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Living Your Animal: Listening to Wild Gender and Sexuality

George Taxidis

This paper identifies specific failures in listening within analytic practice, particularly as experienced by queer and trans patients, as illustrated through a psychoanalytic paper on cruising and anonymous sex. The discussion focuses on three recurring themes in analytic theory that often pathologize transgressive gender and sexuality: the discourse on "part-object relating," the fixation on etiology, and an outdated approach to trauma, along with the assumption that wild gender and sexuality are inherently theatrical and ritualistic. The author advocates revisiting Jung's ideas on sexuality through a queer interpretation of animal references in *The Red Book* and proposes a playful redefinition of the anima as *animx*—representing psychic discoveries related to gender and sexuality that possess a numinous quality and bring vitality. A brief film sequence illustrates Jung's observation that one does not merely have a sexuality and spirituality—they have, or they possess, us. The proposed queer Jungian epistemology of gender and sexuality supports a less heroic vision of the analyst's role, one that embraces discomfort as a catalyst for transformative change in both participants of the analysis.

Commenting on a dialogue with his soul in *The Red Book*, during which she asks him to perform despicable acts, Jung quoted the Roman playwright Terence: "*Nil humanum a me alienum esse puto,*" which is Latin for "nothing human is alien to me" (Jung, 2009, p. 290). In a footnote, Shamdasani identifies one more occasion, in September 1960, when Jung made use of this quote: in a letter to Herbert Read, Jung (1976) remarked that "as a medical psychologist I do not merely assume, but I am thoroughly convinced, that *nil humanum a me alienum esse* is even my duty" (p. 589). I find this to be one of the most profound statements Jung made regarding the ethics of analysis. My duty as a clinician is to strive toward a level of deep listening to my patients' material that acknowledges it as something that also exists within me—whether in actuality or as a potential thought, emotion, or act.

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It is impossible to always hold this ethical position successfully, however, if we also accept Jung's (2009) view of the unconscious whereby "the world of the inner is as infinite as the world of the outer" (p. 264). Simply put, there will always be aspects of ourselves so deeply hidden within the depths of our unconscious that when others display them, the instinctive reaction might be to see them as alien, despicable, or unacceptable, leading to responses of shock, disgust, or horror. I will provide two examples that specifically pertain to encounters with alien gender and sexual expressions.

First, Andrew Samuels (2015) described the "moralizing frenzy" he encountered when presenting a paper on promiscuity at a psychotherapy conference, including a colleague who remarked, "I cannot believe I've heard you say what I think you've said" (p. 95). The second example comes from Avgi Saketopoulou's discussion (2020) of *Slave Play,* written by Black queer playwright Jeremy O. Harris (2018). The play negotiates the extremely complex terrain of the sexualization of racism, and Saketopoulou observed that "anyone with a pulse" (p. 791) would ordinarily feel uncomfortable and want to leave the play halfway through—and many members of the audience did exactly that. It seems to me that Saketopoulou was commenting on the gap between our belief in our own open-mindedness and the reality that some gender and sexual expressions will inevitably disturb and challenge our capacity to not see them as alien, wild, or unacceptable.

The areas of nonnormative gender and sexuality I have in mind include androgyny, cross-dressing, and other forms of gender nonconforming expression; gender-affirming medical care, including hormones and surgery; sex in public places like saunas, toilets, dark rooms, and cruising grounds; various kinds of ethical nonmonogamy, including anonymous hookups, kink, and BDSM (Bondage, Domination, Submission / Sadism, Masochism), as well as sex work. When depth psychologists view these areas as "perverse," as Douglas Thomas (2023) put it, "the Other is unconsciously split from the inner reality of the practitioner and projected on to the patient as a problem in need of a cure" (p. 56).

Queer thinking, in my view, involves a keen interest in the processes that situate certain practices at the understandable and civilized center, while relegating others to the incomprehensible and wild "marginal sexual worlds" (Rubin, 1984, p. 295). Perhaps a symbolic intersection for the kinds of gender and sexuality discussed in this paper is the public toilet, which is both "a paradigmatic location of queer cruising" (Chambers-Letson et al., 2019, p. xiii) and a site of gender policing that can "take on the proportions of a gender factory" (Halberstam, 2018, p. 24). Thus, another way to describe the aim of this paper is that it attempts to explore the psychosocial "toilet" of gender and sexuality.

A Psychoanalyst Goes Cruising

In the paper "Cruising in the Homosexual Arena" by Christopher Bollas (1992), the central argument is that queer[1] cruising is hopeless and psychologically dead. Bollas encapsulates his view of psychological maturity in the statement: "It is by finding a steady partner that the homosexual cures himself, and his lover, of the sexual muggings to be had in the arena" (p. 158). Bollas seems unable to acknowledge that someone might find joy or meaning in wild sexuality, and thus can only conceive of a "healthy" outcome in analysis when his patients transform what feels alien to him into something more familiar.

However, the paper does signify a shift where some within the analytic establishment began to recognize and respond to accusations of homophobia within psychoanalysis, attempting to defend the field by arguing that the issue is not homosexuality itself but certain practices among queer people—cruising, in this instance. From my experience, this line of reasoning remains influential, though it is less overtly expressed. The successors of this tradition are now targeting our trans siblings: the argument suggests that while some trans people are healthy, others (in fact, most) must be prevented from receiving gender-affirming surgery, or they are in denial about their sex, or simply following a trend, among other claims. This trans- and queerphobic rhetoric serves to keep some practitioners within their comfort zones.

By affording themselves a superior, supposedly neutral position from which to study us, rather than allowing us to speak authoritatively on our experiences—either as patients, colleagues, or both—some depth psychology clinicians perpetuate what Miranda Fricker (2007) calls an *epistemic injustice*, which is an injustice toward someone based "on their capacity as a knower" (p. 1) and, more specifically, what she calls a *testimonial injustice*, where "prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word" (p. 1).

It would be unfair, however, not to acknowledge the ways in which Bollas (1992) makes some steps forward. Not only does he acknowledge the importance of involvement in community (p. 164), a significant recognition considering that engagement in "political tendencies" (Samuels, 1993, p. 42) is traditionally pathologized by depth psychology, but he also recognizes the limitations of existing psychoanalytic literature on homosexuality. Specifically, he addresses an important epistemological limitation: that clinicians have often drawn generalizing conclusions based on their queer patients, without questioning whether these patients are representative of the broader queer population. Still, he does not go as far as Steven Flower (2007), whose honest paper on countertransference laments the lack of theoretical contributions from individuals with lived experiences of queerness.[2]

Bollas's proposed remedy for this distortion is to read queer authors' fictionalized accounts of cruising; among others, he references the classic novel *Giovanni's Room* by Black queer author James Baldwin (2007). Bollas is well-positioned to do this as a former English professor, and he may also be following Anna Freud's advice that an essential characteristic of a good psychoanalyst is engagement with world literature (Freud, as cited in Kohut, 1968, p. 553). Bollas (1992) even claims that he learned more about the psychology of cruising from queer authors than from psychoanalytic ones (p. 146). What is painfully disappointing, however, is that what he discovers largely confirms his psychoanalytic assumptions about what constitutes psychological health. It is worth examining in some detail the ways in which Bollas fails to listen to Baldwin's characters, as these also demonstrate common failures of listening that occur in analytic practice with many queer people.

Perhaps the most striking quote Bollas uses comes from a discussion between the main character, David, who struggles to keep his attraction to men hidden from others and himself, and an older gay man, Jacques, about why the latter's sexual encounters are shameful: "Because there is no affection in them and no joy," says Jacques. "It's like putting an electric plug in a dead socket" (Baldwin, 2007, p. 49). I am unsurprised that this passage attracted Bollas's attention, as it conveys one of the main assumptions made by psychoanalysis about the deadness, mindlessness, and shallowness of wild sexuality.

Setting aside the purported lack of value of these sexual exchanges for a moment, I am struck by the uncritical acceptance that the participants should feel shame. Why

should someone feel shame about an unsatisfying, yet consensual, activity? Who is harmed other than the participants themselves? Moreover, I imagine Bollas would acknowledge that heterosexual sex within a long-term monogamous relationship also has the potential to feel lifeless. Would he likewise suggest that such a couple should feel shame about this sexual activity?

More importantly, Bollas overlooks the fact that Jacques doesn't directly answer David's question about why there is no affection or joy in these encounters—he cryptically responds that David will one day understand. This avoidance seems curious to me, particularly since wisdom in *Giovanni's Room* comes from older queens like Jacques, especially when critiquing "straight-acting" masculinity, as Harry Thomas notes (Thomas, 2013, p. 613). I would argue that the societally inflicted shame, which Bollas uncritically reinforces, might contribute to Jacques's sense of shame about these encounters. After all, the novel was published in 1957, 12 years before the Stonewall Riots, which sparked the lesbian and gay liberation movement—a movement that significantly bolstered queer people's sense of self and pride. It is also worth noting that Bollas turns to a novel written 35 years before his paper. We often hear that the psychoanalytic fathers were men of their time, but from a psychosocial perspective, it seems they are more aligned with the generation before their own.

To be clear, I do not doubt that cruising or using hookup apps like Grindr can feel miserable and dead, especially when someone longs for a romantic relationship but engages in these spaces simply because they are so readily available. Moreover, just as some individuals conform to compulsory heterosexuality and heteronormativity, queer individuals can also conform to a queer normativity, where their sexual lives are considered valid only when they do not resemble heteronormative monogamy in any way. It is also evident that some activities, such as chemsex (using psychoactive party drugs to enhance sexual pleasure), can and do harm queer people, necessitating sensitive support for those who wish to disengage from them (e.g., Hoff, 2023). What Bollas and many others often overlook, however, is the possibility that internalized shame can contribute to the experience of wild gender and sexuality and that societal norms are far more powerful than those within the queer community.

A few lines after the plug-and-socket dialogue, Jacques detects David's attraction to Giovanni and urges him to let go of his shame. Both Jacques, and much later Giovanni, diagnose David with what today we would call internalized homophobia and hypermasculinity. Giovanni powerfully tells David, "you never have loved anyone, I am sure you never will! You love your purity" (Baldwin, 2007, p. 125). The text is filled with evidence that David's suffering stems from his desire to keep his masculinity pure and intact. Despite this, and even though David hardly ever engages in anonymous sex, Bollas quotes: "no matter what I was doing, another me sat in my belly, absolutely cold with terror over the question of my life" (Baldwin, 2007, p. 74; as cited in Bollas, 1992, p. 159). I, and many others, are painfully familiar with this kind of misreading: David is terrified because he cannot stop himself from desiring men, yet Bollas takes this remark as further proof that cruising is miserable!

David's internalized shame is evident in his visceral disgust toward a man in drag, which he likens to "the sight of monkeys eating their own excrement" (Baldwin, 2007, p. 24). This statement, unsurprisingly, caught my attention, particularly given my interest in what I previously referred to as the psychosocial toilet of gender and sexuality." Unless one uncritically shares the disgust, a deep analytic listening would lead one to speculate that David is attempting to repudiate a part of his own psyche through his disgust and dehumanization of the drag queen. And if one observes this

dynamic, why not also approach the plug-and-socket metaphor with a similar critical eye?

Depth psychology has often been hesitant to seriously consider psychosocial factors, thereby allowing societally inflicted shame to remain unexamined and, at times, reinforcing it. Although Jung and Jungian authors theoretically emphasize the importance of one's unique path through individuation, which could make them less prone to shaming patients, they are not immune to it. Ann Ulanov and Barry Ulanov (1994) recount the case of an effeminate male patient who, after surviving a violent, nearly fatal homophobic attack, transformed into a more traditionally masculine man, albeit still a gay man. Shockingly, the authors assert that the patient "had learnt a terrible lesson—that savage reaction to unintegrated feminine elements in him nearly cost him his life, but ultimately had saved it by what it taught him" (p. 32).

Could it be that "unintegrated feminine elements" simply refers to a femininity that is perceived as too loud or prominent for the current gender and sex regime? Unfortunately, while Jung (1964/1970) played a crucial role in dispelling the myth of pure masculinity and femininity, he also enabled this kind of gender policing through statements such as "a man should live as a man and a woman as a woman" (para. 243). What is implied in this statement is that the patient's experience of hatred toward femininity and gender ambiguity is a universal constant, and that the only solution is for the patient to essentially "man up."

Part-Objects, Rituals/Performances, and Trauma

I would now like to address three themes that emerge in Bollas's paper and similar analytic writings: cruising as part-object relating, cruisers' behavior as ritualistic and theatrical, and the root of cruising behavior in early trauma. Jungian psychology has significant contributions to offer on all three points.

Part-Object Relating

The discourse of part- and whole-object relating originates from theorizing about infantile experience, particularly in the work of Melanie Klein. In adult relationships, part-object relating occurs when one connects only with a narrow fragment of another person, thereby ignoring other aspects of them. As Dimen (2017) points out, psychoanalysis has often fetishized the notion that psychological health requires both emotional relatedness and sexual excitement to be found within the same person. Building on Dimen's argument, Saketopoulou (2023) suggests that "being turned into a part-object rather than a full human being … is how the sexual drive operates" (p. 28). In everyday terms, what we call *objectification* is an intrinsic aspect of all sexuality, not just transgressive sexuality.

The term *whole* is problematic and misleading, both from developmental psychoanalytic and Jungian perspectives. How can one claim to relate to the entirety of another when neither school asserts that even the individual can fully know themselves? This becomes more problematic from a Jungian viewpoint; while wholeness is the goal of individuation, it can never be fully realized, given that, as emphasized earlier, the Jungian unconscious is not only vast but also infinite.

A more realistic approach would be to focus on the potential denial of significant aspects of another's psyche, particularly those relevant to the relationship at hand.

Some anonymous sexual encounters, including those involving power exchange and humiliation, may be far more respectful of all relevant parts of the participants' psyches than long-term marriages where one partner feels they possess the other in a more permanent—and arguably more disturbing—manner than what occurs in a BDSM scene or a sex-work transaction. In a consensual BDSM scene, the dominant partner might be addressing and honoring a vital aspect of her submissive partner's psyche, specifically his desire to enter the numinous experience often referred to as "sub space" (see, for example, Easton & Hardy, 2011).

Consensual anonymous or casual sex can provide a relationship, however brief, that engages with parts of oneself and one's partner that are incredibly important, vulnerable, or even connected to their shadow (Easton, 2007). I emphasize the word "can," because it is easy to misread my point as an idealization of anonymous and casual sex or as a denigration of long-term monogamy. This could not be further from my views or intentions. Rather, I am advocating for a greater openness and awareness that would enable clinicians to help their patients cultivate the capacity to engage in ways that are meaningful, consensual, and inclusive of significant aspects of both themselves and those they interact with.

Bollas argues that homophobia itself is a form of part-object relating, and I wholeheartedly agree with him. I imagine that this argument may have prompted at least a slight shift in perspective among some of his colleagues regarding homosexuality. However, his selective interpretation of Baldwin's text and his tendency to shoehorn patient material into his unexamined assumptions about gender and sexuality also constitute part-object relating.[3] Perhaps we should be more concerned about this kind of part-object relating—where senior clinicians write, teach, or supervise in ways that enable many other clinicians to engage in partial and retraumatizing ways with their queer patients—than about two or more strangers "part-object relating" in a toilet cubicle or a dark room.

Trauma

Bollas suggests that queer men engage in wild sexuality due to unprocessed trauma—specifically, he refers to early relational trauma related to how the mothers of cruisers treated them as infants (in contrast to the trauma of oppression that I was alluding to in the last paragraph). In doing so, he aligns with the psychoanalytic notion that the purpose of "perversion" is, as Stoller (1986) put it, "to convert childhood trauma to adult triumph" (p. 4). While Bollas (1992) seems capable of questioning the psychoanalytic endeavor of identifying the trauma purportedly leading to homosexuality and acknowledges that its "causes are potentially endless" (p. 152), this is a notable development given that psychoanalytic attempts to identify the causes of homosexuality have historically been both numerous and unconvincing (see Lewes, 1988). Yet, despite this progress, Bollas still seems content to propose that the reason cruisers are drawn to anonymous sex is that they are compelled to repeat their experience of being an "it" in another's internal world—a reenactment of how their mothers treated them. These same uncritical arguments are being used to harm trans patients today.

It doesn't take a genius to recognize that not all infants treated as an "it" by their parents go on to enjoy anonymous sex or identify as trans, nor have all those who engage in this kind of sex or are trans been treated in this manner by a parent. However, the flaw in the argument lies not so much in the suggestion that early experiences contribute to the formation of our sexualities and genders—I have no doubt that

they do, and exploring this when relevant can be enriching. Gender and sexuality are formed in a biopsychosocial manner (see, for example, Denman, 2004). The real issue is the underlying heroic fantasy that some analytic genius can identify a singular (psychological) cause that fully accounts for any gender or sexual behavior or expression, leading the patient to finally renounce this aspect of who they are.

This approach traces back to the earliest versions of psychoanalysis, where the analyst's task was to cure a symptom by uncovering its unconscious traumatic cause. Few theorists seem to consider the variety of biopsychosocial factors that influence the decision to label something as harmful repetition compulsion (Freud, 1920/2001, p. 242) that can and should change through understanding and mastery. These factors can equally shape a patient's assessment of their own gender and sexuality. Psychoanalyst Muriel Dimen (2017) is a notable exception, acknowledging that the shame experienced by herself and her patients is tied to "the shackles of what Foucault called 'regulatory' or 'disciplinary' discourse" (p. 184). This perspective allows Saketopoulou (2023) to assert that "repetition is not necessarily destructive but, when laced with pleasure, can be transformative, even conducive to expanded psychic freedoms" (p. 132).

For too long, psychoanalysis has been mired in what Saketopoulou (2020) describes as a "traumato-phobic stance," where analysts are "preoccupied with what to do *about* trauma" (p. 799). In contrast, her innovative approach to trauma, termed "traumato-philic," fosters curiosity about "what subjects can do *with* trauma" (p. 799). Traumatophilia does not trivialize the often devastating effects of trauma, but it rejects the heroic fantasy of completely curing it and thereby effecting a "return to a pre-traumatic state" (p. 799). Although Saketopoulou does not employ a Jungian framework, her argument is compatible with Jung's view of the psyche, which considers not only the cause of a symptom but also its purpose or telos. As is typical of Jung (1972), he cautions against a one-sided approach: "one ought to be as wary of believing absolutely in causality as of an absolute belief in teleology" (p. 295).

Rituals and Performances

Bollas and many other theorists on "perversion" seem to place emphasis on the seemingly ritualistic and performative nature of wild gender and sexuality. This perspective contains two problematic assumptions: first, that rituals and performances are inherently pathological, and second, that there exists a form of gender and sexuality that is free from ritual and performance.

Rituals are commonly associated with religion or magic, and because we live in a world that purports to be "anti-ritual" (Douglas, 1966, as cited in Duncan, 1995, p. 8), and Freudian psychoanalysis tends to align itself with what is perceived as the opposite of ritual and religion—namely, science—authors often do not feel the need to explain what is wrong with ritual; it is assumed to be obvious to any "civilized" and rational person. Indeed, Freud's first explicit work on religion, written just before he met Jung, compares religious rituals to obsessive neurotic behavior, with the defining characteristic of both being the practitioner's lack of awareness of their meaning (Freud, 1907).

However, one person's rigidity may simply be another person's preference. For example, if I were to suggest that heterosexual men rigidly and ritualistically only use their penis during sexual intercourse, obsessively avoiding the pleasures offered by their anus, I might be accused of being extreme and coercive. Yet, normative versions

of psychoanalysis have often sought to achieve the heterosexual equivalent of this kind of suggestion with queer people.

Raising this issue of ritualistic behavior brings into focus a range of binaries that are of great interest in Jungian thought: rational/irrational, scientific/religious, modern/ancient, and so on. Jung views the Enlightenment's valorization of only one pole of these binaries as highly problematic and limiting. This opens the door for a genuinely spiritual evaluation of wild gender and sexuality, as well as what appears to be ritualistic within it.

Finally, adopting Saketopoulou's traumatophilic approach enables us to view rituals and performances as examples of what individuals might do with trauma. To be clear, I'm not suggesting that all wild expressions of sexuality and gender are teleologically traumatophilic, nor am I claiming that all traumatized individuals can find meaning in the rituals and performances of wild sexuality. However, to label anything that appears ritualistic or performative as pathological is to prematurely shut down the possibility of discovering meaning in wild sexuality.

In one of the most well-known accounts of trauma, Dr. Bessel Van der Kolk (2015) discusses how theater helped alleviate his teenage son's chronic fatigue. Unlike therapy, which provided space for him to talk about his feelings, the author notes that "theater gave him a chance to deeply and physically experience what it was like to be someone other than the learning-disabled, oversensitive boy that he had gradually become" (p. 331). Van der Kolk goes on to offer various examples of how performance can be used to process trauma, even suggesting that all theater might have its origins in this function. Perhaps some forms of wild sexuality can similarly be understood and valued as performances that allow participants to embody different aspects of themselves.

The Queer Potential in Jung's Animal Metaphor: Anima, Animal, Animx

Denman (2004) proposes replacing the often moralizing term *perversion* with two alternatives: *transgressive sex*, which refers to "sexual activity which attracts social disapproval," and *coercive sex*, which "involves activities in which one party has not consented" (p. 198). Dimen (2017) expresses discomfort when some non-queer authors use the term *perversion* (p. 173), and both she and Saketopoulou accept the term when it is used by marginalized individuals, particularly in a playful, appropriating manner, akin to the reclamation of the term *queer*. The metaphor I will turn to next—the animal, in its association with transgressive sexuality and gender—can only be helpful when used in the first person, not when it is used as a device to maintain the supposed civilized nature of the speaker, or, as Preciado (2021) puts it, when marginalized "bodies [are] othered and animalized" (p. 59).

I am not suggesting that we uncritically accept Jung's views on animals, particularly because, as Farhad Dalal (1988) points out, many of Jung's statements imply an evolutionary hierarchy in which the white European male is positioned as more developed and conscious than women, infants, and "primitive" and racialized people, who are, in turn, presented as closer to our common animal evolutionary ancestors. In other words, in Jung's work, the further one is from the modern white European middle-class middle-aged man in terms of race, gender, age, and class, the closer one is seen to be to animals and the animal layer of the psyche.

What complicates matters, however, is Jung's argument that Western civilization is ill and urgently needs to reconnect with, integrate, and valorize qualities that have been neglected since the Enlightenment and throughout much of mainstream

Christianity's history. These qualities are associated with femininity, "primitivity," and animality, and are largely connected to the irrational and the body. Distinguishing between the abstract qualities that have been devalued and the specific forms they take in Jung's imagination (by "imagination," I mean both the figures who appear when he engages in his technique of active imagination and the ordinary, more conscious meaning of the word) allows for an honest, contemporary engagement with his writings. In this way, women, queers, and racialized people do not need to be cast as "the carriers of a sociological White Shadow" (Brewster, 2017, p. 88). Simultaneously, we can still appreciate Jung's profound psychosocial insight that the body and the irrational have been neglected, with devastating consequences.

This idea is most evocatively expressed in *The Red Book.* In the chapter "Nox Secunda," Jung (2009) notices the shadowy figures of the dead, who turn out to be a group of Anabaptists, a 16th-century religious sect. One of them, Ezechiel, explains that the group cannot find peace because their lives were incomplete for reasons yet unknown. He anxiously grabs Jung and asks him if he knows why. Jung (2009), disturbed, replies, "Let go, daimon, you did not live your animal" (p. 294). The dead appear multiple times in *The Red Book*, including in the "Seven Sermons to the Dead," the only part of *The Red Book* published before 2009, where Jung's inner wise old man, Philemon, preaches to them. Three of the sermons contain teachings on the relationship between sexuality and spirituality.

One might argue that if "your animal" refers to the parts of you associated with irrationality, the body, the absence of language, sexuality, and aggression, then this concept is perhaps not so different from Freud's *id*. Darwin's influence is evident in this, as Freud (1917) credits him with revealing humans' "ineradicable animal nature" (p. 285). The differences in Freud and Jung's language, however, are noteworthy. In Freud's schema, denying the instincts, especially the sexual instinct, leads to neurosis. In contrast, Jung's (1972) language suggests that denying the beastly shadow carries a grave risk: "we cease to be three-dimensional and become flat and without substance" (p. 30), perhaps like the wandering dead in *The Red Book.* The id, originally "it" in German, emphasizes how "other" the depths of the unconscious are perceived to be. The term "it" can be dehumanizing and is often gender-neutral or gender-confusing. Grammatically, an animal or a baby is often referred to as "it"; in my mother tongue, Greek, "it" is the pronoun used by some nonbinary trans people.

Continuing with this play on words, *zoe* (see Rowland, 2017) is Greek for "life" and shares the same etymological root as "zoology," making it closely related to animals. This connection suggests that being in touch with one's "animal" is the polar opposite of "the dead." Themes of life and death are also present when Preciado (2021) equates denying his gender and sexuality to comply with the regime of cis-heteronormativity with "the destruction of my life force" (p. 34).

The word *anima*, which is Latin for "soul," "life," and "breath," was used by Jung to describe the unconscious "contrasexual" aspect. For him, the unconscious feminine, perhaps we could say, was what brought him to life—not only through sexual desire but also through misogynistic feelings. This dynamic is evident in his reflections on masculinity and femininity in the chapter "The Castle in the Forest" in *The Red Book.* Jung (2009) is not only shocked by the appearance of a young woman in his active imagination—a "hackneyed nonsense" that appears in "novels that I have … spat on" (p. 262)—but he also clearly states that "man despises [women] because he despises his femininity" (p. 263) and the "most masculine man needs women, and he is consequently their slave" (p. 263).

This is crucial in Jung's understanding of intrapsychic and relational dynamics: to deny something in oneself—or, more accurately, one's Self—whether it be one's femininity or the animal, means to potentially both be fascinated by it and to hate it. Nick Literski's (2021) description of Pentheus's simultaneous fascination with and contempt for the effeminate Dionysus in *Bacchae* by Euripides is a case in point.

A young woman in Jung's active imaginations represented this concept; she was what activated, animated, and gave him life. I wonder whether new paths might open up if we experimented with the gender-neutral term *animx*—something that represents the other within one's psyche, something that excites both hate and prejudice as well as love and desire, something imbued with numinous power, something that, when encountered, makes one feel they are in the presence of something divine.

On one hand, both transgressive and nontransgressive gender and sexuality have the potential to be sources of joy, awe, and a connection with the divine. On the other hand, just as meditation, prayer, or yoga can be practiced in a meaningless, mindless, or superficial way, transgressive and non-transgressive gender and sexuality can also become like an electric plug inserted into a dead socket. I have heard accounts from trans and gender-nonconforming people describing their encounters with individuals who live more freely in their gender for the first time, feeling as though they are in the grip of something truly profound or divine. Or consider someone who, for the first time, discovers the possibility of being submissive—enchanted by the idea and image, while probably feeling some shame at the same time. According to Downs (2012), the combination of sexual arousal (and, I would add, a profound experience of one's nonnormative gender) and shame is an explosive one, often resulting in particularly intense first experiences.

Gender and Sexuality Have You

When David in *Giovanni's Room* first encounters his desire for his friend Joey, it is both mysterious (Baldwin, 2007, p. 6) and monstrous (p. 8). Yet, in the same breath, he describes Joey's body as "the most beautiful creation I have ever seen" (p. 8). David promises himself never to have sex with a man again. Years later, after emigrating to France in in an attempt to banish his experience with Joey, David finds himself erotically entangled with the drunken Giovanni: "everything in me [was] screaming *No!* yet the sum of me sighed *Yes*" (Baldwin, 2007, p. 56). A Jungian interpretation of this description might suggest that it was every thing—every conscious, surface part of him—that said no, but it was the sum of him, his higher, "whole" Self that said yes. This is what I would call animx, and it sometimes works in mysterious ways.

A brief sequence in the Chilean film *El Principe* (The Prince; Muñoz, 2019) illustrates a version of what I am trying to describe. Jaime is in love with his friend, a fact that is obvious to the viewer but seemingly goes unnoticed by the friend. When Jaime sees his friend leave the bar with a woman, he secretly follows them to an outdoor space where the pair engages in a brief sexual encounter. Jaime, hiding behind a bush, masturbates while watching them. As soon as they leave, he runs to the spot where their encounter took place. Overcome by an animalistic force, he begins grunting like an animal, kicking the ground, and thrusting himself against it—perhaps simulating intercourse, perhaps expressing rage that he was not the one with whom his friend had sex, while also stimulating his genitals through contact with the ground. He masturbates frenziedly again, wipes his nose with his hand, and sniffs the smell of his own penis and semen.

The expression on his face could be interpreted as one of horror. But might it not also be seen as the expression of someone who has encountered something larger than himself, something numinous? Jaime is overtaken by sexual lust, which calls to mind Jung's (2009) assertion that "spirituality and sexuality are not your qualities, not things you possess and encompass. Rather, they possess and encompass you, since they are powerful daimons, manifestations of the Gods, and hence reach beyond you" (p. 352).

In the Jungian paradigm, this suggests that sexuality cannot always be explained away or tamed, and perhaps this is a key difference between Freud and Jung. In *Psychology and Religion,* Jung (1958) remarks that "not everything that comes out of the unconscious can be 'sublimated'" (para. 541), if sublimation means desexualizing instincts to render them socially acceptable.

Asking Questions about Gender and Sexuality

Exploring gender and sexuality in clinical practice often involves navigating a tension between two or more poles: for instance, one might ask, "Do I enjoy this kind of sex because of a fear of intimacy, or is this very question rooted in internalized shame?" Alok Vaid Menon reflects on whether their femininity might be influenced by growing up surrounded by women (as cited in Masters, 2020). Similarly, Travis Alabanza (2023) questions whether their desire to transition stems from societal expectations or even safety concerns, given that being perceived as gender-ambiguous can often put one's safety at risk, even in progressive cities.

Many of my patients grapple with similar questions: Am I attracted to Black and Brown bodies because of a racist fetishization? Am I attracted to white bodies because of internalized racism? Can I still claim to be a feminist as a heterosexual female submissive? Do I seek gender-affirming medical interventions, such as taking hormones or undergoing "top" or "bottom" surgery, because I want to conform to the gender binary, or because this is closer to a more authentic self? Is initiating a discussion about nonmonogamy with my partner an expression of my fear of intimacy, or is it the best way forward for our relationship?

My experience is that when patients feel I am not trying to shoehorn them into a particular ideological framework, they are freer to explore all relevant questions. This freedom allows them to delve deeply into their concerns without the fear of, for instance, anti-trans campaigners attacking them or generalizing from their exploration. I often keep in mind an image from *The Red Book* (Jung, 2009) that represents the pain of difficult dilemmas. In it, Jung is depicted climbing a jagged mountain slope: "One-half of the way is white, the other black. I step onto the black side and recoil horrified: it is hot iron. I step onto the white half: it is ice" (p. 277). I believe that my patients need me to be aware of the pain involved in their dilemmas. However, a social-justice-informed and queer-aware approach also requires that I consider the power imbalance between the two "sides."

People who are not queer, trans, or otherwise minoritized rarely have to confront such questions. If you are, say, cis-heterosexual and monogamous, you are seldom asked to justify your gender, sexual, or relationship preferences, or questioned about whether something in your childhood led to your current situation. Yet, it is entirely plausible that monogamy could be a compromise arising from Oedipal anxiety—the fear of being excluded. As Adam Philips (1996) succinctly points out, "no one has ever been excluded from feeling left out" (p. 1). In this sense, monogamy can be seen as a mutual commitment with your partner to never make each other feel left out, and

nonmonogamy is simply a different solution—sometimes more, sometimes less defensive—to the same anxiety.

To acknowledge that one side of these dilemmas is reinforced by societal forces is not the same as suggesting the solution always lies in the non-mainstream option. It simply means that, with close listening, one often finds that the mainstream argument is well known and understood by almost everyone. James Baldwin (2017) describes this epistemological asymmetry when, referring to white people in America, he suggests, "you never had to look at me. I had to look at you. I know more about you than you know about me" (p. 103). I have yet to meet a queer or trans patient who has not encountered the usual arguments about the origins of their queerness. Few, however, have ever been told that their sexuality and gender might be a path to the divine.

Father Jarel Robinson-Brown illustrates this by encouraging a move away from the anti-darkness and anti-Blackness of some Christian theology, drawing attention to the work of Black queer artist Ajamu on dark rooms (spaces in queer venues where patrons have anonymous sex in the dark). He quotes the artist as saying, "lots of us might be out around our sexual identities but marginalised around our sexual behaviours" (Ajamu, as cited in Robinson-Brown, 2023). It is possible that societies (including analytic societies) might rush to congratulate themselves on accepting lesbians and gays while still condemning us to wandering like the dead of *The Red Book* (Jung, 2009) if they demand we hide our sexual behaviors, gender-nonconformity, or our relationships with our trans siblings—whether as friends, lovers, or simply fellow members of our communities.

Adam Philips (1996) suggests that "the promiscuous, like the monogamous, are idealists. Both are deranged by hope, in awe of reassurance, impressed by their pleasures. … they are both the enemies of cynicism" (p. 3). This perspective offers a useful way to assess whether monogamous or nonmonogamous relationships are practiced in a manner that enriches life and enhances individuation. How cynical are the participants? To what extent is someone remaining in a monogamous marriage out of calculated self-interest, disregarding the other's subjectivity, and to what extent are they genuinely connected to the humanity of their spouse? Similarly, how much is someone engaging in kinky or anonymous encounters in a way that touches on the profound vulnerability of humans in the grip of desire, inspiring a sense of awe for the universe and the divine—whether they use that term or not? Conversely, how much are they participating in a manner that truly disregards the other's humanity? Perhaps spirituality could be defined as the antithesis of cynicism.

"My Mistress's Words and My Father's Preachments"

In his speech to thousands of psychoanalysts—a speech he was ultimately not allowed to finish—trans philosopher Paul Preciado (2021) critiques the work of Colette Chiland, who interprets her patient's desire for top surgery as a violent attempt to "negate her own [the analyst's] physical and erotic experience of the breast" (p. 65). Preciado astutely concludes that "it is perhaps not the trans person who refuses to engage with the analytic process, but rather the analyst" (p. 65). Jungian theory offers a framework to move beyond this narcissistic, analyst-centered approach. In a good analysis, "both [analyst and patient] are altered" (Jung, 1954/1966, para. 358). Indeed, in *The Red Book,* Jung (2009) repeatedly encounters figures representing otherness—whether in the form of young women (the maiden in "The Castle in the Forest" chapter

and Salomé), racial others (Izdubar), or those from different social classes (in the chapter "One of the Lowly")—and consistently learns that the "other" is not so other after all; he allows them to change him, however imperfectly.

There is an interesting detail about the Terence (163 B.C.E./1962) quote—"nothing human is alien to me." It appears to have been misunderstood. The character who utters the words in the play "The Self-Tormentor" is Chremes, who uses the phrase to justify meddling in his neighbor's business—*alienum* can also mean another person's affairs, property, or foreign soil; thus, Chremes is essentially declaring that he is interested in everyone's business. Ironically, this interpretation is precisely the opposite of how the quote is typically understood: it's a defense of judgmental gossiping! Yet, whether intentionally or not, the author moved his audience with this expression, which was said to have been "received with an [*sic*] universal Applause" (Steele, as cited in Jocelyn, 1973, p. 15).

For perhaps entirely different reasons, this quote resonates with me, as a queer person, many centuries after it was written. What is equally fascinating is that a major theme in the play revolves around parents—Chremes and his neighbor—who hold rigid ideas about whom their children should marry. The rigidity of gender and sexual norms is a recurring theme in theater, myths, and fairy tales, and it is also the focus of this essay. "My mistress's words," declares Clitipho, the son of Chremes, however, "stick twice as long in my stomach than all [of my father's] preachments" (Terence, 163 B.C.E./1962, p. 111). This, perhaps, is the true battle: our bodies, our unconscious, our authentic gender and sexuality, versus the dogma of normative gender and sexuality.

At the end of the first act, Clitipho is alone on stage after a frustrating exchange with his father. He reflects that fathers are "unconscionable creatures" with little understanding of the excitements of youthful love and pledges: "If ever heaven send me a son of my own, he shall find an extremely loving father in me. He shan't be afraid to make me his confessor, but be sure that I'll give him absolution" (Terence, 163 B.C.E./1962, p. 111). I know how challenging it is to always live up to such pledges, but I owe it to my patients to try.

NOTES

1. I use the word *queer* here because I would like to include all of those who typically take part in cruising, including not only cisgender but also trans men as well as trans women and nonbinary people. Bollas exclusively refers to men; he uses the outdated and too clinical-sounding word *homosexual* and only rarely the word *gay*.
2. Lesbians and gays were banned from becoming members of the British Psychoanalytic Council as late as 2011, unless we hid our sexual orientation.
3. Chess Denman (2003) makes a similar point in her critique of a homophobic paper by Michael Fordham which, again, describes a gay man's relationship as "a part object affair" (p. 165).

George Taxidis is a Jungian analyst with the British Jungian Analytic Association who works in private practice in east London, UK. He studied Jung's Red Book *with the Circle of Analytical Psychology. He is a lecturer at Goldsmiths, University of London, where he teaches psychodynamic counseling and psychosocial studies. He co-founded the International Queer Jungian*

Initiative and is currently writing a book on queering Jungian psychology, to be published in the Jung, Politics and Culture *series by Routledge.*

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