

# QUEERING PSYCHOTHERAPY

*Edited by Jane Chance Czyzselska*



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# About the authors

**Meg-John Barker** (they/them) is a writer and writing mentor who trains therapists and others in gender, sexual and relationship diversity (GSRD) and other skills. They identify as queer, trans, plural, relationship anarchist and kinky. Key intersections are white British, mixed class background, dis/abilities around hearing, post-traumatic stress, survivor and English speaker. They worked as a psychotherapist from 2006 to 2019 following training in existential psychotherapy. They are also strongly influenced by Buddhist, systemic and somatic approaches. An academic psychologist since 1995 teaching and researching primarily GSRD and mental health-related topics, they have also written many books including *Rewriting the Rules*, *Life Isn't Binary* and graphic guides and self-help books on gender and sexuality, as well as zines and other resources. They also wrote the BACP resource on GSRD.

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**Sabah Choudrey** (they/them/theirs) is a psychotherapist in training, trans youth worker, public speaker and writer. At time of writing, they are between the second and third year of their Masters in person-centred psychotherapy. Sabah co-founded Trans Pride Brighton in 2013 and made The Rainbow List in 2015, celebrating 101 of the most influential LGBT people in Britain. Sabah has built a presence across UK and Europe, speaking at TEDx Brixton 2015, ILGA Europe 2016, IDAHOT Brussels 2017 and Malmö Pride 2017/18/20 about intersectionality, identity and

inclusion. Sabah has been a proud trans youth worker since 2014 and Joint Head of Youth Service at Gendered Intelligence since 2020, trustee for Inclusive Mosque Initiative, co-founder of Colours Youth Network supporting LGBT+ BPOC young people in the UK. They are the author of *Supporting Trans People of Colour: How to Make Your Practice Inclusive* (2022). They have also conducted therapeutic work in the community, facilitating groups for trans people or trans people of colour, holding therapeutic spaces with queer trans people of colour with the QTIPOC collective Misery in 2020. Sabah is the winner of the Gay Times Future Fighter Honour 2021.

**Jane Chance Czynszelska** (they/she) prefers to be called Chance and is a white queer non-binary trans relational integrative psychotherapist and counsellor in private practice. They are also a writer. Their therapeutic thinking and being is influenced by feminist, queer, trans and decolonising ideas and practices. They are on the organizing committee of The Relational School. They have volunteered at London's Step Forward charity and at the LGBTIQ+ charity London Friend. From 2004 to 2017, they edited *DIVA*, the magazine for LGBTIQ women and non-binary people, and they write for a range of national and international mainstream and psychotherapy publications.

**Dominic Davies** (he/him) has worked as a counsellor, psychotherapist and sex therapist for over 40 years, setting up, in 2000, the UK's largest dedicated independent therapy service for queer clients, Pink Therapy, after successfully completing the co-editing of the final two volumes of the Pink Therapy trilogy with Charles Neal. Dominic works integratively and specializes in working with gender, sexuality and relationship diverse clients. He and his team of queer tutors also run internationally renowned post-graduate training for therapists working with GSRD clients. He is an older, disabled, white, cis, gay male who has always been involved in consensual non-monogamy (CNM) relationships and for the last 15 years has been out as kinky. As well as offering therapy to queer clients, he also ran a supervision group for kink-identified therapists. He co-authored a chapter on dual relationships with former BACP chair Lynne Gabriel in *Issues in Therapy with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Clients* (2000).

**Bay De Veen** (she/her) is a therapeutic practitioner and supervisor working mainly online. She is an older, white, European, asexual, anarchist lesbian who is genderqueer. Influences include philosophy, science and nature, narrative and story, migrations, poetry, writing and creative approaches to holistic healing that include conversations with the body, the care of self and others, as well as an appreciation for and special interest in the situational and contextual intersections of living a complex life in a wonderful, crazy world.

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**Paul Harris** (he/they) is a white, Welsh, cisgender, working-class, gay male working as an integrative child psychotherapist and consultant supervisor. His specialism in working with complex development trauma is underpinned by over 20 years of work within the field of somatic psychotherapy and the healing arts generally, with both children and families across a wide range of public and private services.

**Ellis J. Johnson** (he/him) is a psychodynamic psychotherapeutic counsellor who works mainly alongside trans/non-binary, queer and questioning people in private practice. He offers training to fellow therapists in working affirmatively with gender diversity, and has previously worked as a mental health advocate and provided counselling in higher education and NHS Wellbeing services. He now works as a supervisor for QTIPPOC and trans/non-binary people across the third sector and also delivers training in anti-racism and trans inclusion to organisations across the UK and internationally. His work draws on anti-racist and decolonial approaches to gender, sexuality, spirituality and the human experience. He describes himself as a Brown, mixed, working-class trans man with roots stretching from Yorkshire to Jamaica to South Asia.

**Dr Gail Lewis** (she/her) is Reader Emerita in the Department of Psychosocial Studies at Birkbeck College, Senior Visiting Research Fellow at the Department of Gender Studies, LSE and Visiting Professor at Yale University in the academic year 2021–22. She trained, first, as a psychodynamic psychotherapist and then as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist at the Tavistock Clinic. Her political subjectivity was formed in the intensities of Black feminist and anti-racist struggles and through a socialist, anti-imperialist lens. She was a member of the Brixton Black Women's Group and one of the founder members of the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent, Britain's first national organization for Black and other women of colour. She is currently writing a book on Black feminism in Britain and has written on feminism, intersectionality, the welfare state and racialized-gendered experience. Her publications include *Race, Gender and Social Welfare: Encounters in a Postcolonial Society* (2000), Polity Press; *Citizenship: Personal Lives and Social Policy* (2004), ed. Polity Press; 'Birthing racial difference: conversations with my mother and others' (2009), *Studies in the Maternal*; 'Unsafe travel: experiencing intersectionality and feminist displacements' (2013), *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*; 'Where might I find you: popular music and the internal space of the father' (2012), *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society*; 'Questions of presence' (2017), *Feminist Review*, 117; 'Black feminism and the challenge of object use' (2020), *Feminist Review* 126 (1). She works alongside artists and other creative practitioners to

explore, disrupt and offer alternatives to the violent and violating representations of Black and queer lives. She and Foluke Taylor were in conversation, discussing 'Black feminisms in the consulting room', as part of Confer's module *Women on the Couch* (2020). She, along with Barby Asante, Foluke Taylor and others, did a recorded reading of M. NourbeSe Philip's essay *Caribana: African Roots and Continuities* for the podcast *Dipsaus*, first available to coincide with the online version of London's annual Notting Hill Carnival in 2020. She also participated in NourbeSe Philip's *Zong! Global 2020*. She believes that intergenerational conversations, as part of the process of ancestral connection and guidance, are among the most urgent in these times. She is an Arsenal fan.

**Amanda Middleton** (she/her) is a white, queer, femme antipodean who thinks a lot about gender. For the last 20 years, she has fought passionately to put queer lives at the centre of knowledge making. Obsessively immersing herself in queer theory as a survival skill, she wonders how we, as queer people, can reshape our relationship to power and resist oppressive forces to take up more space. Initially, she qualified as a psychologist in Australia, and then as a family and systemic psychotherapist in the UK. A UKCP registered psychotherapist in independent practice, Amanda works primarily with relationships, gender, sex and sexuality, specializing within the LGBTIQ communities. She has extensive experience in the NHS and social care and has previously worked as a specialist in the areas of sex and sexuality, dual diagnosis, HIV and sexual health, drug and alcohol use and domestic violence. Her practice home is The Pink Practice, and she is also an associate lecturer at the Tavistock and Portman Trust, and supervisor at Gendered Intelligence.

**Igi Moon** (they/them) is a chartered psychologist and Fellow of the British Psychological Society (BPS). Igi's work focuses on psychotherapy, gender, sexuality and emotion. It is an interesting combination! They have published two edited books, *Counselling Ideologies: Queer Challenges to Heteronormativity* (Routledge, 2010) and *Feeling Queer or Queer Feelings: Radical Approaches to Counselling Sex, Sexualities and Gender* (Routledge, 2007). They are presently working on developing a Trans-therapeutic approach to working with trans and non-binary people and establishing a therapy clinic at Roehampton University. Igi represents the BPS on a number of committees, and they are presently involved with extending the Memorandum of Understanding against Conversion Therapies to protect trans and non-binary people. They are also an Associate Fellow at Warwick University in the Department of Sociology. Most of all they like playing with ideas. And the cat!

**Charles Neal** (he/him) has been connected with psychotherapy for 50 years. A breakdown aged six led to twelve years of formal psychoanalysis, with a series of further breakdowns and hospitalization in adolescence in a therapeutic

community. He specialized in developmental psychology when training to teach. After a few years' break from therapy, he saw humanistic therapists for over 35 years as a client and trainee, mainly at Spectrum Therapy in London. Since 1990, he has worked as an independent therapist, consultant and group facilitator in public and private sectors. His therapy practice has focused on sexualities, creativity and existential issues. Co-founder of the European Association for Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual Psychologies in the early 1990s, Charles founded and chaired its British wing. With Dominic Davies, he edited the Pink Therapy trilogy of practice handbooks (McGraw Hill, 1996, 2000) and later became Honorary Clinical Associate of the Pink Therapy organization, which arose from that. He held their Certificate of Advanced Gender and Sexual Diversities Therapy and, for 20 years, offered workshops on their training programmes. He was an editorial advisor for *We Are Family* queer families magazine and led the world's longest-running gay and bi men's therapy group, Coming Home, for 25 years. In 2014, he published *The Marrying Kind? Lives of Gay and Bi Men Who Married Women* (CreateSpace) and is now in semi-retirement. Although he now identifies as a gay man, 'maleness' has been a difficult identity since childhood. He lived a bisexual life for the first part of his volitional sexual and relational history. He is a survivor of sexual abuse, alcoholic parenting, violence and bullying as well as of very many accidents and illnesses. He deeply enjoyed being married to a woman for 12 years and feels massively grateful in having two, now adult, incredibly kind, talented, loving sons. For the past 40 years, he has lived in a gay partnership. His partner has a teenage son, and they now also enjoy grand-parenting two very special Kiwi girls together.

**Karen Pollock** (they/them) is a therapist offering online counselling, training and supervision. They have specialist training and experience of working with gender, sexuality and relationship diverse communities and have a Post Graduate Diploma in Gender, Sexuality and Relationship Diverse Therapy awarded by Pink Therapy. After studying philosophy at the LSE, Karen worked in southeast Asia for a number of years as a teacher and trainer before returning to the UK. Karen is especially proud of being an Academic Archers Research Fellow and their queering of the fictional character Shula from the British BBC Radio 4 soap opera *The Archers*. They recently contributed to the book *Non-Binary Lives, An Anthology of Intersecting Identities* and lead training across the UK and online for counsellors and others to improve access and inclusion for all.

**Beck Thom** (they/she) is a white, queer, non-binary human from the middle of the UK, who happens to have certified in sexological bodywork. Beck has said for a long time 'everything I touch turns to queer' and that describes the evolution of their work. Beck has a background in LGBT youth work and therapeutic social work, specializing in children with sexual behaviour problems, and they have somehow combined their endless fascination with human sexuality and sex education with



a queer community close to their heart. Quintimacy (Queer Intimacy) is their offering of one-to-one work and online and in-person workshops aimed exclusively at queer and trans people. They also promote queer and trans orientated somatic sexuality work, offering mentoring and training to other practitioners. Beck is ethically non-monogamous, kinky and neurodiverse, and believes that everyone, not only LGBTIQ people, benefits from queer sexology.

**Valentino Vecchietti** (she/they) is an award-winning writer, artist and equality campaigner. In 2019, she founded Intersex Equality Rights UK, an intersex-led organization which campaigns for equity and supports organizations to ethically include people with intersex variations. In May 2021, Valentino redesigned the Progress Pride flag to include the intersex community, creating the Intersex-Inclusive Pride flag.

**Jake Yearsley** (he/him) is a white, heteroflexible trans man living in the South West, UK. Working as an integrative counsellor and psychosexual therapist, he specializes in GSRD therapy, with a commitment to continually evolve and learn from the developing models of GSRD, in particular trans theory. Trans theory emphasizes the lived experience of a trans person as what matters most when working with this client group. Jake has worked therapeutically within trans communities for over ten years. This has included FTM London support group, the Metro in London, LGBT Switchboard, All Sorts project and the Clare Project, Brighton. Jake works in private practice and teaches GSRD therapy at the Minster centre, London. Jake says, 'Acknowledging my trans identity and history is important for me and the work I do. This honours who I am and the trans clients that I see. Not being open about who I am perpetuates the shame of being trans.'

**Neil Young** (he/they) is a white, English, working-class, queer man working with young people and adults in private practice as an integrative arts psychotherapist. Neil has 25 years' experience as an organizational consultant, facilitator, researcher and youth work manager specializing in the lived reality of diverse gender and sexual identities. Neil founded Mosaic LGBT Young Person's Trust [<https://www.mosaictrust.org.uk>], advised the first two Mayors of London on LGBT+ issues and wrote 'Young people: not straight, not narrow' (BACP University and College Counselling, 2017) [<https://www.bacp.co.uk/bacp-journals/university-and-college-counselling/september-2017/young-people-not-straight-not-narrow/>].

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This book is an infusion from the last few decades of life learnings, philosophies, mistakes, insights and wisdoms absorbed and digested from others – inside and outside of the therapy world – about the lived experiences of queer and trans people, underpinned by queer, intersectional feminist and decolonial thinking. There are many people who have helped me in my learning and whose ideas have contributed to the collective consciousness-raising, from my ancestors – especially Paul, who was denied life because of his variation in sex characteristics, and my queer grandmother, Marianne – to people that walk the earth today. The names that come to mind here are the closest to home and there are many people beyond this list who have taught and lifted me, including my family. We continue to learn, making missteps and more skilful steps along the way, so that we may also leave something for those who come after us. I'm grateful to those who came before me and who are also alongside me. Bay, our journey and growth together has changed my life. Juno, thank you for your luminous brilliance. Thank you to the friends, colleagues and others who have taught and continue to teach me so much: Aashna Pretish Raja-Helm, Shammi Kohli and Jamie Crabb, Anando Emryss, Anita Gaspar, Bird La Bird, Campbell X, Diane Torr, Michele Aaron, Michelle Butler, Fox Fisher, Harriet Mossop and Stillpoint Spaces' Other Women reading group, reading group, Jacky Fleming, Janice Acquah, Jennifer Fear, Judy Yellin, Kayza Rose, Kristiene Clarke, Vajralila (Lea), Leticia Valles, Louise Hide, Mary-Jayne Rust, Paris Lees, Dr Phyll Opoku-Gyimah, Shoshi Asheri, Toni Hogg, The Anti-Discrimination Focus' Mamood Ahmad and Sam Jamal, and everyone at London Friend. Thanks also to those from whom I have learned through their writings and practice in and out of the therapy room: Adrienne Rich, Angela Davis, Jane Elliot, Janina Fisher, Jessica Benjamin, Joan Nestle, John Bowlby, Karen Maroda, Kate Bornstein, Maggie Nelson, Patrick Califa, Peggy Mackintosh, Peggy Page, Pat Ogden and Ruella Frank. Thanks to my writing mentor, MJ Barker, without whom this book probably wouldn't exist. Christina Wipf Perry and Liz Wilson at Confer and Karnac, thank you for believing in me and this book and for answering my endless questions. To my clients with whom it is a privilege to work and learn. And to my brilliant, generous co-contributors, it has been a humbling joy to learn from your insights, knowledges and wisdoms. I am grateful for the work you all do in our communities. The world is better for your being in it.

## COVER ILLUSTRATION NOTE TO THE READER

The first rainbow flag was designed by gay rights activist Gilbert Baker in 1976. Each colour represented an aspect of the LGBT movement. In the decades since, the flag has evolved into the Intersex-Inclusive Pride Flag that adorns the cover of this book. A rough timeline of the flag's evolution includes American trans woman Monica Helms' transgender flag, created in 1999 and proudly carried on Pride marches all over America and worldwide in the twenty-plus years since. In 2013 Morgan Carpenter of Intersex Human Rights Australia designed the intersex flag featuring a purple circle, which symbolizes "wholeness and completeness," on a yellow background. In 2017, under the leadership of American civil rights activist Amber Hikes, Philadelphia's Office of LGBT Affairs developed the rainbow flag, incorporating black and brown stripes in reference to queer black, brown and people of colour. In 2018, Daniel Quasar redesigned the flag incorporating Helms' design, to include trans people, creating what is now known as the Progress Pride flag. In May 2021 Valentino Vecchietti of Intersex Equality Rights UK developed the Progress Pride flag further still, to create the Intersex-Inclusive Pride flag. By June 2021 it had gone viral on the internet and was internationally welcomed as the new Pride flag, reflecting the ongoing expansion of queer family.

# Introduction

by Jane Chance Czyzewska

In spring 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic and national lockdown started to change lives as we had lived them. Workplaces and meeting spaces emptied like caves. Days and weeks slowed down. Roads cleared of traffic birthed quiet and birdsong. Space opened up for a collaborative psychotherapeutic cross-fertilization. Following a conversation with Dr Gail Lewis (Chapter 1) in which she notes some of the ways that Black lesbian poet and author Audre Lorde's ideas seem to echo the work of white heterosexual male psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion, I re-read Lorde's essay 'Poetry is not a luxury' and was struck by the therapeutic message in her description of poetry. Reflecting on the form as a revelatory 'distillation of experience' that makes it possible to 'give name to the nameless so it can be thought' (2017, p. 8), Lorde's words sound not dissimilar to what white psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas conceived with his 'unthought known' or the exploration of what we unconsciously learn of the object world as infants and how we can harness it in the service of our psyches.

It wasn't the first time I had felt that Lorde's words convey something vitally important about how we can examine and regulate our emotions. So, it's not only poetry that is a vital place for self-reflection and understanding, as I believe therapy can also be, but also decolonial, Black lesbian feminist, queer and trans perspectives that can bring richness to our profession, a richness that often goes unacknowledged or is even rejected as 'too political', as if the therapy encounter is a politics-free space.

It is because of the politics inherent in our lives, the inequalities that are endemic to it, that therapy, however, *can* often be a luxury and also a privilege, especially for those in the LGBTIQ+ and QTPOC communities. Therapeutic outcomes for these client groups also vary, perhaps sometimes because of this unwillingness to accept that all of our identities are politicized under white cis hetero-patriarchy.

Indeed, Crawford *et al.* (2018) found that people from sexual and ethnic minorities were more likely to report experiencing lasting bad effects from therapy. Rimes *et al.* (2019, p. 577) also found that 'compared to heterosexual women, lesbian and bisexual women had higher final-session severity for depression, anxiety,

and functional impairment and increased risk of not attaining reliable recovery in depression/anxiety or functioning'. Similar results were found among bisexual men. In research by Stonewall (Bachman & Gooch, 2018) one in twenty LGBT people and one in five trans people reported they had been pressured to access services to change or suppress their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Therapists already have an ethical obligation not to practice so-called "conversion therapy" but these harmful practices do take place. Further, as this book goes to press, many therapists are expressing their opposition to the government decision to exclude trans people from the ban on so-called "conversion therapy" practices despite the fact that more recent statistics indicate that trans people are twice as likely as cisgender LGB people to be offered or subjected to conversion practices (BCTC, 2022).

Anecdotally, I have heard from QTPOC individuals in therapy that it can be as much of a lottery to find therapists who are able to work with embodied racialized trauma given its neglect in training institutions alongside the lack of rigorous work around whiteness. The same can be said for finding therapists who have been well prepared for working with gender and sexuality diversity. And as Amanda Middleton (Chapter 7) notes, there are no guarantees about cultural competency regarding these intersectional markers. Both Sabah Choudrey (Chapter 14) and Robert Downes (Chapter 3) observe that there simply isn't enough thought given to marginalized identities in most therapy trainings. The research on therapy outcomes made me think again about the relative paucity of therapeutic literature available to those who work with clients from LGBTIQ+ communities and about who creates this literature and how knowledge is generated. This book aims to contribute something towards filling the gap of knowledge that exists in text form and we could do with several more volumes still. Sabah Choudrey launched their book *Supporting Trans People of Colour: How to Make Your Practice Inclusive* (2022) earlier this year, and Dominic Davies (Chapter 15) with Silva Neves are currently updating the ground-breaking Pink Therapy volumes first published in 2000.

One of the queering practices of this book is that, as editor, I have worked collaboratively, asking participants to reflect on non-normative thinking and practice in a variety of therapeutic situations. A journalist before I became a therapist, I started by speaking with each contributor, not setting the agenda other than to ask them to decide on three or four key considerations to share with fellow colleagues about their work and experiences as therapists and therapists in training. Many of the books we read as trainees and beyond elevate the medical model approach with its diagnostic categories which, although undeniably useful, can also lack the nuance of the actual people we are and of those who come to our therapy rooms. So, with some contributors, topics known to be of interest to them were suggested, while others brought their own preferred talking points. In some chapters, I was present as an enquiring other mind and in others I was mostly

absent. When Bay De Veen suggested writing an imagined conversation with a supervisor, I was reminded of the Black feminist practice of fabulation and Saidiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (2019) and of Jose Esteban Munoz's *Cruising Utopia* (2009) and the importance of creating stories about the future that act as a kind of springboard to the worlds we dream of living in. So, this book is a collection of conversations, some real and some imagined. I have found them all to be thought-provoking, healing and challenging and, although I have spent almost all my working and personal life in queer community, the ideas contained in these chapters show me there is always so much more to learn.

The normative conventions of discourse that exist in the multiplicity of cultures we navigate infuse many of our profession's theories and belief systems and they also frame and reproduce the inequalities that impact not only LGBTIQ+ therapists' lives but also those of our clients. Which is to say that those who hold positions of power, either in social status, in publishing, in institutions or in communities, including in the fields of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, have until recently preferred so-called 'experts' to write and share knowledge in a format that aligns with academic structures and strictures. This form of knowledge creation and dissemination can often use language that is inaccessible and, although there are some ways in which technical jargon can help us to understand the detail of clients' experiences, these are not necessarily what we would share with clients, even if they too happen to be therapists. Indeed our field's rarefied language is one of the many ways in which the asymmetry of power in the therapeutic relationship can be evidenced, but there are others, especially so if the therapist is operating from within a framework that doesn't consider how the positionality of the person in front of them might impact them, and this is where the conversations and essays in this book come into their own. What could happen between therapists or clients if they were to speak together and not be bound by the conventions of normative therapeutic culture? Does not the therapeutic space hold a kind of magic that is born from implicit and explicit conversations between therapist and client?

When I was studying to be a counsellor and then psychotherapist, I would have loved to have been accompanied by a book which offered a sense of eavesdropping on the most fascinating queer clinicians, and which reflected the dynamic nature of the therapeutic relationship. How might a collection of conversations in book form mirror and support some of the kinds of conversations or reflections we have both with clients and between peers and supervisors? Such conversations we know can be life-shaping and world-changing, as well as modelling of the queer and decolonizing philosophies that underpin this book which reject the notion of the therapeutic 'expert', drawn as it is from what Robert Downes calls 'Empire Mind'. So, the conversing subjects of this book have a range of professional, lived and reflective experiences to offer and share and their insights refashion the limitations of the way we are taught about each other, as well as those who are othered. There

can be a tendency, even in therapeutic books, to remain in an intellectual register, even when covering deeply emotive subjects. This can be a particular risk when dealing with themes of gender and sexuality, given the ways in which marginalised groups have often been pathologized and dismissed by associating us with feelings and bodies rather than rationality and minds. In this book contributors were invited to express themselves as fully as possible, and to include the deep range of feelings that circulate around the issues and experiences being discussed. An intersectional vein runs through this book because, despite living in a society that does its best to subsume the complex subjectivities of race, class, ability, gender, cis or transness, sexuality and faith, we know that these markers of difference impact significantly on how each of us moves through the world. The chapters are ordered in such a way as to make it possible to dip in and out as time and interest permits. If you are unfamiliar with this territory, hopefully the first two chapters introduce some of the ideas that many other chapters are building on.

Lorde wrote prodigiously about the importance of recognizing how our differences must be acknowledged and leveraged as a source of strength and pointed to the limitations of living in 'the European mode' which posits that life is 'a problem to be solved' (2017, p. 8) and ideas – rather than the body – are the route to freedom. I understand the space of this book, which moves around queer and queered bodies, as my relationship to my own body and ergo identity has shifted during its creation. Alongside my first conversations in 2020, I also started to explore the shape and contours of my body through conversations with my therapist and the significant others in my life. These conversations moved me from considering myself as a cis queer woman considering a breast reduction to a gender non-conforming person electing to have chest surgery and whose identity is not – perhaps was never – in alignment with the gender assigned to me at birth based on my biology. So, in some conversations, keen-eyed readers will notice that I refer to myself, and am related to, as cis and, in Chapter 5, written closer to the publishing deadline, I have shifted to a trans position, moving from Jane to Chance. I understand transness to be, in the Rocheian sense, 'a new space. Uncontrolled and uncontrollable' by Euro-centric white patriarchy, and 'a destination' (2019, p. 255). Trans as in a way of being that is 'beautifully cut adrift from the endless layers of performativity that have weighed me down my whole life', (2019, p. 11). May we and our clients also find such lightness in our ways of being.

## CHAPTER 1

# Queering the Black feminist psychoanalytic

*Gail Lewis PhD*

We are embedded in and socialized by colonial history and culture, and much of mainstream therapy is based on Euro-centric theories that replicate this same colonial history. This mindset is not inclusive of other cultures or ethnicities. On the rare occasions that other cultures are acknowledged in the literature or elsewhere in our field, they are often based on the racist stereotypes that have existed since the early days of our profession at the turn of the twentieth century. As sensitive clinicians, we need to interrogate and investigate how these ideas show up in therapeutic practice. There are, however, notable exceptions, says Dr Gail Lewis, who offers new ways to think about what colonial era psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion can offer to queer white and QTPOC clients.

### Wilfred Bion and Audre Lorde: queer bedfellows

**JANE CHANCE CZYZSELSKA:** I'm really interested in what you find valuable in Bion's work. I'm curious about how you queer or decolonize his thinking. I want to know about a queer Black feminist analytic.

**GAIL LEWIS:** I'm a Kleinian. I was trained at the Tavistock. I align to it, it makes sense to me in its own terms, but it makes sense to me in the way that any learning that I've done through institutions and the fields of theory and practice they teach, you know, pedagogical practice, makes sense to me, in that they *all*, all of them, come from a framework of modernity, and modernity produced the hierarchies of value of



personhoods and instituted all the normative subject positions that we could occupy.

## Theory and practice come from a framework which produced hierarchies of value of personhoods

**JC:** Yes, true.

**GL:** Including obviously the racialized one that I think is quite primary, I think that gender comes out of that because I think it's also central to racial capitalism. So just as we can really be critical of any mode of psychanalytic, psychotherapeutic learning, all the schools we went to – even now, though there are attempts now to make changes – they are not really fundamentally trying to change, I don't think. I mean, some people in them are making inroads but is that really radically different from anthropology, from sociology, philosophy, history or literature studies? I mean, I don't know whether anything is innocent or more innocent in one disciplinary area than others. We can do our own hierarchies of value and say, 'Oh well, the psychoanalytic orthodoxies are more toxic, more about instilling the normative than the stuff we get in the university, or in the school that's guarded by police', and you know all of that, so I'm aligned in that way, in that I've learned from all of them and I'm suspicious of all of them.

**JC:** Right, OK. So, under racial capitalism, the economic set-up is structured to privilege white people and that makes race a primary subject position which creates further hierarchies – is that what you're saying?

**GL:** It is the economic set-up as *part* of the whole social set-up – a 'social' set-up that includes the psychic, cultural, epistemological 'set-ups'. And within that are the 'ontological' set-ups – the range of subjectivities and senses of self that are possible. Racial capital is a structure/manifestation of the organization of the world through the prisms and knowledge frame and hierarchies of value of human and non-human life. Within that there are categories of gender but increasingly – in the wake of Atlantic enslavement, I think – gender is