Star Queen for Autonomy and Defense

An analysis of trans liberation, class struggle, and Black revolt

Nsámbu Za Suékama

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In 2020, the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic interrupted everything about business as usual under capitalism, save the threat of Black revolt. Precincts burned, prison abolitionism soared in prominence, businesses were looted, mobilization reached international dimensions, and for weeks on end, despite violent repression from the state and non-state actors, the entire country was consumed by a red hot summer. But by the fall of that eventful year, the great upheaval was dying down. As the Biden/Harris campaign picked up steam, so did right-wing backlash. Figures such as Michelle Bachman, a former GOP Presidential candidate and Republican congresswoman summed up the reactionary grasp of the uprising in an interview with a Christian television network: "trans-gender Black Marxists are seeking the overthrow of the United States."

Hyperbolic as that claim may have been, legislative and legal campaigns against Critical Race Theory and "gender ideology"—all collapsed under the pejorative of wokeness or cancel culture—consolidated wins soon after. And despite the ostensibly progressive Biden administration's support of LGBTQ+ rights, it appeared that a reactionary fringe, associated with the white patriarchal angst about PC culture and multiculturalism that decorated the 1990s, had suddenly reshaped the contemporary American political climate.

It is idealism, however, to regard the reactionary fervor following the George Floyd/Breonna Taylor Uprising in simple terms of the moral agendas of backwater communities. Such an interpretation is a marketing ploy for liberal and social democratic electoral candidates. The entire deluge of regressive measures, from abortion restrictions to pro-police funding campaigns and the rolling back of affirmative action, is not a function of ignorance or false consciousness, nor are these skirmishes in a culture war rooted in economic anxiety. This would be to misunderstand a harrowing truth George Jackson delivered on the nature of the American empire: reform and fascism are two sides of the same coin.

Founded on slavery and settler colonialism, the US must regulate the family and household, which anchor how its property and labor relations are to be embodied. The uprising represented a threat to just such a configuration of embodiment. Recall that 2020's rebellious activities are indebted to the near-decade of mobilizations that preceded them, which were themselves associated with queer-led critiques of the prison industrial complex. Racial capitalist property and labor relations are embodied under conditions of patriarchal coercion, a phenomenon I term "imbrication." An account of imbrication better explains the historical conjuncture in which antidiscrimination laws are overturned, nearly 589 anti-LGBT bills are introduced across the United States in just the year 2023 alone, and abortion rights and affirmative action are struck down all so soon after the Floyd-Taylor Uprising.

Imbrication 101

Imbrication is a concept that allows us to identify precedents of this current moment across US history. As I theorize it, imbrication refers to how western bourgeois social relations exist within a network of corporeal and territorial possession. This network is imbricated, or overlaps at the edges (the term is elsewhere used to describe fish scales, shingles on a roof, etc.). The network by which modes of domination and exploitation overlap anchors how populations embody relationships to the state, property, and labor. It is this unity of embodiment and abstract relations that stabilizes the dynamics involved in capitalist society's production and reproduction.

Consider the story of the self-identified "queen of drag" named William Dorsey Swann. From Channing Gerard Joseph's scholarship, we learn that Swann was a Maryland-based gay house mother and former slave who led a group of rebels and ballroom participants in resistance to police repression after an 1888 arrest for "female impersonation."[1] This is probably the first documented LGBT anti-police protest in the US record, foreshadowing what would occur in the mid-twentieth century with uprisings such as the Compton Cafeteria Riots and the Stonewall Rebellion. Later, in 1896, Swann was convicted for "keeping a disorderly house," that is, prostitution. Swann had to request a pardon from President Grover Cleveland after he was sentenced.

Swann's motherhood of a drag house should be noted here. Today's gay/trans mothers are painted as "groomers" for taking care of the unhoused and foster youth regularly ejected from the traditional family household by their phobic family members. And as with Swann House, contemporary trans/queer activism must negotiate the parameters set out by the state even as the law disproportionately denies legal protection to trans or queer people (for example, in "trans panic" defenses that can exonerate transphobic violence).

Swann's apprehension by the state through anti-prostitution laws has contemporary parallels in the US. Practices of survival undertaken especially by underclass Black trans folks (who are disproportionately houseless or housing insecure and jobless or job insecure) are intensely criminalized. This is seen most starkly in the case of self-defense against attackers, as with Cece McDonald or Ky Peterson. Bathroom bills and anti-woke pedagogical reforms will only exacerbate this problem, inciting attacks on a population unfairly characterized as predatory, and which is then further criminalized for acts of self-defense.

The theory of imbrication shows why Swann's house, like contemporary Black QTGNC subcultures, must be surveilled and curtailed under racial capitalism. From a Marxist feminist standpoint, the processes of economic production and social reproduction in a bourgeois society are interpenetrated through the nuclear household and its binary-sex configuration of the body. And as Black feminist thought makes clear, this production and reproduction of bourgeois society into interpenetrated, interlocking modes of exploitation rests atop "atypical" configurations of the body—those that lie beyond the home or the binary-sex division of labor. Lastly, the coercion of household and non-household configurations is a consequence of a nexus which threads together the ideological and material/practical levels, and which is interpenetrated with so-called premodern nexuses expressing different temporal or historical relations.[2] The nexus exhibits what I term a valency, a combining or displacing power, exerting constraints and possibilities for bodily autonomy, and anchoring how state and non-state actors may organize or disorganize human activity.

The New Afrikan prison revolutionary Sanyika Shakur used the term grand patriarchy to describe what I see as this nexus of substructural and superstructural relations. For Shakur, grand patriarchy "threads" together all the "major isms" (modes of domination):

> Class, gender, religion, race and bourgeois law—homophobia and heterosexism too—are all created of patriarchy. These, to look at it in another way, are the walls constructed in the global mansion of patriarchy to keep the Great Father safely se-

[1] Channing Gerard Joseph, "The First Drag Queen Was a Former Slave," *The Nation*, January 31, 2020, `https://www.thenation.com/article/society/drag-queen-slave-ball`.

[2] Sanyika Shakur, "Pathology of Patriarchy: A Search for Clues at the Scene of the Crime," Kersplebdeb, March 2, 2013, `https://kersplebedeb.com/posts/pathology-of-patriarchy`.

> questered away from those buried under the floor, in the closet, used as domestics, maintenance workers and beasts of burden.

Through the metaphor of a global mansion, with figures tucked away in different parts of the house, or forced into different roles, Shakur reveals how grand patriarchy configures a range of "in-home embodied positions" in colonial-class society. He calls patriarchy a "network" that anchors the labor relegations of the bourgeois system, as well as the rights to private property and capital accumulation guaranteed therein. For him, there are "outside-home forms of domination" tied to this process as well, a global phenomenon with particularities specific to each region (and which shift over time). In one phase, the network yields reactionary politics regarding family structure, parent–child relations, and sexuality or sexual expression to anchor the capture of land and capture of the body. In another phase, however, the network can accommodate a politics of inclusivity, integration, and assimilation. Sanyika Shakur describes these phases as follows:

> Under old colonialism gender outlaws were smashed on by church and state. Sharp shooting ideologues riled up the masses to reject "ab-normality" for morals superior to such "deviance." Old colonialism, the general representative of patriarchy, used to push a line of gender authoritarianism… The U.S. ruling class has, in its new and enlightened age of colonialism, come out as the main protector of civil rights against sexual, racial and religious discrimination. It bills itself as the force to make all "citizens" equal. Of course the paradox here is what We must focus on to find the truth. You see because as the ruling class goes about claiming to be interested in protecting civil rights it is, in actuality, promoting and reinforcing patriarchy. It's the tactic of problem-reaction-solution.

For Shakur, both authoritarianism and equalization are threading configurations of the body. This co-occurrence of progressive and conservative forms of in-home and outside-home truncation anchors how relations to law, property, and labor, are embodied. And this is how patriarchy can maintain empire, stabilizing the production and reproduction of capitalist society.

What Shakur doesn't describe, however, is that as this patriarchal imbrication occurs, there is also a disimbrication of the valency exhibited by pre-modern substructural/superstructural nexuses. Dis-imbrication of the combining and displacing power exhibited by alternative nexing forms is central to how the conjugal unit, the nuclear family, the household configuration, the gender binary, and sexual antagonisms all impose limits on bodily autonomy and possibilities for social organization.

Lineal Nexuses and the Black Family

One example of what I speak of as premodern or alternative nexuses is known as lineality. In *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Walter Rodney identifies a connection between lineality and the communal mode of production:

> the predominant principle of social relations was that of family and kinship associated with communalism. Every member of an African society had his position defined in terms of relatives on his mother's side and on his father's side. Some

> societies placed greater importance on matrilineal ties and others on patrilineal ties. Those things were crucial to the daily existence of a member of an African society, because land (the major means of production) was owned by groups such as the family or clan—the heads of which were parents and those yet unborn.[3]

In these African communalistic modes of production, the extended family engages in shared labor and shared distribution of product for the immediate need of the collective. How the body gets organized in reproductive relations is a structural consequence of the overall clan basis for land stewardship. The stability of such patterns of reproduction is anchored in an emphasis on either enatic (matrilineal) or agnatic (patrilineal) ties, according to Rodney. These ties link the heads of kinship groups with progeny, extended relatives, venerated ancestors, and the unborn.

Here, lineality is distinct from what is typically thought of as gender. Its configuration of the body is not alienating through in-home or outside-home truncation as with the modern patriarchy.

The anthropologist Laura Fortunato argues that lineality is not solely about biological inheritance from progenitor to offspring, but rather transmission of cultural belonging.[4] The lineal thread can also anchor how other features of society are embodied, such as the transmission of skills, roles, status, the inheritance of property, the distribution or arrangement of leadership and authority, marital and familial patterns of settlement, and more. Lineal forms are not just pertinent to analysis of communalism and kinship structure but demonstrate a combining and displacing power within the dynamics of social change or social stability. In Mande traditions, for example, a patrilineal thread can be observed, known as fadenya, or father-childness. Fadenya is part of a dyadic configuration of embodiment alongside badenya or mother-childness. According to Karp and Bird's *Explorations in African Systems of Thought*, lineality structures social activity in Mande tradition as follows:

> On the fadenya axis actions are oriented toward individual reputation and renown. On the badenya axis they are oriented toward the total set of rights and obligations provided by the social groups to which the actions are affiliated.[5]

Mande lineality concerns economic questions related to a polygynous culture, stabilizing certain inheritance customs between father and progeny; it also concerns non-economic implications for social activity that are threaded by those customs. In the United States, Mande lineal forms threaded the practices of resistance among some West African captives brought as slaves. According to Cedric Robinson's *Black Movements in America*, slaves in eighteenth century Louisiana

> had been brought initially from Whydah and then principally from Senegambia. With them came the agrarian and textile sciences to cultivate rice, corn, cotton, and indigo. By the late 1720s, when for a time Louisiana became the sole disembarkation point for the Senegambian slave trade in Bambara, the African workers also brought

[3] Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, London: Bogle-L'ouverture Publications, 1972, p. 36.

[4] Laura Fortunato, "Lineal kinship organization in cross-specific perspective," Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society, Biological Sciences 374:1780, July 2019, `https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2019.0005`.

[5] Ivan Karp and Charles S. Bird, *Explorations in African Systems of Thought*, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987, p. 14.

> a tradition of resistance. Largely constituted by those enslaved as a result of the Bambaran imperial wars associated with the rise of the Segu Empire, the new laborers transplanted the Bambara heroic tradition.

To explain the Bambara heroic tradition, Robinson cites literature on the fadenya–badenya dyad. Because of an interpenetration of feudal/imperial contradictions endogenous to continental African societies, with the exogenous force of Western imperialism, chattel slavery, and settler colonialism, such lineal forms articulated themselves as a structurally subversive tendency. Robinson illuminates how the Bamana peoples in particular "organized rebellions and conspiracies to revolt at every link in the commerce between Africa and Louisiana."[6] In this view, tendencies toward individualism traditionally structured through fadenya (and toward group obligation via badenya) were more relevant to rebellious activity than the bourgeois racial-sexual division of labor. Robinson even goes so far as to cite reports about a series of revolts aboard a ship called L'Annibal, during which enslaved women were confused for enslaved men in response to their attacks on the sub-lieutenant in command. Thus, lineality and not patriarchy exhibited valency in the possibilities for revolting slaves' expressions of bodily autonomy.

The combining and displacing power of lineal forms towards racial capitalism and grand patriarchy did not stop at the slave ship. The dialectic of patriarchal imbrication and lineal disimbrication structured the plantation, and continued even after emancipation. Dr. Tiffany Lethabo King points out that, during the civil rights struggle, it was "amidst the backdrop of Black urban rebellion" that Daniel Patrick Moynihan's scholarship on "The Negro Family" was introduced.[7] The so-called Moynihan Report, published in 1965, is described by Dr. Lethabo King as "the sociologist's attempts to police and surveil unruly Black urban life through producing the 'Black family' as an object of knowledge and a problem for national security." The Moynihan Report characterized the last century's inner-city social unrest as a criminal pathology, blamed on paternal absenteeism (fathers not present in the home), a problem which was further traced to so-called "matriarchy." Black communal headship, organized through the matriline, was represented within scholarship, media narratives, and discourse on the Black family as a negative counterpart to white family structure. This myth of matriarchy helped to fuel the carceral repression of subversive political movements of the long '60s/'70s. As the aegis of a drug war was used to surveil and disrupt Black struggles of that time, narratives about a criminal pathology traced to "broken" family structure helped anchor the coherence of these measures. By the time we get to the '80s and '90s, with the growth in mass incarceration, criminalization of Black working-class communities extended far beyond those engaging in movement activity or even in crimes of survival.

Lineal disimbrication was at work here. Black family structures aren't broken but rather nonnuclear, not merely defined by the conjugal unit or the household configuration. Research shows that Black children have multiple kinds of parental figures in their lives, not just blood parents,[8] a phenomenon that is colloquially lauded in adages like "it takes a village to raise a child." Patriarchal imbrication therefore creates the figure of the welfare queen and other narratives about

[6] Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Movements in America*, New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 17.

[7] Tiffany Lethabo King, "Black 'Feminisms' and Pessimism: Abolishing Moynihan's Negro Family," Theory & Event, 21: 1, January 2018, pp. 68-87.

[8] Jo Jones and William D. Mosher, "Fathers' Involvement With Their Children: United States, 2006–2010." National Health Statistics Reports, 71: 20, 2013.

Black women, or the absent father and other narratives about Black men. These tropes come to characterize Black culture more generally in pursuit of increased repression of "atypical" family configurations. Civil sectors, social and public services, and the welfare system in particular allowed the State and ruling class forces to surveil non-nuclear forms of familial organization by triangulating them with negative social/economic outcomes and criminalizing the activities associated with variant forms of parental embodiment. A nexus drawing together ideological and practical concerns is at work here, behind the scandal of the single mother and her fatherless children, her criminal children, her children who "lacked home training," and would not "pull themselves up by their bootstraps," who were more concerned with "playing victim" and "mooching off the system" and "breaking the law" and "looking for a handout" and "pulling the race card." Each narrative proves incredibly useful for identifying potential threats to the US Empire, framing them as anyone not reared or raised properly, i.e., in accordance with white, Christian bourgeois gender norms.

Valency and Gender-Expansive Resistance

The dialectic of patriarchal imbrication does not just involve the disimbrication of lineal forms of kinship. We may hypothesize the existence of other social forms that thread configurations of the body at the nexus of the substructure and superstructure. Terry Rey's *The Priest and the Prophetess* describes a Bakongo-derived tradition of revolt which emerges from an interpenetration of Christian gender ontology (centered on the Virgin Mary) with indigenous configurations of sexual embodiment and of royalty/status. Describing the tradition as a "militaristic form of transatlantic Kongolese Marianism," Rey highlights diverse forms of resistance, from Kimpa Vita (in the Congo) to Romaine-La-Prophetesse (in Haiti), and to the Stono Rebellion (South Carolina), each of which involve Africans who syncretized Catholicism with Kongo-derived organizations of spiritual leadership.[9]

This correlation between African spiritual leadership and Black subversive traditions, especially when juxtaposed with the Western configuration of the home and binary-gender labor relegations, emerged again in the life of Marsha P. Johnson. Marsha, the co-founder of Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries and veteran of the Stonewall Uprising, was once described by Sylvia Rivera as having come over to her house "dressed like the Virgin Mary, in white and blue… carrying a wooden cross and a Bible." Marsha described herself as "married" to Jesus, and along with Sylvia and the other STAR queens, often prayed to and venerated various saints as part of their resistance praxis.[10]

The possibility of organizing modern notions of LGBT struggles through the spiritual nexus of indigenous gender-expansive traditions is also present in how modern Black Brazilian travestis honor the life of Francisco Manicongo. Pathologized in Brazil under the Portuguese Inquisition, Manicongo's gender expansivity was tied to customs practiced by the jimbandaa and the chibados—two of the many gender expansive priestly and political roles configured within Kongo-Angola cultures. Modern Black Brazilian travestis are able to see overlap between Francisco Manicongo's pathologization and their own experiences of transmisogyny because of how

[9] Terry Rey, *The Priest and the Prophetess*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 111.

[10] Sylvia Rivera, "Queens in Exile, The Forgotten Ones," in *Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries: Survival, Revolt, and Queer Antagonist Struggle*, Bloomington, IN: Untorelli Press, 2011, p. 44.

the valency exhibited by indigenous African spiritual forms organizes possibilities for "variant" gender embodiment.[11]

In a similar vein, Malidoma Patrice Somé links his critique of Western homophobia to his respect for the spiritual role of "gatekeepers" in his Dagara society.[12] Through Somé's view, we see that Dagara social continuity is configured via an emphasis on "spiritual energy." The valency exhibited by notions of spiritual energy is a consequence of uperstructural/substructural nexuses endogenous to various premodern societies. Each is correlated to expansive gender/sexual embodiments; but when these become interpenetrated with the capitalist state that was imposed under modern colonialism, slavery, and imperialism, we see patriarchal imbrication. Somé's gatekeepers become rearticulated as homosexual in a demonizing sense.

The demonization of gender variance with regard to African spirituality is a consequence of the same substructural/superstructural nexus which is passing anti-LGBT laws on the continent today. Many such measures are pushed by US evangelical churches, who are now campaigning around parents' rights and fetal rights, drawing from the Southern Strategy born of the Confederacy's focus on states' rights. The latter euphemism was about maintaining property rights, property including slaves. Racial capitalism and patriarchal imbrication go hand in hand, as becomes apparent in C. Riley Snorton's *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*. There we learn that a noted increase in reports and media of so-called "cross-dressing"—regardless of the actual gender/sexual orientation of the individuals in question—correlates to the passage of fugitive slave laws.[13]

Further, the valency of patriarchal imbrication in maintaining antebellum racial/class relations extended beyond the repression of "crossdressing" fugitives. Mary Jones was a trans woman who shows up in the historical record in the 1830s and late 1840s several times, referred to egregiously as "the Man Monster" and "Peter Sewally." She was arrested for theft at one point, and for her expansive gender embodiment at another. Media representations conflated her sexual expression with her supposed crimes; it was suggested that her identity was merely a guise to aid in stealing from upper class white men in New York City. Various salacious claims were made about her to cement these narratives, including the idea that Mary Jones would slip pieces of meat between her legs so as to "trick" sex-buyers into thinking she was a cisgender-perisex woman (this earned her the disgusting nickname of "Beefsteak Pete").

Yet, in Mary Jones's own words, she had always dressed in women's clothes while among the "people of her own color."[14] Having originated in the South, Mary Jones gave brief descriptions of her experience, though she was lampooned in court and laughed off. Sentenced to five years in prison, the material interests of wealthy white New Yorkers imbricated the specific ways Mary Jones was not only criminalized but misgendered, scorned, and painted as predatory. Yet, in Mary Jones's descriptions of the communal basis for how she dressed we also see a non-hegemonic nexing-form, which threaded alternative configurations of embodiment in her upbringing, and

[11] "Francisco Manicongo," National Black Justice Coalition, March 9, 2018, `https://beenhere.org/2018/03/09/francisco-manicongo`.

[12] Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe, eds. *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998, p. 89.

[13] C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

[14] Riah Lee Kinsey, "The People vs Mary Jones: Rethinking Race, Sex and Gender through 19th-Century Court Records," NYC Department of Records & Information Services, August 5, 2022, `https://www.archives.nyc/blog/2022/8/3/the-people-vs-mary-jones`.

thus organized potentials for the variant expression of bodily autonomy she carried into her adulthood.

This interpretation offers insight into the life of Cathay Williams as well. Though assigned female at birth, Williams joined the Union army as a man (under the name William Cathay) and remained in the military under his chosen gender well after the war ended. William Cathay was discharged, however, once his assigned sex was "discovered" during a medical examination.[15] Cathay's story should be viewed in light of the imbrication of material interests in the Union. As Black transfeminist theorist g reminds us in their remarks on escaped Black slaves and the Union army:

> During the Civil War, whenever the Union entered, claimed, and occupied Confederate strongholds in the South with slave populations, these slaves would often flee their plantations to find safety behind Union lines. Initially, they were denied access to Union strongholds as, contrary to the mythos of American moral virtue, the Union's interests concerning the "freedom" of slaves was negligible. It was not until they recognized the utility of escaped Black slaves both in disrupting the Confederate economy through the General Strike and taking upon their labor for its own use, that the enslaved were accepted behind Union lines, as famously pointed out by W. E. B. Du Bois in his *Black Reconstruction*. What is most relevant to note here is both that this labor was the condition for escaped slaves gaining food and shelter from Union camps and that this employment rested upon the slaves being "able-bodied." Becoming "free" [was] tied to one's capacity and "ability" to perform labor.[16]

Despite the claims to be fighting for emancipation, Union leadership and rank-and-file directed racism and strict forms of discipline toward Black soldiers. According to scholar Jonathan Lande, this often meant that quite a few Black soldiers would desert their posts, essentially becoming fugitives to the Union just as many had been historically fugitives/escapees from the slave system.[17] This was because the Union's focus was on control of able-bodied labor and not Black freedom. In this coercion of how labor relations are embodied, we detect patriarchal imbrication, and thereby can understand the necessity for a disimbrication of "crossdressing" embodied by soldiers like William Cathay. Additionally, we might also observe here a non-hegemonic nexus and the valency it exhibits in alternative organizations of Black masculinity. The subversive potentials in Cathay's gender variance may very well have been threaded by the same social form that organizes the antebellum question "Am I not a Man, and a Brother?" or its civil rights era assertion, "I am a Man"—both of which guided Black men's participation in struggles for emancipation and for the franchise.

Finally, we might examine the life of a woman who identified as "of double sex" named Frances Thompson. Formerly enslaved, Frances Thompson was a physically disabled Memphis resident whose community was torn apart by racial violence in 1866. The lynch mob took advantage of Frances Thompson as well as others. Frances Thompson brought her testimony and that of about

[15] Monica Roberts, "Cathay Willams-TG Buffalo Soldier," TransGriot, February 28, 2006, https://transgriot.blogspot.com/2006/02/cathay-willams-tg-buffalo-soldier.html.

[16] g, "Disabled Black Slaves and 'Free Labor': Towards a More Comprehensive Disability Justice," RedVoice, Oct 29, 2021, https://redvoice.news/disabled-black-slaves-and-free-labor-towards-a-more-comprehensive-disability-jus

[17] Jonathan Lande, "Freedom, Race, and Desertion in America's Civil War," Black Perspectives, May 9, 2016, https://www.aaihs.org/freedom-race-and-desertion-in-americas-civil-war.

200 women and men in her community to the court. But doubt was cast on her claims. During this period, there were wider campaigns in the South by which state and non-state forces sought to discount any claims about white supremacist and gender violence. This was so as to conceal the participation by both legal and extra-legal actors in the violence against gender-marginalized folks like Frances Thompson, and against the Black community as a whole.

Frances Thompson's trans womanhood was used to cast her as dishonest in a particular way. State actors regularly arrested her for "crossdressing," and accused her of "running a brothel."[18] Here, we see a patriarchal imbrication holding a great deal of valency, one that not only disorganized entire communities and subjected their bodies to violence, but displaced their capacity to attain legal recourse. Through Frances Thompson's participation with her whole community, including other women, in activism, we might transect the valency of a non-hegemonic nexus, and identify how it threads more expansive configurations of Black women's embodiment, organizing potentials for transfeminist presence in racial-sexual struggles. Thus, we reveal how questions of sexual violence that have guided historical Black feminist struggles with the law and representation (including #MeToo) are as relevant to Frances Thompson's struggle and that of other trans Black women as they are in cis-Black-women-led movements.

Conclusion

The theory of imbrication is a transfeminist material analysis. It draws from the insights of that cohort of working-class and lumpen Black and brown trans/gay/lesbian militants in the twentieth century United States who launched what we today call Pride. In the heat of rebellion against the police, street queens like Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, Zazu Nova, and others arose. In an interview called "Rapping with a Street Transvestite Action Revolutionary," we hear from Marsha:

> I'd like to see a lot more transvestites come to STAR meetings, but it's hard to get in touch with transvestites. They're at these bars, and they're looking for husbands. There's a lot of transvestites who are very lonely, and they just go to bars to look for husbands and lovers, just like gay men do. When they get married, they don't have time for STAR meetings.

Marsha's words offer an implicit critique of the institution of monogamy. Her commentary on how transvestites when married don't have time for STAR, and how pursuit of marriage makes revolutionary organizing difficult, suggests the view that popular concern with lovers is a limiting factor on street transvestites' resistance.[19]

A critique of monogamy was not something the rest of the twentieth century gay movement agreed with, however. Very often, these campaigns relied on appeals to the idea that one's sexuality did not prevent one from being able to work or marry like anyone else. Thus, the configuration of embodiment correlated to specific conjugal and labor relations would become the primary frame of reference in the popular understanding of LGBT struggles. This is a politics

[18] "A case of sexual violence during Reconstruction, 1866," The American Yawp Reader, `https://www.americanyawp.com/reader/reconstruction/a-case-of-sexual-violence-during-reconstruction-1866`.

[19] Marsha P. Johnson, "Rapping with a Street Transvestite Action Revolutionary," in *The Stonewall Reader*, New York: Penguin Books, 2019, p. 298.

known as homonationalism and it is an exclusionary consequence of patriarchal imbrication. Its focus was on inclusion within bourgeois relations of production and reproduction. Not only did it expand the threads of the hegemonic substructural/superstructural nexus, but it disimbricated the subversive potentials of what Marsha and her comrades called gay power.

As we learn from blogger and historian Zagria, militant street queens like Marsha and the other star queens rejected homonationalism.[20] We see this in a transcription of a recorded conversation between Sylvia Rivera and mother Marsha, provided by Liza Cowan to the New York Society Museum and Library:

> I as a person don't believe that a transvestite or a woman should do all the washing or all the cooking and do everything that's forced on by the bourgeois society and the establishment that women have to do this.[21]

Unlike the feminists and LGBT movements of her day, Sylvia didn't narrow her view to the conditions of cis men and women; she includes the position of the so-called "transvestite" (as was the term used in that era) in an analysis of how bodies get organized in a class system. Sylvia was also a member of the Young Lords Party. Her and the other STAR queens' militancy became marginalized within the LGBT political movement. The combining and displacing power, or valency, of grand patriarchy established itself in opposition to the socialist and decolonial expression of bodily autonomy that the STAR queens insisted on.

And, decades later, having divorced itself from a history of Black and brown trans militancy, now so-called "gender criticals" are making a move, trying to paint transness and gay/lesbian identity as opposed and mutually exclusive. Like TERFs, they insist that sexual dualism is the necessary basis for policy and civil protections. But, in this way, gender critical ideology is an expression of gendered imbrication. As with TERFs, gender criticals are forming alliances with fascist transphobes, and piling onto a right-wing dismissal of Black radical, especially Black feminist, thought. These coalitions are not surprising, however, if we understand how a superstructural and substructural nexus exhibits valency over both household and non-household configurations of the body. To anchor the stability of racial capitalism and state power, modernity must include patriarchal coercion of embodiment, geared at undermining the non-hegemonic nexing-forms which thread or structure potentials for bodily autonomy. Without this, the valency of those alternative substructural/superstructural nexuses would continue to help organize future revolts and rebellions, activism and movement activity, thus threatening the relations of labor and property upon which the production and reproduction of bourgeois society is founded.

[20] Zagria, "Sylvia Rivera Part III: Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries," A Gender Variance Who's Who, September 10, 2017, `https://zagria.blogspot.com/2017/09/sylvia-rivera-part-iii-street.html`.

[21] Liz Cowan, "Interview with Members of STAR," New York Historical Society, June 2019, `https://www.nyhistory.org/blogs/gay-power-is-trans-history-street-transvestite-action-revolutionaries`.

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