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# Why I am a Materialist Transfeminist and not a Marxist/Proletarian/R\*dical Feminist

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Spandrel — n — Noun. (plural spandrels)

Architecture: The space (often more or less triangular) between the outer curve of an arch (the extrados) and a straight-sided figure that bounds it; the space between two contiguous arches and a straight feature above them.

Biology: a phenotypic trait that is a byproduct of the evolution of some other characteristic, rather than a direct product of adaptive selection. (see: Stephen Jay Gould, RC Lewontin)

Human ecology: Features of a society or culture which are structural consequences of historical material development, but are neither adaptive nor maladaptive, thus existing for no functionalist

or teleological reasons (see: Critical Human Ecology — Historical Materialism and Natural Laws)

For contemporary radical and proletarian feminists to take sexual dualism at face value is quite ironic. Their materialist/Marxist feminist predecessors explicitly *argued against* doing so.

As an example, we find in *One Is Not Born a Woman* by Monique Wittig an insistence that:

“A materialist feminist approach to women’s oppression destroys the idea that women are a ‘natural group’: a racial group of a special kind, a group perceived as natural, a group of men considered as materially specific in their bodies.”

Wittig’s view emphasized that the body or anatomy was not the basis of women’s oppression. This is because “womanhood” is only material in a social sense, not a natural one. As Rashad Khan explains it:

“Wittig suggests that there is a functional class struggle between men and women, and that this struggle emerges from a specific form of economic exploitation of women by men. She summarizes this by writing that the existence of the sexes and the existence of slaves and masters proceed from the same belief, and that there are no slaves without masters as there are no women without men.” (One Is Not Born a Woman: Remembering Monique Wittig’s Feminism)

In essence, Wittig’s analysis revealed how the so-called “opposite sexes” exist as part of an economic relation. Their opposition is therefore not real in any biological sense, but rather

the Third World (although a critique of the State is not as central here as it is for my thinking).

Both the Third World People’s Alliance and the Anarkata Turn espouse conceptions of sexual oppression that synthesize decolonization with the materialist commitment to unveiling the material basis of social, political, economic reality. Furthermore, both go beyond flaws in orthodox Marxisms that overlook the colonies and non-cis/non-heterosexual experience. These are examples of Gender Self-Determination as a pursuit. Materialist transfeminism for me operates similarly, drawing on my studies of Black (Radical) Ecology in order to formulate what I call a “roots-grasping science” to help bring scientific insight to Gender Self-Determination struggle. It is in that vein that I posit a “Nexus” hypothesis and share these notes here.

the historical interests of wealthy White males—the virile Great Fathers, whose ‘rational’ mastery of nature consigns ciswomen to a supporting role as useful tools for the propagation of the master race. A sexual-economic logic that casts queer ciswomen and men, trans women and men, and non-binary persons into a shadow realm of ‘useless’ and even dangerous sexuality and gender behavior. Any violations of rigid bourgeois roles, especially coming from the ‘inessential’ world of color, are seen as irruptions of an irrational, miasmatic pre-history of ‘Man’, and are to be suppressed with laws and sermons, fists, knives and guns... From a queer standpoint, it is not hard to see how capitalism, racism, and heterosexism are mutually supporting systemic and psychological phenomena.”

Coming from a more multi-tendency approach (as the Alliance includes anarchist and non-anarchist varieties of socialist and decolonial membership), Third World People’s Alliance references the work of Maria Lugones in espousing its feminist vision. Lugones articulated the “coloniality of gender thesis” (which is influential for Sylvia Wynter, by the way). It is from here that, similar to the Third World Women’s Alliance from which TWPA derives its name, an analysis of race, class, gender in tandem are made (Triple Jeopardy), including critiques of the nuclear family, sexual relegations, and even of trans exclusionary radical feminism (TERF) ideology as it relates to Capitalism, cisheteropatriarchy, and colonialism. Similar to what I have attempted to do in the preceding notes, the Alliance’s conception of queer liberation grapples with the problem of knowledge and of metaphysics vis-a-vis the material/power struggles involved with the “coloniality of gender.” It also takes on the specifically ethnocentric implications for trans women, trans men, nonbinary folks, and other (gender)queer populations of

a class division; just as the apparent superiority and inferiority of the master and the slave was not objectively true, but rather a smokescreen for a relation of domination. The components of this class division involved heterosexuality, marriage, and domestic labor relegations: as these position the body in two different relationships to property, Khan suggests. It is for this reason that Monique Wittig argued against the idea that gender is something one is born with, claiming instead that

“a woman is a member of the class of women, which is the class that is oppressed and exploited by the class of men.”

For some, Wittig’s perspective, like that of other materialist feminists, may read like a circular argument that cannot effectively challenge the claim it strives against. Sure, we can assert that neither gender nor sex are natural/biological, for gender/sex signifies how bodies are arranged in one of two relations to property and domestic labor, or one of two roles within heterosexuality and marriage, these being economic and social. But what of other relations to property and labor? Or roles outside of heterosexuality and marriage? Are these not also social and economic questions pertinent to class analysis of gender/sex? If so, how? One possible answer to this question in Wittig’s work is to see so-called outliers as not actually embodying a gender/sexual struggle. For example, elsewhere she claims that a lesbian is not, from a materialist perspective, a woman in society. In my view, this argument runs the risk of a semantic confusion that can render gender/sex as economically determined. Can bodily autonomy be adequately theorized if we “overrepresent” the specific set of economic conditions that coerces the body in a binary fashion qua Gender? For materialist and Marxist feminists of a certain generation, it would seem that the centrality of the worker to class struggle makes this question

irrelevant. Capitalism is the dominant mode of production, so non-capitalist economic reality, including those concerning the body, are epiphenomenal at best. In my view, this narrow conception of revolution allows for the critique of sex as actually class to get reduced to the idea that class is always already binary sexed. Radical feminisms and proletarian feminisms of today have advanced these misinterpretations, to the point of pushing so-called “trans exclusionary” visions of feminism. There are a few “trans inclusive” versions of radical and proletarian feminism, however. Still, the “trans exclusionary” voices are becoming increasingly prominent and maintaining an outsized voice that ironically appeal to mainstream bioreductive understandings of gender/sex. A lot of times, this is in no small part because of misunderstanding how the role of Sex-associated traits in class divisions is a spandrel! Just as the “distinct and late arising twig” of which Gould speaks features only occasional uses of an umbilicus by some on the snail cladogram vis-a-vis their eggs, so also, the reduction of socially necessary labor vis-a-vis a dimorphic view of sexual reproduction associated traits is a historical particularity, not a universal. And just as the umbilicus in Gould’s example is a structural consequence of some snails’ growth around a coiled axis, which makes its existence non-functional (not adaptation), the interpenetration of Sex-associated traits as one facet of the human body with socially chartered myths and materially-incentivized labor divisions is non-functional (not adaptation), being a consequence of very “genre specific” (to use a Wynterian phrase) human ecological patterns of organization.

And yet, a number of self-described “scientific” Marxist/radical/proletarian feminists will misunderstand this! They see “gender oppression” in terms of adaptationism at worst and economic determinism at best. This is to say, these ideologues have suggested that gendered labor divisions and sexual relations within class society adapt to an already dimorphic/

reason. It uses this critique to analyze hegemonic gender (cisheteropatriarchy) in the manner I have sought to suggest, as an ethnocentrically calibrated nexus of imbrication for material and power relations in modern society. It agrees with the Marxist assertion that sexual exploitation anchors capitalist domination, such that it defines Gender Self-Determination around bodily autonomy and a materialist conception in which transformation of kinship structures and relations to land, rather than biology or ontology or axiology, are central to the struggle at hand. Ultimately, the Anarkata Statement grounds itself in decolonization, and as such recognizes the emancipation of a range of orientations toward gender: self-identification, changing, (re)creation, and “opting out completely.” So this is not a romantic perspective focused on simply reclaiming gender/sexuality from within precolonial, ancestral, indigenous genre-inflected experiences, identities, institutions, roles, and lifeways.

Gender Self-Determination also shows up in the Third World People’s Alliance (TWPA), which situates queer/trans liberation in decolonization struggle. This is made explicit in the Four Guiding Principles of the Alliance Constitution:

“Queer liberation is a form of decolonization. It challenges the current ideas about our precolonial history, revealing the colonial origin behind the so-called necessity of heteronormativity and the binary gender system. It shows heteronormativity to be historically specific to colonial and capitalist modernity—the idea that sexuality is exclusively about reproduction, which turns out to be the reproduction of an oppressed work force for the capitalist class. It shows the binary division of gender and gendered forms of social and political control to be falsely naturalized and fundamentally dehumanizing, by identifying these phenomena with

forms of cisheterosexist control and pathologization, which buttress class society and empire. In this way it is part of an overall resistance to the State, capitalism, ableism, and colonialism-imperialism.

Gender Self-Determination shows up in *Anarkata: A Statement*, where the authors write:

“Institutionalized gender... limits the bodily autonomy of all people because it is colonial in origin and invented as a means of abetting the dehumanizing process of... racialization... justifying the taking captive of our land and bodies... [T]rans liberation and gender autonomy upend the logics of racialized biological ‘difference’ that modern gender signifies, and pose a challenge to forced sexual roles that capitalism requires for its exploitation of our land and bodies. Decolonization means struggling for all of us... to have the autonomy to choose and define our own gender expression for ourselves, change gender expressions at will, create new genders, or opt out of gender completely. Gender/sexual liberation within the decolonization project also means the freedom to establish alternative models of kinship and relating, and a recognition that our capacity for altering our conditions is not determined by (values created around) our biology or sexual ontology.”

Foregrounding an anti-political, anti-hierarchical, or anti-authoritarian ideology rooted in Black Radical Tradition (a la Cedric Robinson), otherwise known as Black Autonomy (a la Lorenzo Kom’boa Ervin) and “Black Anarchic Radicalism” (or BAR for short), this part of the *Anarkata Statement* draws on Sylvia Wynter and distills a critique of Man’s “humanist”

dualist anatomical presentation. This would mean that the economic contradiction under consideration is one that has organized bodies into two roles as a function of an a priori two-form presentation of the body. Sex or Gender is social, yes, but the social organism is sorted into a Binary under class society in adaptation to how the body’s traits are already distributed between two poles.

But the idea that the body is dimorphic, and that class based gender divisions are a (mal)adaptive function of said dimorphism in the creation of social dualism – this is reflective of outdated scholarship regarding a set of historical material conditions specific to Europe. It is specifically in European Christianity’s relationship with societies shaped by other Abrahamic religions, and societies that had developed empires and feudal orders, that we can observe a neat insistence and reproduction of only two so-called sexes prior to modern colonialism and capitalism.

For a great multitude of the world’s societies and cultures, however, sex-associated traits were never (or only situationally) organized and understood in dualist/dimorphist fashion. In these cases, the evolution of modern Patriarchy is a lot more complicated.

An economic determinism that refuses to question coloniality and question cisheterosexism prevents one from extricating themselves of the more narrow view and parsing that complexity. Economic determinism frames all embodiment and as defined solely by class, as much as it yields an a posteriori enumeration of the embodied patterns of reproduction necessary for modern class society which is projected backwards in time to precede its conditions of possibility. This is wildly both unscientific and undialectical. Economic determinism was *never* the true intent of Marx’s materialism. In his letter to J Bloch, Engels (Marx’s lifelong collaborator) made clear:

“According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. Other than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase...”

The thrust of materialist conception of history was to challenge idealist and theocentric conceptions of history. Such were the views that blamed social reality on the mind or on God. As materialists, Marx and Engels emphasized a gamut of real forces among real objects, not just one or a few, in their dialectical interpenetration. While not using the phrase “patriarchy,” Marx and Engels’ *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* applied their historical materialism to the question of sexual oppression as it relates to class society and the Political order:

“According to the materialist conception, the determining factor in history is, in the last resort, the production and reproduction of immediate life. But this itself is of a two-fold character. On the one side, the production of the means of existence, of food, clothing and shelter, and the tools necessary for that production; on the other side, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species.”

The two-fold view of production and reproduction described here was not purely economic just because it was “material.” What materialism insisted on was the anthropogenic (human-caused) or metabolic basis for “real life.” This is a human ecological perspective, with the means of material

exploitation of gender expansive peoples via doctors and psychiatrists (4). They demand human rights for gender expansive peoples, but they specifically advocate for revolution and the “full participation” of gender expansive peoples in liberation struggle (5–8). They also uphold critiques of the US military, ultimately demanding revolutionary people’s government in the same manner as many National Self-Determination struggles of that period of Upheaval (9).

This linkage of gender/sexual liberation with national struggle did not start or stop with STAR. Before the Stonewall Uprising, there was the House of Swann Rebellion, and before William Dorsey Swann there was Cathay Williams and before Cathay Williams there was Romaine-La-Prophetsse and outside of Romaine-La-Prophetsse, other figures: Queen/King Njinga, and King Ahebi Ugbabe, and Doña Beatriz Kimpa Vita. They may not have spoken of nationalism, patriarchy, or class struggle but they contributed to a sometimes contradictory legacy of resistance that would eventually evolve into now a struggle for “gender self-determination,” a term defined as, in the words of Eric A. Stanley,

“antagonistic to... practices of constriction and universality... [and] connected to the practices and theories of self-determination embodied by various and ongoing anticolonial, Black Power, and antiprison movements” (*Trans Studies Quarterly*, 2014).

This struggle is percolating in resistance to SARS among Queer Nigerians. It is percolating in the Queer resistance to Ghanaian neocolonial oppression. It was percolating in the Black Lives Matter decade in the US. It percolates in the use of an -X in Latin America that has upset linguistic purists so much. It percolates a critique of a modern Political reason that has secularized (and naturalized) older ethnoreligious supremacist (especially but not solely Christian)

9. We want a revolutionary peoples' government, where transvestites, street people, women, homosexuals, puerto ricans, indians, and all oppressed people are free, and not fucked over by this government who treat us like the scum of the earth and kills us off like flies, one by one, and throws us into jail to rot. This government who spends millions of dollars to go to the moon, and lets the poor Americans starve to death.

#### POWER TO THE PEOPLE

S. T. A. R." (retrieved from "Gender Variance Who's Who" on zaria.blogspot website)

From the outset, STAR theorizes their oppression from the standpoint of what we now would call cisheterosexism. They implicate all those who we would now speak of as cisgender, who STAR called "heterosexuals and homosexuals of both sexes." Immediately STAR connects cisheterosexism to the lumpenization of gender expansive peoples—to our relegation along the margins, the streets. And this lumpen centered analysis is linked with revolutionary potential, a perspective shared with folks like the Black Panther Party during that time. In the manifesto, STAR makes use of a term like "self determination," very common in anti-colonial/socialist movements of that era because of the influence of Marxist, Leninist, Maoist ideology as it got synthesized with the concerns of national liberation (decolonization) movements. STAR extends that synthesis to the protest of gender expansive peoples for bodily, cognitive, behavioral autonomy, and its expression in the form of gender presentation, physiological change, and unfettered right to "be gay anytime" (in that day and age, "gay" was an umbrella term in the way that Trans and Nonbinary are today). STAR takes a position against capitalism (2), police/prisons (3), and Ableist

existence involving how resources from the environment enter into social relations and how those social relations also impact the environment. The propagation of the species was also about a social context of how the body is reproduced or reproduces itself within its habitat. This is not purely a sexual question, from a materialist standpoint. Marxist feminists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century sought to explain why. Marlene Dixon, for example, writing in 1977, elucidated from Engels the following:

"... it is obvious that the biological fact of motherhood is not in and of itself the limiting factor. The limiting factors are to be found in the social relations of production and in the social relations of the family under capitalism, as Engels suggested. Engels argued that the subjugation and oppression of women can be traced to those factors which caused the communal kin group to be broken up and individual families separated out as isolated units, economically responsible for the maintenance of their members and for the rearing of new generations. The subjugation of the female sex was based on the transformation of their socially necessary labor into a private service for the husband which occurred through the separation of the family from the clan." (On The Superexploitation of Women)

Drawing from Engels, Dixon was writing in a similar vein as to Monique Wittig and other feminist applications of historical materialism. This allowed her to clarify the ways that the social context for species propagation looked different in one historical epoch versus another: a communalistic order, versus a bourgeois order. In a communal mode of production, the reproduction of social bodies within their habitats was kin based.

But, the bourgeois mode of production broke up these kinship structures, splitting human persons into “atomized” configurations (what Dixon calls individual family units). As a consequence of this historical shift, the reproduction of social bodies within their habitats became a “female” rather than clan responsibility. Socially necessary labor, in Dixon’s terms, is then isomorphic with a certain so-called “sex,” as a domestic or private define relegation. This ultimately serves to reduce species propagation as somehow the reproduction of the husband’s existence and of the progeny who should inherit his name, property, etc.

It is the socio-ecological context of material analysis that gave Marxism its political galvanism and intellectual or philosophical clarity. For Marlene Dixon, the reductionism involved with the patriarchal relation is understood as necessary for mystifying the position of the “breadwinner” or worker within the capitalist system, portraying such a role in opposition to the “homemaker” as both natural. In her own words:

“If we look at the European family historically, we see that prior to the rise of industrial and monopoly capitalism, the family, as an extended kin grouping, was the economic unit of society. The family was a production unit as well as a consumer unit. With the complete triumph of commodity production, the family appeared to be reduced from a production unit to a dependent consumption unit, from an extended kin organization to the nuclear family defined by contractual marriage. This transformation of the family accompanied the transformation of labor (in the family production unit) into the commodity labor power (the ability to work sold as a commodity whose price is wages). These shifts in the function

REVOLUTIONARIES armies fighting against the system.

1. We want the right to self-determination over the use of our bodies; the right to be gay, anytime, anyplace; the right to free physiological change and modification of sex on demand; the right to free dress and adornment.
2. The end to all job discrimination against transvestites of both sexes and gay street people because of attire.
3. The immediate end of all police harrassment and arrest of transvestites and gay street people, and the release of transvestites and gay street people from all prisons and all other political prisoners.
4. The end to all exploitive practices of doctors and psychiatrists who work in the field of transvestism.
5. Transvestites who live as members of the opposite gender should be able to obtain identification of the opposite gender.
6. Transvestites and gay street people and all oppressed people should have free education, health care, clothing, food, transportation, and housing.
7. Transvestites and gay street people should be granted full and equal rights on all levels of society, and full voice in the struggle for liberation of all oppressed people.
8. An end to exploitation and discrimination against transvestites within the homosexual world.

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."

To me, Marsha is making an implicit critique of the institution of monogamy and heterosexuality here. Her commentary on how transvestites when married "don't have time" for STAR, and how pursuit of marriage makes organizing difficult suggests to me that popular concern with "lovers" is a limiting factor on street transvestites' resistance. This overlaps with insights raised about monogamy and heterosexuality within Marxist feminism. Monique Wittig's materialist feminism, for example, critiques a so-called "heterosexual contract" because of its limits on women's liberation. Marsha's perspective, like that of Sylvia Rivera, is more gender expansive, though, and comes from a different political orientation, one that I deem to be decolonial/Third Worldist. This gender expansive and Third World view of class struggle is the catalyst for transfeminist materialism or a materialist transfeminism. It was most clearly synthesized in the STAR manifesto:

"The oppression against Transvestites of either sex arises from sexist values and this oppression is manifested by heterosexuals and homosexuals of both sexes in the form of exploitation, ridicule, harrassment, beatings, rapes, murders.

Because of this oppression the majority of transvestites are forced into the street and we have formed a strong alliance with our gay sisters and brothers of the street. Who we are a part of and represent we are; a part of the

and organization of the family also created shifts in the function and role of women."

Womanhood (and manhood) as we know it today, Dixon argues, is an embodied consequence of shifting historical material dynamics. Those dynamics involve the atomization, alienation, and dispossession central to creating an exploited class to be bought out by meager wages; alongside the ways this exploited working class relates no longer to the family within a kin-based and communal configuration, but rather a household and sexually divided configuration.

If neither of these categories are natural, then, being contingent, and emerging within a particular set of social relations, then that means, in the bourgeois mode, the propagation of the species in its habitat is artificially rendered a matter of how "household production plays in the reproduction of capitalist society" (in the words of Kirstin Munro).

Marxist and materialist feminism is no monolith, though, and it is important to identify some differences within it to further elucidate why contemporary radical feminism and proletarian feminism fall short in their "sex as class" theory. From "Social Reproduction Theory," Social Reproduction, and Household Production by Kirstin Munro, we learn for example that thinkers like Battacharya may theorize the social context of reproduction solely or primarily around the reproduction of labor-power (the worker's input within the productive economy). This view, Munro suggests, "valorizes" the manner in which domestic labor is distinct from but essential to how the exploited proletarian is able to "contribute to accumulation via waged work for a capitalist firm." Certainly, the ruling class cannot profit off exploited productive labor if the worker cannot make it back home to "reproduce" oneself through the preparation of food, in resting, grooming, etc; and certainly, these provisions cannot guarantee the worker is "reproduced" as such to return to the firm fed and rested and groomed

ex nihilo (out of nothing), for someone must be doing that labor. Thus, for many kinds of Marxist/materialist feminism, you not fully grapple with the ruling class' exploitation of the "proletariat" without understanding un(der)paid domestic sexual labor divisions that allow the proletariat to reproduce themselves enough to return to work. For Munro, all the activities involved in the organized production and reproduction are intrinsically questions of domination, however, rather than just unvalued forms of noble or hard work that only become exploitative by the intrusion of capitalism as an extrinsic force. This to say that the parts of the production and reproduction process do not exist apart from their wholes. To that point, Munro points out how thinkers like Quick will theorize the social context of species propagation under bourgeois society by "emphasiz[ing] the household production process rather than domestic labor alone." This perspective accounts for the reproduction of labor-power as much as it views un(der)waged domestic labor as "just one input" into a process that "also relies on commodities purchased with money from waged work." For Munro, this theory is more dynamic as it can more exactly attend to the ways household and non-household production in capitalism are "interdependent." The ruling class themselves already understand this, although they naturalize or sacralize the relationship between the inputs from the so-called Breadwinner and so-called Homemaker as a "complementarity" ordained by either Natural Law or God's Will. The man provides, and the woman nurtures: and her nurturance is not possible without his provision, just as his provision is not possible without her nurturance. It becomes an ontology, a defining feature of personhood, through appeals to nature and appeals to tradition. This serves to mystify the social context of the relations of production and reproduction, so that the value created by the labor of the workers is more effectively captured for the boss' profits without the game being exposed for what it is.

that the connection between Gay Power and Black Power activity likely could have put Marsha, Sylvia, and other gay militants in contact with political education materials like the works of Fanon, perhaps even Marx and other theorists of decolonial and class struggle. In a transcription of a recorded conversation, provided by Liza Cowan to the New York Society Museum and Library, Sylvia Rivera once made a critique of gender roles:

"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. I don't believe in that. That's all a lot of baloney. If you have a lover or you have a friend that you really care for, you split everything down 50/50. If you don't feel like doing it, you just don't do it. Let him do it because this is what we're all trying to get across."

Sylvia's view on "50/50" in a relationship outright links gender stereotypes about domestic labor to bourgeois society. This observation sounds strikingly similar to materialist feminist analysis. But unlike the feminists of her day, Sylvia doesn't narrow her view to the conditions of cis/heterosexual 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. Similarly, in an interview called *Rapping With a Street Transvestite Action Revolutionary*, Marsha seems to lament the ways many of her community members would deprioritize the revolution in favor of a focus on romantic/sexual relationships and monogamy:

"I'd like to see a lot more transvestites come to STAR meetings, but it's hard to get in touch with

be called “critical traditions.” Fanon’s influence permeated the entire Black Power era and wider age of anti-colonial struggle, with works like *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) being read by many militants at the time. We see Fanon’s “magic hands” concept is referenced by the Black Liberation Army in their Political Dictionary:

“Mojo: An Afro-american term meaning magic powers or influence. In political sense, it means the magical hands of the people, their power to define political, social, economical, spiritual and military phenomena, and make or cause to move in a desired manner, i.e. to bring about revolutionary advancement to the evolution of [humankind]”

Here, a traditional Africana religion is used to frame a philosophy of revolutionary self-determination and material struggle, very similar, in my view, to how the Gay Post Collective had framed their philosophy of street survival with regards to a host of spiritual traditions as well. Both maneuvers read to me as a figure of speech in the same way of Fanon’s “magic hands,” to put a focus on, again, the role of human will in the material struggle. And, it should be noted that much of the BLA’s activity is associated with the Black Panther Party, the latter of whom had its largest chapter in the same city where the Stonewall Uprising occurred: New York. Even more, Sylvia Rivera, Marsha, and other founding members of STAR, when they were part of the militant Gay Liberation Front (GLF) had actually conflicted with the white and liberal approaches to the gay liberation movement at that time because they were in support of the Black Panther Party, while assimilationist gays were not. Sylvia Rivera, was even part of the Young Lords Party, and as such she got to meet and speak with Huey Newton. It must be assumed, then,

For Munro, the mistake in traditional Marxist and Marxist feminist thought is that while it might uncover how “theft” of value is not natural, its practical application may focus on how such waged and unwaged exploitation of labor in and outside the home is guaranteed by the State. Certainly, the law, government, and Statecraft do ensure that “rights” to private and public property are guaranteed for the entrepreneurial endeavors of the ruling class, safeguarding the mass dispossession that undergirds why people must sell their labor-power and purchase commodities in order to survive. Liberal humanist enlightenment thought is decorated with support for this arrangement, which is why capitalism is central to how “democracy” is conceived in the West. The social contract with the State and the body politic are both theorized in terms of bourgeois interests and relations. For Munro, however, just as a narrow focus on domestic labor’s reproduction of a worker’s labor power serves merely to valorize the former, narrow attention to the role of the State in the “organized, protected robbery” of the workers serves merely to demand “redistribution of both monetary wealth and political power from capital to the workers.” In Munro’s own words:

“This redistribution appears to be conceived of as a stepping stone towards the ultimate end of workers — now broadly defined to also include those engaged in the work of reproducing labor-power — seizing power and centrally planning an equitable form of distribution while leaving the existing production processes intact.” (*Social Reproduction Theory*, Social Reproduction, and Household Production)

What this tends toward is policy based around remunerating labor inputs of capitalist production and reproduction, waged and unwaged alike, especially under the leadership of

a governing Party that represents working class interests. But Munro calls this a “productivist tendency” within Marxism and Marxist feminism. While acknowledging its emancipatory intents, Munro argues that it is unable to address the “inter-related and overlapping ways in which capitalism organizes production and social reproduction in our day-to-day lives.” Munro insists that such a limited conception downplays the social misery and environmental destruction that are fundamental to capitalist production/reproduction, since

“The state, capitalist firms, and households are inextricably linked to one another via their own processes of production and reproduction, with these processes shaped by the imperative of endless accumulation.”

It is here that we introduce my Nexus hypothesis. I agree with Munro regarding how the so-called imperative of endless accumulation is what shapes the processes of production and reproduction in bourgeois society. For me, the manner by which this imperative links the State, capitalist firms, and the household is through “imbrication,” an overlapping “at the edges.” I speak of Nexuses of imbrication in material and power relations, to highlight that the former stabilize *certain* patterns of social reproduction, so as to thread the reproduction of the *dominant* society. To assert that a Nexus anchors a *particular* society’s reproduction through a web which stabilizes particular patterns of social reproduction derives not from an orthodox Marxist and Marxist feminist perspective on the conditions of the proletariat as it relates to sexual relations between men and woman. Hence, the verb to imbricate, specifying “overlapping at the edges.” I am struggling from Third Worldist view of class relations beyond the proletariat, especially for those who do not neatly fit into hegemonic categories of man/woman, female/male. I see this

as moving resources from the first to the last, from “above to below,” Marsha and her collaborators could ensure that “nobody starves” and “nobody gets rich.” Later, in this same text, the authors connect their street philosophy to metaphysical ideas within Western occult traditions, as well as belief systems outside the West such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism. Although referring to spirituality, the writers insist that what they speak of re: survival as “street people” is something that

“didn’t stop working when Police Chief Cahill ran the kids out of the Haight; it won’t stop working when we’re gone. It will continue to work as long as there are people who believe in it strongly enough to live by it.”

There was an emphasis on the struggle — in this case, the Gay Power movement’s conflict with the police — and the power of the people that undergirds the Gay Post Collective’s connections to belief. That they highlight the need to “live by” the street philosophy in the real, reminds me of Frantz Fanon:

“To educate the masses politically does not mean, cannot mean, making a political speech. What it means is to try, relentlessly and passionately, to teach the masses that everything depends on them; that if we stagnate it is their responsibility, and that if we go forward it is due to them too, that there is no such thing as a demiurge, that there is no famous man who will take the responsibility for everything, but that the demiurge is the people themselves and the magic hands are finally only the hands of the people.” (The Wretched of the Earth)

I argue that Marsha and her collaborators could very well have read Fanon, whose works foreshadowed what would later

liberated. It was a revolutionary thing.” (How Sylvia Rivera paved the way for trans revolution)

This emphasis on the street and economic struggle shows up in a document called *How We Survive*, co-written by Marsha alongside Ralph Hall, Tom Brachen, Flash Storm, and Osiris as part of the Gay Post Collective in 1975:

“We came up with the idea long before we heard of other people doing it, though it did become common experience on the Haight. We never tried putting it into words before but if we had to this is the way it goes: We live by sharing what little we have with those who are needier still. We know that others will do likewise.

Call it living by faith if that suits you. Call it whatever you please but don’t knock it; we’ve seen it in action. We know it works, we’ve lived by it for years and we aren’t dead yet. Nobody gets rich on it, but nobody starves either. The way it works with us, somehow at the last moment something comes through when our own need is greatest, just as when other street people come to us in greater need, we somehow find we just happen what will help them most.

It’s like being part of a river— we pass on to those below us just as we receive from above, the flow continues without end.”

Here, the authors do not speak of “making history” in a materialist sense explicitly. The language is quite mystical and elusive: but the essence of their street philosophy asserts the role of “conflicting human wills” in negotiating real conditions, real forces among real objects, in a struggle to determine one’s position within them. By confronting the needs of the street, such

as essential to understanding the way that core-periphery relations operate, especially when we consider the unevenness of how “progress” on gender issues looks in our world today.

What the Nexus hypothesis hopes to clarify is how the imperative of endless accumulation — which shapes the links between the State, capitalist firms, and the household — has as its necessary precondition the history of what Marx called “primitive accumulation” in Africa and the Third World. The technologies of this primitive accumulation emerge within slavery, colonialism, antiblackness, imperialism, neocolonialism. As a Third Worldist, the aforementioned are ongoing and foundational phenomena that prop up, precede, and may even exceed the pursuit of Capital. In fact, the key role of these phenomena in the modern world’s emergence is why they are relegated to “the edges” of analysis. Such is a mystificatory schema, so that the color line, what WEB du Bois called “the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea” is taken at face value, perhaps even naturalized or taken as cosmic damnation. Not only that, but the gender “threads” of that color line are taken as a given, especially regarding their role in the dissolution of pre-existing Nexuses that imbricate non-dominant material and power relations. This is why, for example, when Marlene Dixon looks at the dissolution of the communal kin group and the reintegration of its attendant socially necessary (reproductive) labors into the household under sexual divisions, not only does she privilege the binary, but she explicitly claims the following:

“We are not equipped with time machines, and cannot verify Engels’ hypotheses concerning the origins of the ‘world-historical defeat of the female sex.’ We can, however, demonstrate that the ‘subjugation of the female sex was based on the transformation of their socially necessary labor into a private service for the husband’

and that under capitalism the institutions of the nuclear family, monogamy (for women), the sexual definition of women's social roles, and the private appropriation of their labor power and their reproductive power are the basis of their subjugation." (On The Superexploitation of Women)

Dixon's view relegates to the distant past the mechanism in how the modern family relates to embodied separation (alienation) from earlier clan-based relations. So, she pivots instead to merely demonstrating how capitalist institutions transform socially necessary labor and the social propagation of the human species into a private service (and one that mystifies the production of labor power). But, Black radicals and Third Worldists, especially transfeminists, know that we need not time machines: we can look at the history of capitalism and the State in the colonies to see how the atomization of kinship structure by the nuclear family undermined communalist modes and transformed labor relations, even to the point of imposing sexual relegations where there were none. In this way, we could theorize how "womanhood," how "homosexual," how "transgender," how "intersex" alike are all structural consequences of a historical process.

Additionally, by decentering the First World and the cis/heterosexual proletariat (as well as productivist visions of remuneration by the socialist State) we can attend to how communal and other non-capitalist modes persist to this day, or only have been partially dissolved or recently dissolved in a number of non-Western communities. These modes, finally, demonstrate Nexuses of imbrication that are gendered as well as non-gendered. Many of these Nexuses did not originally exhibit binary, dualist, dimorphic gender/sexual relations; and the dissolution followed by reintegration of the attendant patterns of reproduction they stabilize still do not neatly conform to the

when speaking of how, given the classed (and colonial) basis for sexual organization of the body, various persons struggle for self-determination of their bodies/gender amidst the "particular conditions of life" that comprise such a conflict. These are the two things that I consider when I read Marsha P Johnson, co-founder of Street Trans\* Action Revolutionaries, who once said:

"History isn't something you look back at and say it was inevitable, it happens because people make decisions that are sometimes very impulsive and of the moment, but those moments are cumulative realities."

I understand Marsha's perspective as a Gay Power view of historical materiality, born outside of Marxism or Marxist feminism, in the throws of a particular class struggle led by the transgressive gendered people of the streets. Comrade Maysa highlights the ideology of STAR, focusing on Sylvia Rivera, who was a close friend of Marsha and the founder of the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries:

"STAR and Sylvia's activism made economic issues a priority. 'Transvestites and gay street people and all oppressed people should have free education, health care, clothing, food, transportation, and housing,' reads the STAR manifesto. To remedy homelessness in the trans community STAR created StarHouse, where they housed and educated youths. Sylvia recalled that 'everybody in the neighborhood loved StarHouse. They were impressed because they could leave their kids and we'd baby-sit with them. If they were hungry, we fed them. We fed half of the neighborhood because we had an abundance of food the kids

sufficient understanding of the principles of historical materialism. This is the perspective I bring to those reductions of “womanhood” to a “political class.” Engels goes on to further explain that the economic side is decisive in the end, but not the sole or primary phenomenon involved:

“We make our history ourselves, but, in the first place, under very definite assumptions and conditions. Among these the economic ones are ultimately decisive. But the political ones, etc., and indeed even the traditions which haunt human minds also play a part, although not the decisive one...”

A key point for Engels is the role of agency alongside the other conditions which are the motive force of history, some of which include the life of the mind. Engels even provides examples by looking at some of the national developments in some European contexts of the time. He considers it absurd to regard these particular examples in primarily or purely economic terms, insofar as Statecraft and ethno-religious conceptions played a role. He further writes, with regards to the ultimate (economic) factor:

“...history is made in such a way that the final result always arises from conflicts between many individual wills, of which each in turn has been made what it is by a host of particular conditions of life. Thus there are innumerable intersecting forces, an infinite series of parallelograms of forces which give rise to one resultant — the historical event...”

It is a regard for those “innumerable intersecting forces” as Engels calls it that yielded so-called critical traditions among Black feminists (ie, theories of interlocking domination). And the factor of human will: this should be what is considered

dynamics of the Western household as a configuration (in part due to legacies of slavery, lumpen-carceralization, colonialism, and imperialism). This requires us to look at gender/sex in a more expanded fashion, and to emphasize that the patriarchal Nexus imbricates how dominant (bourgeois) material/power relations under coloniality reorganize human relations of production and species propagation beyond the European context. Right now, then, as reactionaries speak of protecting women, children, and families, they will make attacks on abortion and transness, while also seeking to undermine the Indian Child Welfare Act in the US. The co-occurrence of both is to advance the dissolution of (bodily) autonomy concerning Turtle Island indigenous kinship structures in the US, in pursuit of encroaching upon unceded Native territory and establishing pipeline projects. And wherever such projects are found, an ongoing legacy of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two Spirits (MMIWG2S) exacerbates, while any violent self-defense on part of indigenous folks, including marginalized gender Indians, is criminalized and suppressed (as occurred in the battle at Standing Rock). Such present histories have to be viewed in light of many indigenous Turtle Islander relations more generally. Citing Paula Gunn Allen’s examination of “gynecratic egalitarianism” in about eight different Native North American cultures, including that of the Cherokee, Maria Lugones writes:

“Among the features of the Indian society targeted for destruction were the two-sided complementary social structure; the understanding of gender; and the economic distribution that often followed the system of reciprocity. The two sides of the complementary social structure included an internal female chief and an external male chief. The internal chief presided over the band, village, or tribe, maintaining harmony and administering

domestic affairs. The red, male, chief presided over mediations between the tribe and outsiders (Allen 1986/1992, 18). Gender was not understood primarily in biological terms. Most individuals fit into tribal gender roles ‘on the basis of proclivity, inclination, and temperament. The Yuma had a tradition of gender designation based on dreams; a female who dreamed of weapons became a male for all practical purposes’ (196)”

As opposed to a hierarchical, oppositional binary gender system, many Native cultures traditionally exhibit an egalitarian gender pairing. Material and power relations in several cultures can be identified as having “imbricated” at a Nexus which patterns their reproduction in a non-dualist fashion. This gender pairing is traditionally fluid, allowing for what we now understand as gender variance. I learned during my studies of Cherokee language, culture, and society that Anitsalagi practice a form of communalism known as Gadugi. The communal labors are traditionally selected from the Seven Clans that provided the basis for kinship structure: Anigilohi (Long Hair), Anisahoni (Blue), Aniwaya (Wolf), Anigotegewi (Wild Potato), Aniawi (Deer), Anitsisqua (Bird), Aniwodi (Paint). Leadership within the two units of governance that Lugones mentions, Red (associated with the wartime) and White (associated with the peacetime), is traditionally gleaned from the Seven Clans, such that the Council House (gatuyi) at the center of Cherokee village life had space for counselors from each Clan. Importantly, one’s position in kinship relations is anchored by an enatic or matrilineal Nexus. This imbricatory Nexus is traditionally complementary and gerontocephalous, headed by elders. Therefore, while a gender pairing of anisgaya associated with hunting and anigehya associated with farming emerges, this by no means suggests a Patriarchy and gender binary, especially since there exists the role of nudale udanhtedi (different hearted ones).

attempts to correct the failures of mechanical uses of historical materialism. We can speak of so-called “mechanical materialism” as a kind of class reductionism. Earlier, when I identified economic determinism in the thinking of Marxist feminists this was part of a critical orientation towards class reductionism. Mechanical materialism was not the intent of Marx and Engels’ thinking, but it is still something they both contributed to in socialist thought. Engels himself admits to this in the letter I mentioned before:

“Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that the younger people sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasise the main principle vis-à-vis our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place or the opportunity to give their due to the other elements involved in the interaction. But when it came to presenting a section of history, that is, to making a practical application, it was a different matter and there no error was permissible. Unfortunately, however, it happens only too often that people think they have fully understood a new theory and can apply it without more ado from the moment they have assimilated its main principles, and even those not always correctly.”

In a spirit of self-criticism, Engels suggests that as a matter of *political* convenience, he and Marx had to undertake a degree of class reductionism to drown out the voices of those opposing the socialist movement. But, ultimately, Engels acknowledged that such an overemphasis *was an error*. Further, he suggests that political and theoretical immaturity goes into why the undue stress on economic factors was carried up by “the younger people.” Class reductionism is a response to in-

To illuminate these things, it takes theorizing how class society, the Political order, and patriarchy — shaped now by an imperative of endless accumulation — “overlap” vis-a-vis ongoing conditions that began as primary accumulation — and thus imperialism and antiblackness — all of which concern such “limnal categories” as non-Western societies, non-cis/heterosexual roles and embodiment, and non-proletarian underclasses.

But, imbrication as a model and the Nexus hypothesis must first be driven by a transfeminist engagement with Black feminist theories of interlocking domination alongside materialist feminist theories of social reproduction. Furthermore, such a “Black transfeminist materialism” as I like to call it requires something akin to Fanon’s “stretching” of Marxism, or the Black radical tradition’s “break” with Marxism into an autonomous horizon as Cedric Robinson describes it. Together, this simultaneously critical and materialist Black transfeminism can go beyond the reductionisms, false universalism, and Political Reason that plague much of contemporary emancipatory thought, opening up deeper possibilities for understanding the anthropogenic context of “human” social struggles.

Troublingly, when the proletarian and radical feminists on twitter coordinated a campaign to get my account taken down, my account was also being watched and reported by actual fascist reactionaries. Beyond just my own experience, there is a scary trend in which Leftist voices are united with right-wingers in usage of phrases like the antisemitic dogwhistle “cultural Marxism,” the antiblack/transphobic dogwhistle “woke culture”/“cancel culture.” Both camps, opposing as they may be, can sometimes share a narrow understanding of Marxist humanism, of postmodernism, of poststructuralism, and the Frankfurt school that gets used to paint any critical tradition as a problem. But critical theory as it is commonly known actually began within Marxism first, starting with

More importantly, sexual exploitation is not the characteristic of traditional Cherokee life. In fact, from my understanding of oral reports of ancient Cherokee oppression under the so-called mound builder cultures, documented in Cherokee Stories from the Turtle Island Liars’ Club, as well as the stories about the ancient oppressive priesthood known as anikutani (recorded in Mooney’s albeit limited ethnography *Myths of the Cherokee*) Cherokee society intentionally undermined or reversed the appearance of hereditary caste/authority amongst themselves. And it is claimed in these stories that Cherokee trace their origins in part to resistance against sexual and spiritual abuse from the oppressors in question. One may wonder if these reports have doubled as commentary on the social forms that arrived with European colonists.

Part of the Cherokee origin story also centers on their arrival to the southeast Turtle Island. These stories revolve around the four cardinal points, each of which have a color association, and a specific set of behaviors and values attached to those colors. In cosmology, those behaviors and values are key to maintenance of *duyukta* (balance), which keeps the earth from sinking into the Ocean by allowing one to negotiate spiritual forces from the world above and world below. We could say that, in this way, sacred traditions inflect the production and reproduction of Cherokee society’s relations at the level of self-conception, through an interplay between myth and behavior regulation. With colonialism and settlement, however, we start to see for Cherokee society, as with other Native nations, the gradual imposition of Patriarchal sexual relations. We start to see the undermining of *Gadugi* labor relations, and transformation of spiritual beliefs and relations to land as the *Anikituwagi* experienced territorial dispossession and acculturation. Furthermore, *Anisgaya* were seen as somewhat unmanly for engaging in hunting rather than both farming and control of domestic affairs like “men” are “supposed to” in the Western worldview. While *Anigehya* had to be relegated

to domestic and sexual reproductive labor, and their position within matrifocal leadership or enatically-derived relations is pathologized as backwards and curtailed. Maria Lugones describes these developments in terms of the “coloniality of gender” and she directly relates them to the rise of slave owning, English-educated political leadership in Cherokee culture. Governance structure changes and lifeways changes involved in the production of a “male” stratum educated in Western values therefore allowed for the appearance of slaveholding among Cherokees, some of whom would eventually side with the Confederacy during the Civil War. In my view, gendered coloniality exemplifies an “imbricatory nexus” of dominant material and power relations, one that stabilizes or organizes certain patterns of social reproduction in order to thread the reproduction of an overall society defined by the color line. A major consequence of this process is that Anitsoine, those now considered “Two Spirited” find themselves marked with the homophobia and transphobia of the West.

These developments can be observed as recent as within the last two centuries, possibly shorter, in the Cherokee context. For other cultures around the world we find within them an internal dynamism (endogenous forces) whereby a certain gender non-dualism and expansivity emerges amidst non-capitalist modes of production; the dynamism is then interrupted (by exogenous forces), and gender non-dualism/expansivity replaced with gender binarism and rigidity under colonialism, slavery, and capitalism. Looking specifically at Black struggle under this process in the US: we may emphasize the ways fascism, Statecraft, and class domination required and were anchored by certain forms of sexual oppression, including anti-transness/anti-queerness. Nexuses anchor why “parental absenteeism” is used to repress, ultimately summoned to erase and even denigrate the “atypical” forms of parental involvement in Black communities, including by Black men in their and their kin’s children’s lives. Nexuses anchor the

ter). We don’t falsely universalize geography specific historical material developments by taking “proletarian” and First World embodiment as the deictic center of our analysis. We understand region-specific “sexual” embodiment as a *spandrel* nexed within the dialectical negotiation of external and internal forces, in a nature-nurture sense. We reject the idea that any such embodiment is functionally adapted to a “mode of production.” With the help of a Nexus hypothesis — which observes social forms including Gender, Age, Lineality, and more, that anchor particular patterns of reproduction — we assert a *multitude* of spandrels of embodiment (sex-associated or not), which involve loci of interaction for exogenous and endogenous forces both at the level of the individual organism and whole populations of organism. It is here that one can identify what is now being understood as a “fluidity” and “expansivity” of gender, sex, sexuality, and identity.

We use this to better clarify the position of the “dark proletariat” (a la du Bois) which historically has not been configured within the Western household and nuclear family in the manner described by orthodox Marxism/feminism. This is a way of “transecting” the line between a so-called Grand Patriarchy and Minor Patriarchy (a la Sanyika Shakur), the line between the “dark side” of the coloniality of gender and the “light side” of the coloniality of gender (a la Maria Lugones). And this is about affirming the struggles of the people of the streets, the people being institutionalized and incarcerated, the people who are lumpenized and precariat, those being reproduced as a criminal underclass, reproduced at the margins and the fringes, as disposable and demonic and damned. For the Nexus that stabilizes those patterns which have positioned as accordingly, anchors the reproduction of the dominant material/power relations, forcing us out of homes, out of sacred spaces, out of access to jobs and education and safety and healthcare, among other things.

an artifact of superficial observation. Sexually receptive males who dressed or wore their hair partially or completely in female ways have been noted throughout Africa. In several cases, they are also spirit mediums in possession religions or shamans. (Diversity and Identity: The Challenge of African Homosexualities, pg. 268)”

Not only does Africa’s trajectory of evolution as far as modes of production diverge from linear-stagist presuppositions sometimes elucidated from Marxist analysis: African societies’ complexity of productive relations is correlated to an immense complexity in historical patterns of reproduction (species propagation). Each of such patterns are stabilized by organized social forms I call Nexuses, most notably Seniority and Lineality, which anchor how their respective societies may reckon the reproduction of self-concept, of kinship, and more. Thus, those Nexuses concern the dynamics that have to be considered through an analysis of class and hierarchy (especially for the more stratified patterns); but, a transfeminist perspective is necessary to illuminate how the embodied consequences, aka sex-associated spandrels, constitute a *range* of presentations that are now understood to be “homosexual” or “third gender.”

The heart of transfeminism is to reject sexual dimorphism/dualism; the heart of a decolonial and materialist transfeminism is to understand the binary as a mystification of imperialism, class society, the State, ableism, and authoritarian religion (“a grand distortion of reality” a la Sanyika Shakur). We move toward the “superficially bimodal/dipole distribution” thesis for understanding the range or spectrum of variables involved in sex-associated trait presentation. We emphasize the dialectical interpenetration of these “parts” — understanding them in the register of phylogeny and ontogeny — with “wholes” in the register of sociogeny (a la Fanon) and ecogeny (a la Wyn-

characterization of Black communities as “matriarchal,” used to repress and summoned to impose labor relegations on Black women at the intramural level and in wider society simultaneously. And Nexuses anchor pathologization of Black queerness/transness, especially our disproportionate experience of exclusion from the home/household, and the ways this anchors or even worsens negative social consequences that come from non-household arenas of society (religion, the State, workplace/jobs, school, etc). Nexuses anchor the ways underground and semi-underground economies of survival thread the lives of a lumpenized and criminalized underclass, which fuels mass incarceration and provides a political and economic source of benefit for the Empire/settler colony. Nexuses had to do with stabilizing the patterns of social reproduction whose embodied consequence was to render Seniority the anchor of material/power relations in many traditional African societies, which becomes clear when reading works like *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. Nexuses had to do with stabilizing the patterns of social reproduction whose embodied consequence was to anchor material/power relations in Age-Gradation customs, which becomes clear when reading texts like *African Anarchism: A History of a Movement*. Nexuses also have to do with the following observation made of African societies by Walter Rodney

“the sequence of modes of production noted in Europe were not reproduced in Africa. In Africa, after the communal stage there was no epoch of slavery arising out of internal evolution...”

The movement from communalism to feudalism in every continent took several centuries, and in some instances the interruption of internal evolution never allowed the process to mature. In Africa, there is no doubt that the societies which

eventually reached feudalism were extremely few. So long as the feudal state was still in the making, elements that were communal co-existed with elements that were feudalism and with some peculiarities due to African conditions. The transition was characterized by a variety of social formations: there were pastoralists and cultivators, fishing societies and trading societies, raiders and nomads. They were all being progressively being drawn into a relationship with the land, with each other, and with the state, through the expansion of productive forces and the network of distribution.” (How Europe Underdeveloped Africa)

In communalistic modes of production of Africa, the extended family engages in shared labor and shared distribution of product for 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 in these contexts. The stability of such patterns of reproduction is anchored in an emphasis on either enatic (matrilineal) or agnatic (patrilineal) ties, according to Rodney. Thus a given society might calibrate Lineality as the nexus of imbrication vis-a-vis that thread the overall societal reproduction of a communalistic order. In linking the “head” of kinship groups with progeny, extended relatives, venerated ancestors, and “the unborn,” such Lineal nexuses do not stabilize an organization of the body in an alienated manner, atomized within a “household” and nuclear family separated from clan and ancestors. This is why “gender” is not a defining trait of individual personhood, if it is even constructed at all. The co-existence of non-communalistic modes that drew such societies into differing relationship to forms of Statecraft and class contradictions in Africa warrant understanding how Lineality as a nexus could persist across

social forms. And related to this, we might want to bring my Nexus hypothesis to understanding the following observation made of African societies more broadly:

“Evidence of same-sex patterns in some fifty African societies has been reported or reviewed in this book. All these societies had words— many words, with many meanings for these practices. Furthermore, these societies are found within every region of the continent, and they represent every language family, social and kinship organization, and subsistence pattern...

African same-sex patterns are not only widespread, they are diverse. In fact, they are more diverse than those found in other parts of the world. The three most common patterns are gender-differentiated roles, age-differentiated roles, and (more or less) egalitarian or mutual relations, examples of which can be found for both males and females. (Age and gender in general are key bases for social organization, not just homosexuality, throughout Africa.)

The most often reported pattern is that of a social status for males and sometimes females who engage in varying degrees of cross- and mixed-gendered behavior. It must be remembered that males who do not dress like other men or who do not do typical men’s work are more visible to observers-insiders as well as outsiders. It is literally easier to observe cross- or mixed-gender dress and hair-styles than to monitor sexual behavior, which is usually performed in private and in the dark. However, the apparent predominance of the gender pattern is almost certainly not