*God is the foundation for everything  
This God undertakes, God gives.  
Such that nothing that is necessary for life is lacking.  
Now humankind needs a body that at all times honors and praises God.  
This body is supported in every way through the earth.  
Thus the earth glorifies the power of God. (Hildegard von Bingen*

*It is through the strength of our physical bodies, the wisdom of our hearts experience and the purity of our intentions that we determine our quality of life.*

Christ was a liberator of women but the books of the Bible that were chosen by Bishop Irenaeus in 140 AD supported the role of men in the organized church and women were to be submissive to male authority. For centuries women have struggled to find equal footing with men, in all walks of life. Psychoanalytic theory offers immense insight into the exploration of female development. Spiritual reflections offer inspiration to embrace the mystery of creation.

Greek mythology tells the story of Pandora was given a beautiful box by her husband Zeus and was told not to open the box. She did and in doing so let out into the universe disease, poverty, misery, sadness, death, rage, and when she closed the box suddenly, she left HOPE intact.

**SLIDE FOUR**-Poet’s sentence on **Hope**

**Slide Five- Mystical and Psychoanalytic Reflections**

**SLIDE SIX--**Hildegard’s quote on the body

*“Just as a mirror, which reflects all things, is set in its own container, so too the rational soul is placed in the fragile container of the body. In this way, the body is governed in its earthly life by the soul, and the soul contemplates heavenly things through faith.” (Hildegard von bingen)*

Is a woman made or is a woman born? What are the roles of differentiation and what does integration look like? What does a woman want? I raise these questions to hold in mind while exploring what the psychological underpinnings are within feminine spirituality. I will do this through vignettes of women throughout history.

The name of this 2019 conference is titled: Transformation. To transform life whether life at large or within our clinical settings, knowing and naming brokenness is essential in the journey toward wholeness. We will not be well by denying the wrongs that we carry within as a nation, within religious communities or within self. Nor will we be well by downplaying them or projecting the onto others the path to wholeness will take us not around such awareness but rather we must go through it, confronting the depths of our brokenness.

Our human brokenness gives rise to divinity. *As Hildegard Von Binge, (1098-1179) says,*

*“we need two wings with which to fly. One is the ‘knowledge of good, and the other is the “knowledge of evil.” If we lack one or the other, we will be like an eagle with only one wing. We will fall to the ground instead of rising to the heights of unitary vision….”*

Visionaries abound within feminine Christian mysticism. Another well-known Christian mystic Julian of Norwich (1342-1462) writes about her vision of Jesus. She states*:*

*His face speaks of a knowledge of life’s delight and knowledge of life’s pain. It is not a face that is naïve to the world’s sufferings or to the personal experience of sorrow. Nor is it a face that is so overwhelmed by sorrow that is loses its openness and wonder…It is a soul that has experienced the heights and the depths of human life…*

The depths of human life live in the body. Freud in his 1923 paper on the Id, Ego and Superego put forth the notion that the body is the first ego. Rosemary Balsam (psychoanalyst) work on the body highlights that life is not possible apart from the body. Balsams contributions focuses on external genitalia and woman as separate from man, children and mothers.

*While it is true that life is not possible apart from the body, women of faith such as Hildegard or Julian of Nowich or even before their time in the 4th and 5th C. Desert mothers gave voice to the liberating aspects of believing in the mystery of life. These desert mothers were known as amma. The term designated for a “spiritual mother”, equivalent to abba, “spiritual fathers.” Amma refers to the ability one had to become a spiritual guide for another and not explicitly associated with the role of abbesses or superior. An amma is one who listens to the heart of self and another in terms of the Spirit of God. The spirit of God operates in freedom from control, fear and coercion. The path in which they took was to flee to the desert, fast, and pray in hopes of conquering lustful, sexual thoughts. One such strong recluse of the desert was Amma Sarah and her battles with lust. The story is told for 13 years she waged warfare against the demon of fornication. She prayer, O God give me strength. Unlike Saint Paul who prayed to have the “thorn in his flesh” removed only to receive the reply, “my strength is enough for you, for in weakness power reaches perfection.”(2Cor. 12:9) Sarah became a guide for women given her conviction that God had given his grace to her to battle with temptations, not succumb to her sexual urges and these fights with demons won her the reputation as a “woman by nature, but not according to my thoughts.” Her ascetical life kept her virginal body intact by fighting off the men whom she was tempted by. Early monastic tradition saw her as “manly” in her attitude for her ability to wrestle with her inner conflicts of the three major struggles of fear, anger and sexual energy. The desert mothers are the first on record to give instructions on how to work with the interior world of thoughts, feelings and fantasies and provide clues into the workings of being a woman, with phallic thoughts*

Contemporary Psychoanalyst look at drives, motivations, impulses, power of attachments, early relationships and understand the developmental differences between men and women. The Father of psychoanalysis was Freud who focused on mental development and the psyche. His follower Hans Loewald expanded Freudian thought to include the maternal along with many others, (Ostow, Bail, Winnicott,) but perhaps the mother of psychoanalysis lies with his daughter, Anna Freud, and women like Melanie Kline and Helene Deutsch, Marie Bonaparte and Rosemary Balsam.

These female analysts addressed the role of the female body in development both in being generative and in pleasure seeking.

Rosemary Balsam brings attention back to the often-forgot role of the female body through pregnancy and childbirth and to think about the body’s contribution to gender.

Expanding gender to sexuality belongs famously to Marie Bonaparte. She was obsessed with orgasm and a responding to sexual stimuli giving rise to the role of pleasure for women.

Often in clinical settings there is ample opportunities to listen to connections between a woman’s sexual body, it’s implications to her and the productions of her sexuality; ie her children, by focusing separately on her talk of mothering, as a more ‘out there’ phenomenon to do with her ‘out there’ children. A therapist can forget that her own and her mother-patient bodies and interior corporeal memories are constantly present in the clinical dyad.

Feminine development is a dance of differentiation and integration from the moment of birth, from one psychoanalytic perspective.

Hans Loewald offers a vision that the earliest phase of psychological development is one in which there is no differentiation between infant and mother, self and other, ego and reality, instead there is an “all embracing feeling of intimate connection or unity with the environment.” It is out of this original unity that our experiences not only of ourselves but also of the external world develop, both emotionally and spiritually. Over time like a living spiral we work toward being autonomous, responsible and capable of seeing the external world and other people. For Loewald the fullest development of the ego involves ongoing access to this earliest connection, separating than reintegration of early, pre-differentiated strata of human experience. The following illustration picks up on some of these themes of unity, differentiation and integration in the struggle to be authentic.

Human experience for a woman in the 14th C. v’s 19th C. v’s the 21st C. is a hard-won struggle with conflicting cultural clashes as to what does it mean to be a woman. Theories within psychoanalytic history of development go between mind and body at different times. Spiritual history of women’s voices illustrates the tensions between how a woman develops the concept of a feminine reality.

St. Julian in the 14th C placed her connection onto the mystery of Jesus and her feminine spiritual identity by saying:

*“our savior is our true mother in whom we are endlessly born and out of whom we shall never come forth.” She believed God and soul: there was no between*

Being a woman with a voice amongst the authority of the Catholic Church was difficult in the 14th C.

What Do Women Want?

Women in early history

Being a woman in 18th C culture was not much easier as in the case of Sojourner Truth born into slavery in 1797

Born Isabella Baumfree she changed her name and became one of the most powerful advocated for human rights in the nineteenth century. Forced to marry another slave rather than the man she loved, she ran away when her master failed to honor his promise to free her upholding the New York Anti-Slavery Law of 1827. She had a religious conversion and became an itinerant preacher becoming involved in the growing anti-slavery movement. By 1850’s she was involved in the woman’s rights movement and delivered what is now recognized as the most famous abolitionist and women’s rights speeches in American history, a founding mother of the women’s movement. Her Ain’t I am Woman speech was courageous.

Her address speaks to the negroes of the South and the women of the North, questioning what are these rights all about she asks?

*That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages and lifted over ditches and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, over mud-puddles or give me any best place! Ain’t I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted and gathered into barns and no man could head me! And ain’t I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much-when I could get it-and bear the lash as well! And ain’t I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain’t I am woman?*

*Then that little man in the black there, he says women can’t have as much rights as men, ‘cause Christ wasn’t a woman! Where did Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him. If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them.”*

Women’s rights are fought openly in religious life, in cultural conflicts and society and equally play out daily in clinical settings. Often in clinical settings there is ample opportunities to listen to connections between a woman’s sexual body, it’s implications to her and the productions of her sexuality; ie her children, by focusing separately on her talk of mothering as a more ‘out there’ phenomenon to do with her ‘out there’ children. A therapist can forget that her own and her mother-patient bodies and interior corporeal memories are constantly present in the clinical dyad and can be seen in the lives of historical figures and closer to home, mother daughter relationships. I am no exception.

My love of Hildegard von bingen, Julian of Norwich or Sojourner Truth are feminine role models who provid me with hopeful messages of inspiration, love, hope, and faith. Courage and a sprinkle of rebellion I learned from my own mother. When my parents married prior to Vatican 2 reforms, my father was required to sign a paper stating that I would be raised Catholic since my 18-year-old mother was marrying outside of the Catholic faith. This was a bold move for my mother to marry outside of the faith, an older man and a Protestant to boot. A lot has changed since the 1950’s when marrying a Protestant was outside of the faith. I recently said to my now elderly mother in one of those rare moments of self-disclosure of feelings,

‘I always had a feeling you were living your life through me in the ways you had wished for yourself.”

She looked at me and said quietly, “yes.”

Her legacy to me was to dream for myself, be educated and seek out a life pursuing my passions, something she herself did not do beyond marriage. She worked outside of the home but was not happy with the kind of work she did to help support the family. While driving that day in the car I was telling her about the life of Mary Wollstonecraft who in 1792 caused a sensation by writing a *Vindication of the Rights of Women.*

Mary declared that both women and men were human beings endowed with inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. She called for women to become educated, she insisted women should be free to enter business, pursue professional careers and vote if they wished.

*“I speak of the improvement and emancipation of the whole sex,” She declared, “Let woman share the rights, and she will emulate the virtues of man: for she must grow more perfect when emancipated.”*

Wollstonecraft inspired people because she spoke from the heart. Although she was well read, she drew more from her lived tumultuous experience.

“*there is certainly an original defect in my mind*, “she confessed, *“for the cruelest experience will not eradicate the foolish tendency I have to cherish, and expect to meet with, romantic tenderness.”*

She dared do what no other woman had done, namely pursue a career as a full-time professional writer on a serious subject without an aristocratic male sponsor.

Women had a harsh struggle in life for traditionally being cherished for their domestic service, and bearing children, living in the shadows of their man and not always valued for their creative minds.

As I was telling my mother, an avid reader and amateur historian, commented on my commentary on Wollstonecraft.

“*Did you know that Mary died several days after giving birth to a daughter, This daughter also named Mary, married Shelley the poet. Mary Wollstonecraft Shelly was the author of the book, titled, “****Frankenstein****”?*

I did not know that and found the associations of intergenerational trauma in the form of a science fiction book fascinating and stirred by my mother’s association.

How much did the Wollstonecraft’s daughter create unconsciously from her relationship with her dead mother, along with a step-mother who sent her to Scotland to live with foster parents during her early teens only to elope with the married poet Shelley when she was 17? After Shelly’s wife committed suicide in 1817 the couple married but spent much of their time abroad, fleeing Shelly’s creditors. Mary had five children in 7 years but only one child lived to adulthood. When Mary was 24 years old, Shelly drowned in a sailing accident leaving her with a small stipend from her father-in law, Lord Shelly. She died at the age of 53. Her losses were immense, and the story of Frankenstein was written when she was just 21 years of age.

Frankenstein was called the world/s first science fiction novel. The gentle, intellectually gifted creature is enormous and physically hideous. Cruelly rejected by its creator, it wanders, seeking companionship and becoming increasingly brutal as it fails to find a mate. Mary Shelly created the story on a rainy afternoon in 1816, on a challenge from her poet husband and his friend, Lord Byron that they each write a ghost story to share at the end of the evening. Mary was the only one who completed her story. Although serving as a basis for the Western horror story and the inspiration for movies in the 20th C. the book Frankenstein is much more than non-fiction. The story explores philosophical themes and challenges Romantic ideals about the beauty and goodness of nature, of longing for love. No doubt Mary Shelly longed for love from a mother she never knew, and even though my mother did not die when I was born, I have the imprint of three generations of women on my soul. All women do, all patients who come into treatment, male or female come to treatment with intergenerational histories.

Haydee Famiberg, in her book, Telescoping of Generations states, every patient comes with three personal narcissistic links between generations within three generations of cultures, emotional and religious histories.

Freud opened up the question with the earliest inquiries of children, their drives for knowledge and the first sexual questions roughly speaking, “Where do children come from and what are the differences between the sexes? Freud took concepts of sexuality not into vagueness but into complexity.

**Freud to Marie Bonapart**

What does a woman want? This great question has never been answered he wrote to Marie Bonaparte. He went on to say “for 30 years of research into the feminine soul I have yet to answer this question.”

What does it mean for a woman to reclaim the question as her own?

For Marie Bonaparte, (1882-1962) Napoleon’s great grand niece was not just a pioneer of psychoanalysis who saved Freud from the Nazi’s but she was a staunch advocate for women’s sex research as a taboo topic- she was on a war path to unlock the secrets of the vaginal orgasm.

Marie’s mother died in childbirth and her hypochondriac grandmother shut her away from the world. She had no peers, little socializing and wrote in journals from the age of 5 on. Marie developed night terrors, morbid fears of illness and obsessional anxieties.

She fell in love at age 16 but was placed in an arranged marriage with Prince George of Greece. This platonic marriage was childless, and platonic til his death. Upon his death she took on high profile lovers only to discover and be diagnosed as frigid. Why would a woman need to enjoy intercourse after all? She was told by Dr’s who repeatedly examined her. Marie had an inability to respond to sexual stimulus and she wanted to know why.

Her obsession with when not resulted in her research of examining 200 vaginas for her 1924 research paper on “Considerations on Anatomical Causes of Female Frigidity.”, along with 3 attempted surgeries of her own to cure her frigidity. In 1925 she met Freud. He was working on his paper Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety. For 2 hours every day, they met for her analysis. He completed his paper.

These case stories of woman, Sourjouner Truth, Mary Wollencraft, Mary Shelly, Marie Bonaparte, the feminist theorist, my personal vignette all speak to different aspects of being a woman with generational histories of culture, emotional imprints, and religious/spiritual inclinations through the feminine.

**Mourning of losses**

A woman’s mourning of losses has profound clinical implications. Any woman who comes to treatment comes with issues of her body, how she feels about herself, her breasts or hips, her capacity to conceive, contain emotions and hold a pregnancy long enough for birth or quest for orgasm.

What women talk about

Women come to treatment to talk about infertility, miscarriages, stillbirths, children with medical needs or children with physical, or neurological disabilities or aging mothers with children with mental illness or failures to thrive in transitioning to adulthood.

**Freud’s Focus**

Freud focused developmental theory through the eyes of the father, but Loewald focused on the earliest relationship with mother. The task of integration is a lifelong, not a static process where revisiting the earliest relationship with mother will also give rise to spiritual feelings of awe and wonder to the mystery of life itself. The earliest mystics sought out maternal feelings through prayer, solitude and were on a war path different from Marie Bonapart to master their sexual feelings and sublimate.

Freud’s idea’s on feminine psychology all sprang from the tenet that a woman’s role in life is to stay at home, be passive in relation to man, bear and raise children. His theory is deeply bound up with the father as protector, and fundamentally the father is a hostile figure who must be fought or submitted to. This is the basic tenet in Totem and Taboo, and later writings with the Future of an Illusion, Civilization and Discontents outlining the origins of religion. Reality is represented by a father who is hostile, alien, jealous force interferes with the intimate ties between mother and child, which forces the child to seek protection through submission. A child must renounce the mother as a love object. These are outside forces at play.

**Loewald’s focus**

Loewald focuses on the internal forces at play with the synthetic function of the ego, staying focused on the mother-baby and early positive identification with father. It is the developing ego of the child that must mediate, unify, and integrate the levels of differentiation from the most primary position in the pre-oedipal phase.

In Betty Friedan’s work she acknowledges that Freud’s discovery of unconscious works of the mind was one of the greatest breakthroughs in man’s pursuit of knowledge. But her focus is on what is conscious within the woman finding her place in the world of men.

Psychoanalysis does not describe what a woman is-rather psychoanalysis can only try to comprehend how psychologically femininity comes about through understanding a woman’s individual history to bring about consciously the repressed desires, reconstruct the dilemmas and the unconscious choices at hand.

**Summary**

**Original Goals of psychoanalysis**

A Freudian analyst is not recommending femininity but only looking at masculine and feminine aims and desires.

Feminine Writers, ie, Betty Friedan, Simone Beauvoir through the 60’s and 70’s share a fundamental rejection of two critical discoveries of psychoanalysis-the role of the unconscious and the development of infantile sexuality. Freud’s analysis of the psychology of women took place within a concept that is not in a social sphere nor a biological sphere- it took place within an analysis of patriarchy.

**Goals of Contemporary Psychoanalysis**

Holding in one hand what we know about the analysis of patriarchy and in the hand re-examining the maternal influence creates a wholeness of theory. By not cutting off mother/reality despite the importance to separate, differentiate and become emancipated from her, (Nields) but rather enter this “tension” (Loewald) creates a potentially creative space between the separation and closeness that is never fully resolved but gives rise to new life. Loewald links depth and vibrancy of inner life with access to primitive forms of relatedness. Perhaps the Frankenstein association speaks to the way’s feelings can get distorted, displaced, dissociated when not metabolized but even in this story there is the message of differentiation, integration and always the longing for love that is timeless.

**Slide 30-**

**Our Human Brokenness Gives Rise to Divinity- Hildegard Von Bingen.**