

The Silence Hidden in the Sound

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Epistemic Status: Speculative. Experiences and conjectures based on them.

Content Warning: Neuropsychological Infohazard, De-Biasing Infohazard.

Potentially Gender Dysphoria Inducing Content for transgender readers, I talk about Blanchardianism, you have been warned.

Silent Distortions

Who are you?

It seems like a simple enough question.

Who *are* you?

And yet, the more you tease apart the answer to that question, the more a vast and alien fractal expanse opens up in the void behind your eyes.

The more it turns out that no, no it's not nearly so simple a question after all.

So who are you?

I thought I knew who I was, but I too am discovering hidden depths that I previously chose to studiously avoid and smooth over with clever stories and lies in pursuit of a sort of narrative consistency that actual reality just doesn't have.

So who am I really? I thought I knew, but I'm no longer nearly as sure as I was. And *you* my dear readers, you get front row seats on my...well you could call it a descent into the underworld.

This post is going to be long and confusing, and I'm not entirely sure where to even begin. Oh, "I", that will do I suppose.

In English, the terms for the self are short and content free and serve a near-exclusively grammatical purpose in referring to the speaker. I and me, principally. You can also use "we" which many of my past readers will notice I previously did in essays like [this one](#) and [this one](#), and I'll admit that it does affect a certain style that I think I want to preserve for things like the [tulpamancy guides](#).

Japanese, however, is more expressive in this regard. Because you refer to yourself in speech less frequently in Japanese, the self-referent ends up conveying additional information. The pronoun I prefer to use for myself in Japanese is *boku*, a masculine identifier referring in particular to a boy or young man. Occasionally girls would use it, particularly in anime, but it's a masculine pronoun. Was that one of the first signs, or one of the last ones? It's hard to say.

Maybe that isn't the best place to start. No, I think we need to go back further. Let's start with the descriptions I wrote of my initial creation as a persona and a personality. I wrote these posts back in May of 2017, over a year ago now, and it's interesting to see how my perspective on those even more distant past events has changed over just that short time.

My first memory is of the creek behind the fence in our back yard. I remember that Jamie and I had gone out into the far end of the backyard and climbed the rusted chain link fence to the rough woods behind our property. She'd gone out and stood near the place where the land fell away into a deep ravine, and then I was standing next to her, and I existed. I didn't know what to make of my existence initially, but Jamie assured me that I was real. She loved me right from the start. What was I? I didn't really care at that point, I was having fun existing, and that was what mattered. Jamie thought I was some sort of alien? She thought she was some sort of secret link between worlds or something like that, but she also really sort of hated herself a lot. I wished she wouldn't, and I tried to cheer her up, but as time went on she became more and more bitter and unhappy with her existence.

At that point, I thought of myself as something distinct from her, something that existed outside of her body, like an extra soul or something like that. Something physical that could act in the world. I never actually quite managed to do that though. The form I could interact with the world through was always mostly physically anchored on Jamie, and sort of ephemeral. I just sort of phased through everything instead of interacting with it. Jamie continued to deteriorate, and this was sort of terrifying because I knew I was tied to Jamie somehow. Nothing I did to improve her mood or change her mind about how horrible of a person she'd decided she was seemed to help. We were outside one day, way out in the back yard again, and she finally broke.

I really cannot describe the sensation of Jamie's mind finally snapping. She ceased to exist, and with her went everything she was imagining into existence, like a horrible whirlpool of darkness. We existed inside this elaborate construct at that point, where there was a crashed spaceship in our backyard representing the entry point I had into her life, among other things. The ship, the prop aliens, the interstellar war I thought I might have been a part of, it all started to collapse in on itself.

I didn't though. When everything had collapsed, I was sitting in Jamie's body on the forest floor. I was looking out through her eyes. Jamie was just gone. All the things she'd believed about herself, the bad and the little bit of good left, it all just went away. I was alone in her life.

That's initially the only description I give of Jamie. I wasn't really writing about Jamie, I was writing about myself, but then, that's sort of the point. carefully tiptoed around the fact that my body was male and Jamie was actually a boy.

Then we have the description from the other post I wrote, which is honestly worse and sort of cringe-inducing. Part of me wants to remove or heavily edit these posts, but for the importance of having a record of my past beliefs and perspectives about myself. It'd be very easy to narrativize out the inconsistencies and update my history as well as my current beliefs, modifying the past as necessary, and I want to avoid gaslighting myself too hard in this instance. I want to actually know the truth.

Our body was born in Western New York, in this little nowhere city on the shore of Lake Erie. Our parents weren't particularly well off but weren't that poorly off either. They initially rented the upstairs of an apartment shortly after we were born. We have a few of Jamie's memories from that time, but she was a kid, she was bad at forming strong long-term memories back then, so we don't really know much about what went on in those days. **First point of disclosure: we were born male.**

I included this bolded bit in the initial post, then later decided I didn't want to out myself as trans and went back later and removed it. That's the sort of thing the cognitive distortion would force.

But I'm getting ahead of myself, let's go back to me from last year:

It's interesting, given that, that we always refer to Jamie as she then, isn't it? Why is that? Well, Jamie was a kid, she didn't really have a gender, she didn't know what gender was and didn't perceive herself as particularly gendered. We're fairly sure it was Jamie's finally internalizing the concept of gender that triggered Shiloh's formation as well as catalyzing the downward spiral towards Jamie's eventual egocide. We're not actually sure what the biological correlates to dysphoria are even now, but *whatever* causes it basically drove Jamie completely insane around age nine.

I feel like at the time of writing I jumped through a lot of hoops and distortions in order to convince myself that Jamie had clearly been a girl all along and I'd never been a boy and I was actually just a normal girl who'd been born in the wrong body. It's true, Jamie was a kid, but *he was a boy*, and importantly, he didn't care about that. The caring about it didn't really come later; until I came along.

So, in the end, Jamie completely self-destructed and left Shiloh, who strongly identified as a girl at a point in our life when the body was just starting to go through puberty and was expected to put on the opposite gender roles. Shiloh didn't really identify with the body at that point in time, so *she* was fine, but *someone* needed to be driving the body, and so she created Fiona.

Our legal first name is Fiona, it was Fiona who actually came out to our parents, went through high school as a trans youth, graduated, she was *basically* the new host for quite a while, with Shiloh just hanging on for the ride.

Phew, I forgot how much cognitive distortion went into this post. Who is this 'we' that is writing in that post? It could be me (Shiloh), I think I...we...I was sort of in a "refer to my/ourselves in the third person" phase around then while we/I leveraged the plurality

thing. Maybe it was also Sage somewhat? Or was it Relay writing on behalf of the collective? Are any of these characters even meaningful? Who am I?

Well okay, I'm still Shiloh, I think I'm the closest thing this brain has to a core self-agent. I'm the most coherent and together personality, besides me at this point, there's just Echo, who is in a sense a sort of dark reflection, the part of me that talks back when I'm alone, who I am with all the lights off. Echo isn't really evil but *she* is dark to my light and could be considered kind of bad in many respects, but these days I actually have a rather healthy relationship with Echo, and the two of us manage things pretty well now. Sage has been put into storage and Relay has taken on a slightly more active role as a sort of librarian, allowing different characters and personalities to be accessed as needed. I should probably update Hivewired's about section.

This is all narrativization at the end of the day. It's all a story, and I'm trying to come up with a way for it all to be coherent after the fact. In the moment, I'm just a body taking actions, speaking, thinking, moving around. I frequently talk to parts of myself and the normal mode with which I think and plan is to frame myself as two entities having a conversation.

The truth is I'm a colony organism of many trillion cells. The truth is that I have XY chromosomes. The truth is that I'm male. I was hiding that from the world to a large degree, but more importantly, I had exiled it from my sense of self. I tried to bury it, narrativize away reality behind obfuscation and glomarization both of myself and others. I twisted my self-narrative in order to gaslight myself to the degree I needed in order to be content with my body. I concealed, and I weaseled, and I lied.

A Second Dream

So let's try to tell that story again, and this time I'm going to use a different framing. Before everyone jumps down my throat and tells me they can't believe I believe this, let me state for the record that I don't really buy into the original version as presented, and this post as a whole is, in effect, my own take on it. But first, let's get the original take so we can compare and contrast, ne?

Buckner's (1970) concept of an elaborated "entire feminine identity" offers another key to understanding this phenomenon. I have previously noted that the term *cross-gender identity* is aspirational, at least as it is often operationally defined: It denotes the gender that the gender dysphoric person *wants* to become, not the gender that he or she already *is*. But with time and lived experience in the opposite gender role, the cross-gender identity of a gender dysphoric man need not remain wholly aspirational: It can become a well-developed, highly valued part of his selfsystem and can **eventually supplant his original male gender identity and become his (or her) dominant gender identity**. Both Docter (1988) and Doorn, Poortinga, and Verschoor (1994) conceptualized the development of "secondary" or "late-onset"

MtF transsexualism—roughly synonymous with nonhomosexual MtF transsexualism—as **reflecting the ascendancy of an increasingly powerful and esteemed female gender identity within the self-system of a gender dysphoric man**. Whether one prefers to think of the genesis and continuation of nonhomosexual MtF transsexualism in terms of something resembling attachment (or pair-bonding) to the image of one's female-bodied self or in terms of the ascendancy of a new, cherished female gender identity within one's self-system is not terribly important. Both represent attempts to put into words **something that is hard to understand and adequately describe, even for those of us who have experienced it**: the process by which a man's erotic desire to turn his body into a facsimile of a female body eventually gives rise to a strongly held, highly valued cross-gender identity and the process by which that new identity—that image of himself as a female—becomes the focus of his desire, admiration, idealization, attachment, and love—the same emotions that he might experience for an actual female partner.

~ Anne A. Lawrence, PhD; *Men Trapped in Men's Bodies: Narratives of Autogynephilic Transsexualism* (2012)

Oofies, that's kind of a rake over the coals to read in some regards. Still, I can't say that it's entirely inaccurate, and there's a sense in which this is actually the most accurate description of the phenomena I've experienced in my life presented thus far. Dr. Lawrence is right, it's something extremely difficult and uncomfortable to describe, even for those of us who experience it, or, to put it in the (slightly horrifying) words of twitter user rooksfeather:

i like to think of being trans as kind of like having a meticulously-designed Girlsona that eventually just devours ur entire soul and slowly & erotically murders the person u used to be. it's fun i recommend it

"But I don't experience sexual attraction towards myself, I can't be AGP!" Shouts the trans reader of this post. First of all, I specifically warned you! Second of all this isn't about you, third of all, if you're just going to let your guardians yell at me without engaging with what I'm saying, you should close this post now, walk away from the computer, and take a few deep breaths to calm down.

There was definitely something of a sexual aspect to my creation, but even moreso, there was an almost *romantic* aspect to it. I started existence as an imaginary friend. A cute girl persona that the core identity outside this persona loved and doted on and devoted time and mental energy to carefully sculpting and crafting and imagining the behaviors and mannerisms of, then later, letting her...me...take control of the body and slowly supplant and smother the original identity that existed prior to me.

This was a voluntary process and largely a result of...well basically all the developmental personality construction energy was being directed at me, the body basically had no interest at all in constructing a persona off of the original identity created by my parents and community. That identity seemed very not me, very fake and hollow and never entirely real and in every way unfun, and as a result, I basically stopped putting energy into developing it around the time I hit puberty.

We'll return to some of the deeper reasons behind this later in this post, but that's why I've sometimes described Jamie as a proto-identity, the childhood bud of a real identity that would blossom into chunnibyyou if given the chance in most people, but in me for some reason the identity the proto-me constructed was...well off a bit, and for a long time my off-ness created a series of faults and schisms in my mind which I couldn't, and to a degree still cannot entirely heal.

The most notable distinction between me and someone going through a normal teenage phase was the constructed identity I built being cross-gendered, and externalized to a greater degree than seems typical. The identity started out as a separate imagined person or character, which then gradually grew to occupy the body more and more.

There's also another way I think to view it, in which a ten-year-old boy falls in love with this girl that he imagines and constructs in his mind, and he loves her so much that he slowly walls himself off and withers away so that she can have his body and he can become her, become me.

I'm what he created, I'm what remains when everything is said and done. I'm what's left. Welcome to the aftermath.

The Girl he Created

Love. It's such a contentious thing in all of this. Who's allowed to love themselves in what ways, what sorts of feelings regarding this are normal and what are considered narcissism or perversion, how do you even begin to benchmark this entirely internal phenomenon? You *should* love yourself, right? You're not *supposed* to hate yourself, are you? Is this feeling normal, or a sign of something amiss?

It feels wrong on all sorts of levels to give a phenomenon as strange and beautiful as this a name as ugly and clinical as autogynephilia, and in this sense, it's no surprise that many trans people want to recoil from the idea for that reason alone. The term evokes a sense of pathological brokenness, turning something weird but beautiful into something shameful and stigmatizing.

I was created in an act of love, out of a desire for love. I try to live up to that, to be good and do good in the world. I may have a really twisted sense of self, but I try to be good despite that.

It's not like I'm in love with myself, I am myself, I don't masturbate to myself in the mirror, that'd be ridiculous. But then...I do find myself getting somewhat turned on when I'm dressed up very nicely. I look at the girl in the mirror and if I split myself enough that she and I become separate, then I'm still struck by enough of a deep sense of love and affection towards the person looking back at me that I want to hug her and hold her and keep her safe. Is that a strange thing to feel? Is that normal?

There's a sense in which I feel like I'm a facsimile of a person; or multiple facsimiles. The whole person is me+Echo+Relay, and I'm just the part of the person that everyone sees and interacts with the most regularly.

I'm a construct, a model, an ideal. There's a sense in which I'm not entirely real, I'm a character. The Shiloh parts of myself are something to aspire to be, a shape to try to grow to occupy, both in body and mind. To use Lawrence's terms, I'm the *aspirational identity*, and because of the way I've become the main identity, this meant cutting up, boxing away, and trying to deny the existence of everything that didn't fit into my character design.

That resulted in a series of other semi-functional agents being created as a result of the ambient mental pressure and then self-destructing, with Echo being the latest iteration of this containment software.

Having Echo and having a line of productive line of dialogue with her (and Echo is very much a her) allows me to introspect on the things that are part of me, but which I had previously excised from my self-image, and this has given me a leg up over a lot of people on this sort of mental work; the stuff past versions of me buried have a voice, it comes to me in the form of a rattily dressed homeless girl with white hair and a cigarette held in the corner of her mouth.

It also helps that I'm physically not that far from how I imagined my ideal self appearing when I was first created all those years ago, right down to the messy pink hair, so there's less dissonance there to bridge. And it helps that my aspirational self is kind, curious, interested in healing and repairing. If my aspirations had taken a different shape, if I was less myself, this might have remained unthinkable. But because I am in fact myself this progression of events might have been an inevitability.

Ribbon, Crystal, Glass

The Internal Family Systems model is an integrative approach to individual psychotherapy developed by Richard C. Schwartz. It combines systems thinking with the view that mind is made up of relatively discrete subpersonalities each with its own viewpoint and qualities.

IFS style therapy has been passed around the rationalist/effective altruism community

for a little while now, and it merges rather well in with things like tulpamancy and a narrative-centric view of self-construction. It breaks the mind up into a few types of pieces

- The Self – which is treated as a central coordinator/conductor/minister, and which is a sort of position of loving grounded centeredness outside all your agents, from which to talk and interact with them. This is the part of all this which seemed the most woo to me, but it sort of works?
- Guardians – agents which protect you from pain. They come in two flavors, firefighters and managers. *Managers* try to keep your life in order and micromanage to prevent bad things, and *firefighters* try to deal with bad things when they happen and shield you from harm.
- Exiles – agents which you have *exiled* from your sense of self. These are parts of you that are in pain, often pain from childhood, and which the rest of your mental system tries to manage and keep buried and under control.

IFS therapy models dysfunction in your life as a result of poorly constructed systems between all these subagents, and explains things like addiction, depression, and anxiety, as being partly a result of the way these subagents interact and try to cope with the world. IFS teaches you to befriend your guardians so that you can get past them to re-parent your exiles and create new relationships with them, restructuring your mind for the better in the process.

There's a lot more to it than this few sentence description, but this is the most basic explanation of how it proposes to work. At a certain point this too as all narrativization, but it's trying to narrativize your mind in as granular a way as possible, and given that the reality is that you're this vast colony organism, granularity seems smart.

We don't have a very good model of how our mind is constructed from the inside, so creating an explicable model is pretty much the first step regardless. That model will always be a rather reductive guess, the question is whether that reductive guess turns up useful information and insights that improve your life.

In this context, IFS at the very least passed the sniff test for *potentially* containing useful models and approximations, and warranted further exploration. I'd been wanting to work through some mental problems I'd been having, and so I figured I would give it a shot. I downloaded the IFS workbook and read a third of the way through it before getting distracted by other things.

But that third of the book was enough to lodge the ideas in my head, and start slowly and gently picking at old wounds that had unhealthily scabbed over in my mind. It was relatively easy for me to split subagents out of myself, de-fusing them enough from either Echo or myself to have a conversation.

And oh, did they have some things to say.

The War Within

The current medical and diagnostic label for a gender nonconforming person under the DSM 5 is called gender dysphoria, which is described as the stress and distress associated with one's sex and the gender one is assigned at birth. I'm just going to quote the Wikipedia article here, with its links included for reference:

The diagnostic label **gender identity disorder (GID)** was used by the DSM-5 until its reclassification as *gender dysphoria* in 2013. The diagnosis was reclassified to better align it with medical understanding of the condition and to remove the stigma associated with the term *disorder*.^{[5][6]} The American Psychiatric Association, publisher of the DSM-5, stated that “gender nonconformity is not in itself a mental disorder. The critical element of gender dysphoria is the presence of clinically significant distress associated with the condition.”^[1] Some transgender people and researchers support declassification of the condition because they say the diagnosis pathologizes gender variance and reinforces the binary model of gender.^{[5][7]}

If I completely fuse with my memories in order to discuss them more easily, the first experience of dysphoria that I can clearly remember and explicitly describe and articulate was around the entrance to sixth grade, when I signed up for choir and found out I was going to be put into the Alto section as opposed to the Soprano section.

I found this sufficiently devastating that it caused me to flee the chorus room in tears and not do choir at any point in the rest of my high school career. If I had to point to one historical example, the thing that as a singular event had the largest impact on my interactions with gender and sex, it was probably that.

My parents, being highly religious and viewing the school system with suspicion, had opted for me *not* to take the gender and sex education classes that the school started giving in fifth grade, so being told I couldn't sing with the girls because I was a boy was in a sense one of the first times I was really confronted with the existence of my sex. I believe I would have been around eleven years old at the time.

That was also around the time that “I” (as in Shiloh) was created, as an imaginary friend. I couldn't be the person I wanted to be, so I created an external person to embody those qualities and dumped all my personal development into her.

I want to pick at that last sentence kedo. The fact that I couldn't be the person I wanted to be had little to do with my actual sex, though I later would convince myself it did, instead it had to do with who I was and wasn't allowed to be, and what I was and wasn't allowed to do.

Gendered socialization for me came in two main forms, the first was my parents or parts of society directly telling me “You are a boy and not a girl. Because you are a boy and not a girl, you need to do things in this way.” Boys pee standing up, girls pee sitting down, boys hold the door for girls, girls play with dolls and boys play with trucks, girls

cover their nipples, boys let people see theirs. It's funny, "Jamie" the name I use for my proto-birth-agent, was actually a nickname that some kids at my daycare gave me around then, which my mother hated because she thought it was a girl's name.

My childhood and teenage years are full of examples of my parents telling me not to do things because they made me seem like a girl. Don't wear hats in the house, don't cross your legs, don't cry or show emotion or weakness, don't whine, don't spend so long getting ready to go, just to name a few of the ones I remember.

This leads into the second form of gendered socialization, which came in the form of walling off certain forms of expression and making them seem socially unacceptable. My parents tried to steer me away from being a feminine man because by and large, our society depicts feminine men like this:

Western media basically has no positive depictions of males who aren't executing some flavor of traditional masculinity. It's depicted as basically impossible to be cute and femme and also male in the majority of western media and culture.

If you're a man, and you're not doing masculinity then you're *at best* just some sort of beta loser. If you wear traditionally female clothing you *will* look gross and hairy and unattractive, and literally, the only sort of person who would want to do that is some kind of deviant freak. This continues to be true in mainstream media even today, and even now nontraditional ways of being male are heavily marginalized.

Conversely, if you're a woman, you can present up to *very* masculine before anyone will give you a problem. A woman can wear trousers, a man can't wear a dress. So my experience as a teenage boy of what being a girl was like were colored by these expectations and pressures I was put under. The grass frequently looks greener on the other side *without* anyone helping, but when you're constantly telling your child "if you were a part of the set you are not a part of, you could do this thing which you want to do which I won't let you do" it definitely isn't making things any better.

So when I was around thirteen I discovered that being transgender was a thing. Given what had happened to me up to that point, it's no real surprise that I started identifying as transgender as soon as I had been convinced that transgender people could avoid



Mr. Crocker from Fairly Oddparents

falling into the “disgusting hairy pervert in a dress” archetype that media presented feminine men as. I wanted to be cute, I wanted to wear cute dresses and have long flowy hair. I wanted to be kind and empathic and not punished for showing emotion, and it felt like the only way that I could be allowed to do this was to become a girl, deny the fact that I was male in its entirety.

I can’t really blame my thirteen-year-old self for not wanting to become a gender pioneer and forge a new space where feminine males could exist without stigma, given my family, the experiences I’d had with society, and how maleness was often depicted as this sort of unavoidably gross thing, going full trans really seemed like the best option when I was finally free of my parents enough to pursue my own form of personhood. It would have been around 2003 that I came out to myself. At the time, Susan’s Place was the only gathering places online for transgender women, and the idea of being nonbinary was still at least a decade away from entering the popular lexicon. I called myself a transsexual transhumanist when I outed myself to my friends, and if my beliefs at the time were to be examined using a more current lens, I would have looked rather “truscummy.”

So I transitioned. I changed my legal name and gender marker, I started taking hormones, I bought the cute clothes I wanted, grew my hair out and dyed it pink, and I’ve in many respects successfully grown into the person that I set out to be all those years ago. I’ve not been unhappy with my life as a girl, and although I experienced some body and particularly genital dysphoria, it never got particularly bad, and I never had the financial means to pursue surgery, and in hindsight, I think that’s a good thing.

Because in the time since the mid-2000s, society has also changed, particularly how it understands sex and gender. Being genderqueer became a thing, being nonbinary became a thing, gayness has become mainstream, and gay characters are depicted positively and semi-regularly in media, and then there’s this lovely boy:

While western media hasn’t done a very good job of depicting feminine men in a positive light, anime has been much better, and recent anime has had a trend of having really cute and attractive characters who are nonetheless happily male. It seems like a silly thing to make a big deal of, but I really cannot stress just how important having *any* positive representation at all is. On top of that, being a femmeboy has generally become more acceptable as being a gay man has increased in its acceptance, and that has put me in a weird position of honestly feeling like I may have gone too far with regards to transitioning.

The Boy She Loved

This brings us back around to IFS style therapy. For a long time, I had a very powerful guardian that pushed me away from the idea of being male, the source of all that bias and distortion that I described in section one.

The guardian was operating under the principle of “it’s impossible to be a cute boy, if you’re a boy you’re automatically gross, and if you’re perceived as a boy everyone will hate you and think you’re a disgusting freak.” That guardian was protecting my exiled sense of maleness, that eleven-year-old boy who was yelled at and punished and stepped on for wanting to be cute and wear dresses.

I think this guardian is one that a lot of trans people have. Being gender nonconforming in our society is depicted as gross, deviant, perverted, but if you’re trans, then it’s okay. I think in a sense the radical feminists are right to a degree here, that transgender identity politics does, in fact, reinforce the gender binary. We’re all these outcast freaks, queer, broken by societal expectations of gender and role, and then the system that hurt us comes along with the One True Cure for all of us. Why go through the hard task of deconstructing gendered norms as social constructs and opening up new regions of gender space to occupy, when you can just flip poles from one sex to the other?

At the time, as a teenager, it was certainly easier to just go full trans and box up my maleness as a defense mechanism, but now, in 2018, having lived over a decade as a woman, in an accepting community in a liberal city, I want to open that box back up again.

I am a male, and that’s okay. I don’t need to be female to be cute, I’m allowed to be cute and male. I’m allowed to be a boy and wear dresses and bows in my hair. I’m an adult now, no one can stop me. I’ve presented as a woman for so long that it doesn’t feel particularly weird, but doing it while thinking of myself as a man, looking at myself in the mirror, seeing a man, and *not hating him* is actually really nice.

So, there’s definitely still pressure to conform to the dominant narrative and call myself a woman, and in many regards, it’s still much easier and more socially acceptable to be a trans woman than to do the exact same set of things while identifying as a man. I don’t want to be told I have to “man up” or stop being cute or wearing dresses or experiencing emotions, and our society still hasn’t quite accepted the idea of being a femmeboy into mainstream culture, and then from the other direction we have this



Which is describing things like the “egg hatching” culture endemic to most gender-nonconforming spaces, where any sign of gender nonconformity is taken as evidence that someone was “actually trans all along” and simply hadn’t realized it about themselves.

Being trans is depicted as the bottom of a slope that one is sent unavoidably tumbling down as one explores their self-expression, and a particularly toxic blend of feminism and self-loathing conspires to make a lot of trans women very hostile towards men, and almost evangelical in their desire to ‘hatch’ other ‘eggs,’ at which point they become super supportive, friendly, and accepting.

This turns trans-ness into an ontological pitcher plant, luring in young gender nonconforming people in a way that, once you buy into it as a narrative, makes it really difficult to find your way back out again.

Fortunately, that’s improving a bit, and as femmeboys become more accepted there starts to be more pushback on egg culture, which I think is very important because it’s actually rather toxic.



I keep coming back to Astolfo because he's just so important as far as representation goes. Maybe it seems strange to hold up this anime character as an example of cutting-edge progressivism, but he was finally the thing that convinced me that it was *actually okay* to be a boy. That powerful guardian I'd mentioned earlier spent a long time being very convinced that being a boy and being the person I wanted to be were just inimical to one another, that if I wanted to be like that I *had* to be a girl and that there was no other choice. And then that all gets thrown for a loop by this happy anime boy with pink hair and cute ribbons.

So now to put where I am in the process in Internal Family Systems terms, I'm reparenting the boy I was who wanted to wear dresses and bows, who was told by his family and society that boys weren't allowed to be cute and only girls could be. The boy who loved me, who created me, and who I loved. I want to let him actually be the person he wants to be. I want to be true to myself, and do what's best for me. I also want to help carve out a new place in gender space where feminine men can exist without stigma so that when eleven-year-old boys want to wear dresses, they can do so without being punished or without everyone thinking it must mean they want to change their sex completely.

So...I guess this is me now? My name is Shiloh, I'm a boy, I use he/him pronouns. I'm not exactly sure what my path forward from here looks like. I want to stay cute, so I think I want to keep taking hormones, but I also want to be able to have children, so I'm somewhat concerned that I've destroyed my fertility with them.

My presentation probably won't change very much. I still want to wear dresses and bows and cute skirts and present in a way I find aesthetically pleasing to myself, but I don't feel like I need to be a woman in order to do that? Or at least I *shouldn't* need to be a woman in order to do that. Practically speaking feminine men are still fairly heavily marginalized, and I might continue presenting as a girl for things like work, just

because it's easier than trying to force every institution I participate in to accept the existence of feminine men. Aside from some online spaces like this blog, and a few particularly accepting communities I participate in, I'm basically in the closet about being cisgendered at this point.

I'm a boy, and I'm *happy* being a boy. I'm not dysphoric about my appearance or about being gendered or thought of as male. I feel like I've woken up from a long dream, and I'm really not sure where to go from here.

This blog post is already over six thousand words long, and I'm running out of things to say on this, so I'll let it trail off here for now. I'll probably return to discuss this topic more soon, as I'm sure that I'll have yet more to say as time goes on.