L did, she's far better than me. Mom gives her a huge smile, like well done, and I do not know why S is bothering with squash – and says to her: see, I told you you can beat her. L just smiles. Mom pulls a chair close to her and tells me to come sit next to her. I say: no thanks, I would rather sit close to the fire – which is closer to my dad. The whole time he said nothing, but just sat with his hurt, sad look on his face.

## **DREAM THIRTEEN**

Myself, my Mom, Dad and eldest sister and G were on holiday but spending it in Johannesburg together. Dad went off to work and Mom came into my room and began crying, asking me why I was wasting my life. She told me I was making the wrong decision and she had made an appointment for me to go and see her psychologist. I tried to remain calm but got more uptight as I had told her I did not need to see a psychologist since it would not change anything. L then walked into my room and tried to explain to my Mom that it was just the way I was and would not change it but my Mom just kept on crying and left the room. My Dad appeared, looking upset and wanted to know why mom had been crying.

Then all four of us were in the dining room and my Mom was insisting that I must go see a psychologist because he will sort me out. Once again I said I did not need one and that I was quite happy with who I was. The reply: no you are not.

Then they went off to play golf. My Dad was outside waiting for my Mom. She started going outside but came back in and just broke down in tears telling me please I must change, I am going to be so unhappy and how could I do this to her. My sister was sitting on the couch and my dad at the door. I turned to them and said sorry L, sorry Dad, but I have to do this. I pushed Mom on the floor gently so she was on her back, sat on top of her, held her arms down, told her to stop crying and look me straight in the eye. I then let rip but in an assertive firm way. I told her that I will not see a psychologist to try and change me. I will not put up with her trying to make me feel guilty. This is me, it is not going to change. It just is. I am not diseased or dying so there is no need to treat me like I am. And finally, it is time you accept it or do not, but then let it be and let my live my life and you yours.

We both got up, she wiped her face, stopped crying and off they went to play golf. I looked at my sister who said to me it was the right thing, you had to do it.

## **DREAM FOURTEEN**

I was shopping with Mom in PE. I see squash friends who I stay with, D and D. Mom goes off to buy things, I stay and chat. I ask if I can come stay the weekend because I am coaching not only squash, but cricket and rugby as well. D sort of ums and ahs which is strange because previously she only welcomed me. Eventually she says OK but she will give me her phone number. I say I have her phone number. She says not this one so I say what is going on. She says her and D have split up, the marriage was doomed from

the beginning. Oh no, I think, then D walks back.

We walk around the shops and I see my mom at a pay till so I join her. Then I see another friend of mine, turn around to chat and walk with her a bit. When I get back I see my mom surrounded by police at the till. I ask what is going on and one of the guys says, no she was almost robbed by this guy. I see a black guy being handcuffed but then they whisk him away. I ask where they are taking her and no one tells me, she just does not say anything.

D and D come back and I'm stuck at this mall but need to get back to Grahamstown so they offer me a lift, but in a mini. So I cramp up in the back and off we go. On the way back we broke down since a part of the engine flies off into the bush. We stop and manage to find it.

#### **DREAM FIFTEEN**

I was collecting reptiles with someone, I cannot remember who. I cannot see their face, but it was snakes and lizards. We had to show them off for some project that we had to conduct. We collected them from any old places I used to be around, like school and my childhood house. We had to prove that they were not dangerous to catch today.

At the same time, a squash tournament was going on. AJ, who had disappeared for a while, reappeared, but no one gave her the time of day, everyone was really bitching at her and would not speak to her. I had to play her, but before our match I saw her in a corner looking very dejected so I went and spoke to her. She told me no one understood what she was going through, and she could not explain to anyone how she felt about this guy she had met, she totally loved him, yet everyone thought she was silly. I told her it was okay to fall in love and just go for what you wanted because it might not happen again and if she was happy then she should continue seeing him and stuff the squash because there is more to life than squash. We went on and played. She felt really grateful to me, as someone finally spoke to her, was her friend.

After the match she went off but I felt I was losing my front tooth. It was chipped before and repaired but was loose again. I went looking for a dentist to fix it but could not find anyone. It kept getting looser and looser and actually I forced it to break off. I went downstairs and found a guy who said he was a dentist so I said I would go shower and then come back.

After I showered I went downstairs again but everything had changed around and where his office was previously was different. Actually, I found some other guy in another office and asked if he knew where the dentist was. He did not. I asked if he could help me, but he said he was a doctor and could not.

#### **DREAM SIXTEEN**

I was living in a small town with my folks but they had gone away and were now on their way back. I had gone to meet them somewhere and had told them about myself. All appeared to be fine so I headed back home where a friend of mine was house sitting. My flat was quite a way away from the main house and as I drove in I saw a few men milling around the house. I went into my flat and saw S, asked who they were. She did not know. Some guy called me when I had tried to watch my folks. He said my mom had hired these men to watch me to see if I was seeing anyone and had told them that when I arrived here they were to lock me in the house/flat and make sure I did not escape or see anyone because this would change me.

The men were on their way down to the flat. S helped me get out and we went down to what appeared to be Sports Admin or some Admin building here at Rhodes. S spoke to this woman who gave her money and then gave me money which I was to use to live off. I said goodbye to S. She was going to tell my folks that I had not come home and she had not heard from me. I was going to just disappear.

#### **DREAM SEVENTEEN**

I was back in Johannesburg for a vacation but was staying at our old house. I was involved in league while I was up there, playing for men's league side at my old club. I was really struggling in my game and had lost my first three matches and the guys were wondering if I should not drop down a league. I did not want to but I was considering dropping down a position to No 3. I had a match this Tuesday night and was trying to find out who was playing on the opposite side so I could decide which position or number to play that night.

I needed to go and see my friend S because she would know but because I was only on vacation I did not have my car so I needed to borrow my mom's. She refused because she would not allow me to see S. I tried to explain why I needed to see her but she turned away.

At the same time, I had an assignment due for Varsity when I returned. I had my whole family involved in doing it. It was putting together a flower arrangement of all different rare flowers and then I had to do a write up on it. I was collecting the flowers while my mother and sister were putting them in an arrangement. They had just about finished when my mom ripped off one of the flowers and said it did not go in the arrangement. Now I had written about it in my report and so would have to cross out that information and make a mess. We had a huge fight about why she did not consult me first and eventually



my dad came along and calmed me down and said he would get his secretary to type it. For some reason I needed it by Wednesday so could not wait until the next day so he said he would take it then to G.

It was 4 pm and I had to be at squash at 5 pm and still did not know where we were playing. At 4.15 Ian phoned and told me where we were playing and who I was playing and I decided I would play No 3. I needed to get there somehow since my mom still refused to let me use her car so I phoned S quietly and asked her to come and fetch me. My Mom walked past as I was saying goodbye and just glared at me and walked off. Eventually S arrived and I left with my mom not talking to me. She dropped me off and I met up with Ian and we waited inside the courts for D to arrive. I refused to play first since I always played first and Ian had just driven for ages to get there so we waited for D to arrive and because he was late he would have to go on first.

Eventually D walked in looking quite high. He went on but was losing hopelessly. I was first lying there watching him play and could feel myself getting all nervous and uptight. I did not want to play at all so told Ian he had to go on next. I was considering scrapping. I was sick or wanting an excuse so I did not have to play.

### **DREAM EIGHTEEN**

A whole bunch of us were in Grahamstown being taken for a gym session by one of the HMS lecturers. We were divided into groups and each group was to work on some apparatus and work out a performance to present to the class. Our group had to work on the ropes. There were two very good gymnasts in our group who were going to be the leads so Dr B spent all the time with them, working with them while the rest of us just sat around. I am absolutely useless at any form of gymnastics and was petrified of heights and with these ropes we would all be swinging around the hall but very high. I explained my fear to Dr B and she said no excuses I must get used to it.

So eventually I thought I would try to overcome my fear and went on the ropes. I climbed up quite high and someone started pulling me from side to side and it began swinging around the hall. Once it started swinging it would not stop. I was screaming for help but Dr B said no one was to help, I must learn to cope with the apparatus and heights. So I went bashing into the walls and swinging around for ages. Everyone below just carried on as though there was nothing wrong.

Eventually I knew I had to get down by myself so I swung over to some curtains and grabbed them to slow myself down from swinging so fast. Just as I let go of the curtains I let myself slip quite far down the rope before I picked up speed again and then let myself drop off. People had put big mats down in case I fell. Of course, I missed the mats and fell on my hip.

Everyone was real happy I had got down. Dr B just shouted for everyone to go back to their apparatus. My hip was really sore and I struggled to walk, but returned to my group where I was told I would not have to go up on the ropes again. The lecture was supposed to finish at 4:30 but it was 5:10 already. Someone gave me roller skates so I would not have to walk and could rest my hip. I could not use them properly and kept falling. We were let out by the lecturer and I went to find if I had a league squash match but could not find anyone so presumed we did not.

I was still struggling on those skates and made a complete arse of myself in front of various groups of students who were sitting in this parking lot. I looked to see if I could get them off but they were like glued to my feet. But I started getting the hang of it. I skated past this group of guys who were in a gang. When I passed them I heard someone shouting out a guy's name of another gang. We were in an underground parking lot. A guy came skating past me and I realised this was the guy the gang was after. It was very dark and I had the feeling I would be mistaken for this guy. I could hear the other guys running towards me. I tried skating away but kept falling. I could not get further than a few steps at a time. I just kept falling.

I found some stairs. There were two entrances next to each other. I chose the left hand one and saw that the actual stairs had been taken away and it was just railing on either side. I slipped into the next entrance and looked down and saw the gang leader one flight below waiting for me and could hear someone above me and someone behind me. The whole time I had been shouting, telling them I was not the person they were looking for and he had skated past me ages ago. The leader just insisted I could not fool them and they finally caught up with me.

### **DREAM NINETEEN**

C, K, J and myself were driving to East London. I was driving and the road was really bad and it kept going wide and then narrow. We were driving along when the road narrowed and we hit the ground on the side of the road and the car pulled to the left. I just tried to pull the steering wheel to the right and had the brakes on but the car was doing its own thing. So we did a 180 degree turn and landed up next to the railings with a huge drop down a cliff. Everyone was looking at me waiting for an explanation. I just pointed out how the road had narrowed all of a sudden. Anyway we were all okay and the car was okay so off we went again.

Then just before East London we had to drive down a mountain. I was driving along a little path as

a road, it was really steep and slippery. I got the car down the first bit, then we all had to drive along a ledge which was so narrow that the wheel on the one side hung over the ledge a bit, before a long drop down, but the view was stunning so we stopped the car and had a look.

We then arrived at East London at this hotel which seemed to be where all the Rhodes students went. It was full of students. We were waiting to eat so went to sit down at a table and ordered food. Next thing K and C jump up with desert bowls and run inside, they came back with huge bowls of ice cream drowned in chocolate sauce. I asked them why they were having it now and they said they always ate desert before a main course and then would see if they still wanted the main course. Secondly the hotel was known for their ice cream and chocolate sauce. I realised everyone was hurrying to try and get some. I went in to get some and when I finally got to the front after queuing for ages the last scrap was taken. I spent ages running around trying to get more ice cream but non one would help me out or bring out more ice cream.

Eventually I found a waitress who brought out a tub and it was chocolate and vanilla. But as I was about to dig in she grabbed the tub and took it back in, returning with a fudge flavoured ice cream. By this stage K and C were back for seconds and were just laughing at me for struggling so much just for ice cream. So I got the ice cream and chocolate sauce.

### **DREAM TWENTY**

I was at home looking at what movies were on with a friend of mine but could not decide which one to go see. I had to go play a squash match in Pretoria first but did not know where the club was. My eldest sister said she knew which one it was and was describing it to me and where it was but I could not picture it, even though I'd played there before, and recognised the name of the club I just could not get an idea of where it was. I had played there plenty of times as well. So my sister was getting really agitated because I was not getting her instructions.

She left the room and then these people walked in with guns and shot my friend in front of me and told me I was to take them to the courts with me and I was to kill someone. This woman just pointed this gun at me and told me not to ask questions and if I refused to take them or tried anything they would kill me. I explained to them that I did not quite know where the courts were and this woman said I must not lie and I had better get us there.

By some fluke I found the courts. I remember walking in and going past the courts, people were saying hello and speaking to me and these people were right behind me with guns aimed at my back and I had to pretend everything was alright. We went upstairs in this club where the change rooms were and bathrooms other rooms were. I said I wanted a bath so they locked me in this bathroom and said they had to go find this person I was to kill.

This woman left a cell phone in the room with me but it could also be used to hear what I was doing. Once again I was instructed not to try anything funny. The door was closed. As I was about to get into the bath, the door opened and someone shot me in my side. I fell into the bath but there was no blood, just a clear mark where the bullet had gone in. It was really painful and I just gritted my teeth. That was my warning not to try anything.

I finished bathing and was drying myself when the cell phone rang. Another friend of mine was phoning to tell me there was a new movie out that I should go see but she could not remember the name. I was worried this woman would hear me on the phone and think I'd phoned to try and get help so I was trying to get this friend of mine off the phone without panicking or being suspicious.

I then heard shots being fired outside and panic cries, then silence. I'd just managed to get off the phone when this woman came back in and said they had found the person I was to kill but another friend of mine (L in HMS) had got in the way and started asking questions about where I was. She had seen me come in with these people and then disappear. They had killed her.

She close the door and said I had five minutes to get dressed. I started dressing when the phone rang again. I knew it was this friend of mine phoning back because she had said she was going to find out the name of the movie and phone me back. I tried to just turn off the ringing sound and not answer the phone. I was afraid the woman would think I was phoning out for help. However, I kept pushing this button to turn it off but it would not go off. So I picked it up and was about to put it in my squash bag under clothes to muffle the sound so no one would hear it ringing when the door opened and this woman was standing with a gun pointed at me. However, the ringing was my actual alarm going off.

### **DREAM TWENTY ONE**

I was on holiday with my family at the coast. We went down to the beach but did not sit with everyone else on the beach. Instead my Mom insisted we go sit by the lagoon/river that was a bit up the coast. There were two ways to get there, one was along the coast line, walking through part of the river to get to the bank and the other way was a back way behind the dunes and up a very steep dune.

We used the coast way but the river/lagoon had crocodiles in it. I was really worried about this but

my mother insisted it would be fine and safe and she could practice her golf hitting across the water. So we settled on the bank. It got really hot so my middle sister and I kept jumping in every now and again. For quite a while there was no sign of crocodiles. And then while my Dad was on this wave ski on the water he saw the head of a crocodile above the water so came back to tell us to be careful

My Mom kept insisting not to be silly that they would not attack us on the bank and we could swim but as long as we did not swim close to them we would be fine. I got quite angry but did not say anything. I decided to go to the beach and swim. My Dad and sister came along and off we went.

The swimming beach was miles away so the other two decided not to swim because we were not going to walk all that way so I just swam where we were. Everything was fine but I had not realised I had been washed a bit to the left and into a horrible rough area. A huge wave came and pulled me under water in its under current. I remember just struggling for breath trying to fight against the undercurrent but nothing was happening. I managed to push against the sea bed and break through the water. End of swim.

So off we went back to our spot on the bank but we had realised the tide had come up. We were right on the edge of the bank and for some reason could not move back so the water was lapping at our feet. My sister decided to go for a walk around to the other side of the bank to see what was there. So off she went.

We were watching the water and next thing this huge crocodile approached – but it was huge. The wave ski was in the middle of the water and it just went and bit it in half. I was really panic and wanted to go but everyone else wanted to stay. It started coming towards us on the bank and I said we should move because this thing is going to get us on the bank whether we are in or out of the water. My Mom said they do not attack people on land. My Dad and his friend still had their feet in the water and this crocodile went under the water so we could not see it. Next thing it appeared right by the bank where we were and grabbed this guys foot. My Dad and I just held onto him and pulled him up onto the bank. He lost a couple of toes and his foot was quite mangled. Then the crocodile disappeared.

Now we were going to leave but we had to wait for L. So I went to go look for her but could not find her. I came back along the back route and as I got to the top of this steep dune I saw her on the other side of the lagoon about to swim across. No one else saw her and I was shouting at her not to swim because of the crocodile but she could not hear. I ran down to my folks and all of us were shouting to her not to swim across but she was intent on swimming across, so she went.

At first we could not see any sign of the crocodile and she was almost across when the crocodile came up behind her. We shouted for her to swim faster but she was tired by now. I jumped in to go pull her along. As I got to her the crocodile got her leg. We were right by the bank now and I was just kicking at the crocodile's nose and screaming. The bank side was really slippery and my folks kept slipping when they tried to pull us out. I managed to drag myself onto the bank and dug my heels into the sand and just pulled L with everything I had. She just seemed to slip out the crocodile's mouth and did not have a scratch on her.

## **DREAM TWENTY TWO**

I went away with D and In for my squash team. We went into a country like area and were then going to JOB. We set off with Ian driving my car. We were staying with some woman we did not know but we hardly saw her. We always went out on drives to look around and see if there was anything to do. I was in the passenger seat.

We stopped off at the side of the road and Ian got out to go and ask someone something. D quickly got into the driver's seat and said he wanted to drive. He does not have a licence but said there would not be a problem out there in the country. I arrived back and sat in the back.

He speeded off along this tar road. I asked him to slow down and he said I must just relax. Then we hit this winding dirt road that was going down this pass. He just kept his foot flat. I shouted for him to slow down and stop so Ian could drive. He just laughed and kept laughing. Now I began getting really angry and shouting that my car was not a 4x4 and was not made to go so fast or handle these roads and that we were going to skid out of control. He just kept laughing.

I began panicking (D's brother) and saying to D to stop or slow down. He would not listen. We were approaching this really sharp corner and I was sure we were going to flip or roll. I just started screaming for him to stop and let me out and have some respect for my car. I screamed and screamed. In began shouting at D to stop. We took this corner and just skidded around it and went right into the other side of the road but did not roll. Around the corner the road ended and D stopped. I just said: "now wasn't that fun guys, something different". He said he had a feeling we would not roll and just felt like driving and going fast. So I drove us back up the hill and got us back to where we were staying.

I walked inside and there was my family. They had decided to come visit me because I was not going back for the vacation. My Mom wanted to see how fit I was and if my training was paying off so insisted that I and I have a training session.

I felt really sick and did not want to train but no one would listen when I said I was not feeling well,

except I. However, we went and found a squash court and as we played I could feel myself wanting to pass out, which I did.

When I came around I was standing over me really worried and my Mom was saying I must carry on to finish, no excuses and it was probably just a sugar low. We continued for a while until I just walked off court and went back to the house.

Flashes of me and my Mom in front of everyone and my Mom asking questions the whole time about me. I got really irritated and walked out of the house eventually. L came and chatted to me, asking what is wrong. I said I was tired and was getting irritated by all the questions and felt like I was under surveillance and being followed all the time. L then got really angry and said she did not care anymore. I got upset with this and took it personally that she did not care about me anymore. So I said: that's just great, exactly what I need at the moment and walked off. However, she caught up with me and apologised but said I became a different person around my mom and she makes me really uptight and tense. But I must make an effort, be patient and give her a chance.

### **DREAM TWENTY-THREE**

I was busy training really hard with In and D when they said they had had enough. It was quite late and I had dinner at S's house with her parents. This guy came to ask if I would play for a while with him, and I was really rude and said no. I was packing up and these two girls walked on court who I had never seen before and also asked if I would coach them, but they could not really hit the ball. So I told them to speak to In and D and sort out a day when they could come and train with us but I did not really want to coach.

We must have been in JhB because I went home but we had moved. My Mom had cooked for me and I told her she should not have because I was going out for dinner. And she was really angry that I was still going to dinner at S's house with her parents. So she was not going to lend me her car.

I was already late and now I had to run to her house – her parents or mom hated it when people were late. I was excited to see them since I had not seen them in ages. So I started running there but could not remember the way properly so took longer to get there which made me later.

I arrived eventually and they were just about to start. Everyone was around the table and S just said: "oh, finally you have arrived." T was also there and greeted me but everyone else was really cold towards me which was not normal.

So I sat down, Mrs W (S's mom) had aged so much. She's Chinese who had previously looked young and cared for her body. Now she was overweight, wrinkled skin and her hair had greyed. There was always laughing at the table and myself and Mrs W got on excellently, but now she was not even talking to me and looked miserable. Previously she would take real effort in her cooking and make Chinese food for me when I visited but she had just put out cold meats and salad and bread. I was pretty confused. She just said she was livid and did not feel like cooking and asked J (her husband) to pass her cigarettes. My eyes shot open, she had never smoked before.

Everyone sat there in silence. She continually got up to get something from the kitchen and I asked Shin what was going on. This was not how I remembered her family. She said she was really struggling to accept the gay issue and the fact that S and T were going to marry. But not to worry, she was having a particularly bad day.

Mrs W returned and said: "yes, I'm struggling to deal with this issue, I don't understand it, I don't understand the three of you". I just looked at her and wanted to get out of there it was so intense.

Then I heard my Mom arriving to fetch me. She was really early but I was quite glad. S and T were just behind me at the door when my mom opened the door and saw T (T is my ex). She looked shocked. Anyway, she said hello to her but not to S and we left. In my ear she said: "Oh, so T is also that way – why didn't you tell me. And I see S's got her claws into her now."

### **DREAM TWENTY FOUR**

I was at Varsity but it looked exactly the same as did my Primary school. We had just broken up for the vacation and my Mom was coming to fetch me, although I had my car as well. I was walking down the stairs with this guy C, saying I did not feel like going home, I wanted to stay in Grahamstown (but the Varsity was situated in PE just outside North End). He was saying he also did not want to go home and would be quite happy to stay as well. But we agreed a change of scene would do us good.

We get to this gate and his lift was there so he left. I waited a while and saw my mom was late. I was the only one left there so thought perhaps I was supposed to meet her at my flat so I could leave my car there. I got in my car and had to drive through this really bad area of town where there were serious gang wars going on. I had to stop for some reason. While I had stopped in this area this guy came to my car window pointing this machine gun at my head and told me to open the door or he would kill me.

In the background a war had just broken out and there were bullets flying everywhere. He told me to give him anything and everything worth taking. I had nothing except R10-00 and small change which I

gave to him and some tapes but he did not want tapes. He did not believe me that that was all I had and fired a round of shots just above my head. He pushed me further into the car and looked inside the car and wanted to know where the radio was. It was hidden underneath the dashboard, and there was a gap where it was previously. I knew he would not see it so pointed to the gap and said I did not have one. He believed me, then wanted me to start the car. I turned the ignition on but it would not start without the immobiliser which is well hidden away. I told him I was having trouble starting it and it was not starting. He put the gun to my head and I told him I was not lying, he must try.

Just then I heard my Mom's voice. She had seen my car and this guy and came running across the road. This guy panicked and I screamed at her not to come any closer, I would be fine, I was yelling at this guy that she was my mother and not dangerous. Everything was going in slow motion. He turned and panicked and fired a shot at her. She was really close. I was screaming and crying no. She stumbled towards us and this guy picked her up. She was saying leave my daughter alone, she's not dangerous. He then put the gun at the back of her head, I was yelling and shouting and crying, hysterically telling him no, not to hurt her. Fortunately my alarm clock went off.

### **DREAM TWENTY FIVE**

There were a group of people including myself sleeping in this room, when a lecturer came in and woke everyone up and said we had to write a psychology test, but it was a multiple choice. We were not allowed to leave the room or do anything until we had done the test, but I got up and said I had to go to the bathroom. So off I went and had a shower and got dressed. When I got back they had written the test without me but I still had to do with other people while other people were getting dressed and ready for the day. Every time I was about to put down an answer someone would ask me a question or tell me to hurry up because we had places to go. Then I would forget the answer or could not find the answer on the paper. So I ended up rushing through the paper putting down silly answers. But as I finished I noticed everyone had left without me and I was not sure where they had gone.

I walked down to these sports fields at a school and saw a rugby match going on between a girls team and a guys team. So I went to watch. I saw this girl I needed to interview for an assignment and was about to go to speak to her when this other girl who knew me but I did not know her came up to me and started chatting to me, then dragged me off to meet her friends.

The girls were giving the group a really good run and they were playing serious hard rugby. I was quite amazed at the way those girls were tackling and scrumming and being tackled. This match finished and another team went on to play.

A bunch of us were sitting around making food and I kept insisting we needed more tomato which I chopped up and added to whatever we were making. Then while we were eating this girl choked and died on a cube of tomato. I could not believe it and was horrified and felt extremely guilty. I was the only one who was upset, the other girls did not seem very concerned about it and just said it happens. This girl who apparently knew me just said I must not worry it was not my fault. She told me it was fine, these things happen, and she would organise the funeral.

The funeral was the next day and was held on a hill somewhere. I was still overcome with guilt and everyone else seemed in quite high spirits. After the funeral we were cooking again, a tomato sauce pasta. I was stirring the sauce and was about add another tomato when I went into a state of shock. I just stared at nothing with this blank look upon my face. This girl was talking to me and then realise I was out of it. I felt myself retreating further and further into like a void, a nothingness where nothing existed. I could hear voices telling me to get back to reality and stay with the present, I wanted to say I am trying too, but I just felt I was losing it. I wanted to come back but could not get my mind to think or do anything. I remember my eyes just moving but seeing nothing. These people around me were getting concerned since I was not responding to anything and thought it must have something to do with the death of this girl. They took me away from the sauce and into a room and managed to get me back. Then they said, right it is time to party and started to drink. Everyone was just getting drunk. I had a few drinks but did not want to get drunk.

We came down from this hill and I was dropped off at home to get my own car and meet everyone at Kolors. Driving along the streets, the whole of Grahamstown was drunk, everywhere I looked people were falling all over the place, walking in skew lines. Everyone. I felt like I just did not fit into this scene. People were staring at me like I was a foreigner, and I felt like an outsider. Everywhere were groups of people smoking grass and drinking and questioning why I was driving around by myself.

### **DREAM TWENTY-SIX**

I was in JhB for a tournament. I had won my first round of matches but was now approaching important matches. I had been seeded completely out of position so I had a really tough draw. My dad asked where I had been seeded and when I told him he was furious and wanted me to complain but I said just leave it.

He said I always just leave it and it gets worse. I just told him there is no point fighting with the selectors – they find some excuse to do what they want anyway. Besides, it took the pressure off me.

The times were not up for the next round of matches and I was leaving to come back on the Tuesday morning and it was Saturday. However, it was raining really badly and there was water leaking on the courts so that is why the times were not up yet. Only one court was okay to play on. I was told if it stopped raining we would play on Sunday and if not we would not and the matches would be postponed. I tried to explain I had to play on Sunday because it would cost too much to change my ticket to fly back later and I did not have a cent to my name to change it. They provisionally set my time for 3 pm on Sunday but I was to phone and confirm I was playing.

At home my Mom was in and out doing some Church deeds. I could not understand what she was doing and when I asked her about it she just said tis religious things I am involved in for the church, some research stuff. I said I did not realise she had become so involved in Church things and she said it was a recent thing.

Next thing a friend of mine L, for USA, is at the front door. I could not believe it. She said she had been trying to get hold of me for ages because she knew I was going to be in JhB for five days so came from the USA to visit me but was going back on Sunday. I tried to convince her to stay but she had to get back to work. She had to go but said she would come back in the morning. I tried to tell her I was not sure that I would be there but she did not hear me.

On the Sunday it was raining terribly and I tried to phone the courts but there was no answer. It was about 2 pm and L arrived, and I was rushing around trying to find out if I was playing or not and could hardly speak to her. Eventually I got hold of one of the selectors and they said they would phone me back to see if they could get my match on the good court.

I was chatting to L and my mom came in to use the phone. I asked her to leave it open because I was expecting a call but she said she had really important calls to make that could not wait. One of them was to the club to a squash lady I knew so I asked her to phone and find out if I was playing. I was panicking a bit because it was 2:50 pm and if I was 15 min late for the match I would get a walk over awarded against me.

While mom was on the phone L had to leave and I was trying to listen if my Mom would ask my question and say goodbye to L. I ended up saying rushed goodbye to her and we agreed we would have to chose a time when neither of us were busy. My Mom was about to put down the phone and I asked her again to find out for me, but she just waved my question away and put the phone down. I could not believe it and I was furious. Then she refused to let me phone because she was still busy so I took her car and drove to the courts. I got there just after 3, my opponent was there but we could not get on the good court, there were scheduled matches the whole day on it and our match was not scheduled on it. I was told we would have to play in the morning. But that meant the match would end a day later.

I went home and started packing. I decided stuff it, I could not afford to change my ticket. My Dad came through and saw I was quite upset so I told him I was because I could not afford to change my ticket to fly back later. He said I must decide if it is worth it or not. Maybe I would do well enough in the tournament to cover the extra cost. I said if I lose the next match and change my ticket I will not earn enough to cover the costs. He asked me if I did win the next match then I would be in the finals and that should be enough to cover costs and it was important for selection purposes. He told me to think about it before deciding.

It seemed like ages to make the decision but eventually I went and changed my ticket but I was now flat broke. I'd used my grocery money for the rest of the month. When my Dad asked me what I had decided I told him and he smiled and just said I had made the right decision.

## **DREAM TWENTY SEVEN**

I was at some squash courts somewhere in Grahamstown and wanted to train but S and P (from Sports Admin) were busy playing. S was thrashing P and he was getting quite peeved but they continued to play for quite a while. P was giving me these weird looks and did not greet me at all. He was making me feel really uncomfortable.

At the end of the game they shook hands and walked to the front of the court. I was watching from the side of the court and then they kissed and hugged. So I assumed they were having an affair. They came off court and P ignored me and walked straight past me. S greeted me and asked how I was. Anyway, I was waiting for someone to train with but no one pitched up so I just left.

I asked this woman for a lift to my car which was parked down the road. I jumped in and she drove down the road, but way past my car and she was not going to stop dead just slow down and I had to jump out which I finally did but I was further from my car than when I started.

I was then in JhB and had to go pick up a friend of mine from the airport. I had my car there. I was driving to go to the airport but was very nervous because there had been so much violence in JhB. Ruthless

killings were reported everyday and on the day there were demonstrations and gang wars rumoured to be going on so I was to stay on the main roads. I was already late because of having to walk all the way back to my car after squash.

I was keeping to the main road and highways but everything had changed. There was so much traffic and buildings had appeared out of nowhere. I was close to the airport but still so far. I turned onto this highway and heard cars hooting at me from somewhere, people getting my attention so I got off that road and this woman said that stretch of the road was a new runway. So I took this back route away from the traffic.

As I drove down the road I saw policewomen and beyond them this large crowd of people demonstrating and fighting. Just before I got to the policewoman I turned around but they stopped me. They wanted to fine me for doing a U-turn and were making me fill out all sorts of forms. The crowd was moving up the road shouting and looking really violent. I was rushing through this form and wanted to get out of there but it took me ages to get anything done. Eventually I got back to my car and as I drove off the crowd started attacking these policewomen.

I got back onto a busy road and was driving next to a golf course and noticed all these famous golf player playing golf. Ballesteros, and then I saw Nelson Mandela playing. I was really confused. I arrived at this robot and this bus drove past and P and this other girl I knew were standing in it. I was going to pick P up from the airport and wondered why she was on the bus, but going to the airport. She waved and I saw her. She pointed to her hand and I realised she had had the bandage taken off. I signalled her that I would still pick her up from the airport. They disappeared and I looked over onto the road to the airport which was blocked all the way to where I was in the traffic.

#### **DREAM TWENTY EIGHT**

I was at home visiting people. A friend of mine was at my house, we were talking when my mom came in and said she had another book for me to read. I said it was alright thanks, but I do not need another book to read. She said no, I was ready for the next book, it was time for the next stage. I was getting a bit angry but did not want to fight. I said there was no next stage and time for what? She asked if I had read the first book she sent me and I said yes, twice. So she starts asking me questions about it which I answered and then I said I had had enough, I was not reading anymore books, I respected other people's opinions and views and I did not expect her to accept things but she must not try to change me and cure me. She was really angry and said she could not believe that I did not believe in God and I could turn against him. That S had really got her evil claws in me. She said I did not even want to try heal myself, at which stage this friend and myself left.

#### **DREAM TWENTY NINE**

Everyone was out in Grahamstown. I went down to the Rat and Parrot and met up with some friends of mine. We were sitting outside chatting when I saw some other friends inside at a table. Sitting with them was a friend who I had had a fight with ages ago and we had not spoken since. But I thought bugger it, I want to go and say hello. So I went and sat at their table. This girl kind of said hello but did not really talk to me. The rest of us were having a good laugh and then everyone decided to go home except myself, this girl A and one of her friends. We were the only two at the table and to my surprise she started talking to me. She said she was moving out of her digs into a house she had bought in Grahamstown. She was moving down here permanently and was going to find other things to study. Then she said she'd be having people over for dinner when she moved in and would I like to come. I was shocked since she is the type of person who is always worried about who she goes out with and what other people will think. So I said would it not bother her about me if people started talking. To my surprise she said, no, people must get a life. Then she apologise for the fight we had had and said she was in the wrong. Then her friend arrived back so we did not finish talking.

#### **DREAM THIRTY**

I was playing a squash tournament so I was at home. My Mom kept asking me how I was and I would say I was fine. She asked if I had read the book and I said yes. So she said is everything fine then. I said I was fine thank you and things were going well with me. She looked really happy and said:"so you are not gay then. I just laughed and said, oh Mom, I have not changed my mind since the last time we spoke. She was really upset and was crying saying no, please do not be gay, you cannot be gay, please. So I said OK I am not, I am just a person, so just see me as that. She was angry as well and said it is not funny. I did not want to fight so I just said she did not have to accept it, I was not asking her to accept it. Then she said she supposed all my friends were also this way. I said no, but she did not believe me. Then she disappeared.

I had to still go play squash. My mom's car was gone and there was my car and both my sisters had their cars. My car had no petrol so I had organised for my middle sister to give me a lift because she was

also playing. She had agreed so I got my stuff and went to her car. She was there so we put everything in. My Mom was now in her car pulling out to go somewhere. L got in her car and would not open the door for me. She drove forward then stopped and laughed. I really was not in the mood for jokes and asked my mom to tell her she must top messing around. I was also late for my match. My Mom saw and watched but said nothing.

Then I walked to the car door and L indicated she was going to the courts and she would see me there. I thought she was joking. My Mom drove off and I was saying to L do not be silly, you are giving me a lift. There was no other way for me to get there. She smiled and drove off with my stuff. I was furious and walked into the house screaming and swearing at her.

My older sister was asking what is wrong. I told her and she said she would take me but in my car and then would pick me up later. I did not have petrol in my car, I told her. She did not have much time either because she was going out. So I said bugger it, I'll take my chances on what petrol I have, and off I went, played my match, then left.

The next thing I was arriving at this wedding. It was my elder sister's wedding. I was really late and walked in and saw everyone in my family sitting waiting. I went to sit down and they all just stared at me. I asked what they were staring at and they said at the way I was dressed. I looked really androgynous in a tailored tux and wearing a black hat. Then I realised A, my cousin and partner, were waiting at the entrance. I rushed out to get him and met up with my gran and this other woman. My gran introduced the woman as my mother's ex-headmistress who was gay. My gran just smiled at me. I felt confused as to why she had told me this information. We walked into the wedding and sat down. My sister's husband to be cut the cake right in half and everyone seemed to be quite confused.