

### *Book Review Symposium*

**Clyde Woods**, *Development Drowned and Reborn: The Blues and Bourbon Restorations in Post-Katrina New Orleans* (eds J T Camp and L Pulido), Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-0-8203-5092-9 (paper); ISBN: 978-0-8203-5090-5 (ebook)

*Development Drowned and Reborn* offers crucial historical insights to those interested in Black queer and trans geographies and provides a pathway to read Black queer and trans geographies in relation to the Blues development tradition. Throughout the text, gender appears as the milieu through which race and sex are socio-spatially (dis)organized. Charting Black queer and trans geographies in this text can help to de-naturalize the logics of race and racism by pointing us towards where gendered relations take place as racial arrangements. Woods' analysis in *Development Drowned and Reborn* emphasizes that the development of the social relations of racial capitalism in New Orleans required spatialized gendered relations that precede and guide gender's emergence as a term of social classification in the postwar era (Preciado 2008; Repo 2015). This comes through most clearly in Woods' attention to the spatialization of vice in New Orleans.

Woods emphasizes that creating and siting vice districts in Black neighborhoods at the turn of the century set the stage for residential segregation throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in New Orleans. Zoning vice in Black neighborhoods worked alongside technological developments like the screw pump, which allowed for swamp drainage and thereby white flight to the North part of the city towards Lake Pontchartrain. Establishing vice districts in Black neighborhoods was a crucial tactic for the racialization of urban space at the turn of the century in US cities (Bailey and Shabazz 2014a; Keire 2010; Mumford 1997; Ross 2004; Shabazz 2015). Vice zones are one example Woods presents of a racial enclosure that preserved and further commercialized the capacity to consume bodies that was hallmark of regional white masculinity.

Vice districts like Storyville were often sites of interracial sex and sexual experimentation, and often held emerging LGBT subcultures that revolved around experimentation with and rejection of the meaning of the biologically sexed body and heterosexual sex roles and relations. At the same time, vice districts reflected the ways white masculinity was carved out through creating zones of commercialized pleasure, leisure, and enjoyment that simultaneously functioned as sites of domination, surveillance, and violence. The simultaneity of subjection and subjectification is often lost in renderings of queer space that attempt to recover gender and sexual deviance as inherently transgressive (Oswin 2008). Storyville was crafted as an economy where white men could routinely transgress dominant gender and sexual norms while claiming moral superiority and religious piety, and in that way, preserve the relations of plantation capitalism, which relied on the unrelenting availability of bodies to the desires of white patriarchal power.

Storyville was also a place that held Black cultural production that explored, experimented with, and violated the bounds of sex and race. Woods notes that Storyville had “become a central place for Blues piano experimentation” (p.93). A part of that tradition of Blues experimentation was Tony Jackson. Jackson was a Black gay man born in New Orleans in 1884 who demonstrated musical prodigy at a young age (Rasheed 2015). Jackson started playing in the bars, casinos, and brothels of Storyville when he was 13 years old and quickly became a sought after musician. Known by his 20s as “Professor” because of his musical acumen, Jackson was a friend of Jelly Roll Morton and left New Orleans in 1912 for Chicago, which he perceived as more tolerant towards gay people than New Orleans (Lomax 2001:43-45). Storyville reminds us how racial Blackness becomes the criteria of difference that separates vice from civility so that Black neighborhoods become understood as generalized sites of gender, racial, and sexual experimentation within urban landscapes (Bailey 2011; Bailey and Shabazz 2014b; Chapman 2014; Ross 2004; Shabazz 2015). It is notable that prior to 1912, the year Tony Jackson leaves New Orleans, the city increased policing and surveillance throughout vice districts in response to a contrived moral panic about “wild” Black cocaine users (Keire 2010:66-68).

During World War II the land that held Storyville was redeveloped into the Iberville housing project. City officials closed Storyville in 1917 in response to mounting public health concerns about venereal disease and social hygiene. Woods also reminds us that public health concerns also reflected anxieties that jazz and blues culture were negatively influencing white people. Shutting down Storyville was a biopolitical move because the Bourbon bloc, or ruling elite class, needed to re-consolidate the social relations of racial capitalism by managing race and sex through the socio-spatial forms of the family and public housing.

Resistance to biopolitical state governance would develop in the cultural production of what Woods calls the “Double V” movement. Double V describes the post WWII cultural and political forms that develop around the idea of double victory: one against fascism abroad and one against racism in the US. The material geography of New Orleans’ Double V movement was also the material geography of the innovation and production of Black queer and trans aesthetics throughout the postwar era (Chapman 2014; Rasheed 2015; Vaz 2013:86). For example, Little Richard’s 1955 hit, “Tutti Frutti”, which was originally conceived as a quasi-instructional on anal sex and later sanitized for mass market, was a last minute addition to his album. His producers decided to record the song after being impressed by an impromptu performance during a recording lunch break at the Dew Drop Inn (Weinstein 2015:67). Woods argues that Central City nightlife venues that cropped up after World War II, like the Dew Drop Inn, were vital sites of experimentation and collaboration that formed a pillar of the Blues sustainable development tradition in New Orleans.

We can understand the Black queer and trans geographies of Central City in the postwar era as preserving a sense of place that sees the construction, demolition, and redevelopment of vice zones that Woods traces as part of a long story of how gender operates as the terrain of socio-spatial maneuver through which sex and race are adhered to bodies and scripted through differential land value and zoning and through the coordination of administrative and disciplinary capacities of the state and ruling class. Gender in this text is a “racial arrangement” (Snorton 2017) that can be seen in the spatial organization of the city. You get a sense of the

virulence of American racial segregation as you walk from the French Quarter through the remains of Storyville, distant from the promise of “normal life” (Spade 2015:139) in the newly drained swamp lands that re-instantiated the social relations of white masculinity: racialized space through the destruction of wetland ecosystems. Woods shows us how gender is a racial arrangement expressed through urban planning: the capacity to use and mold the flesh of nature, the flesh of Black people, and the flesh of women into socio-spatial forms.

Woods’ analysis opens up a pathway to read Black queer and trans geographies into the Blues sustainable development tradition (Eaves 2017:87). Black LGBT people and places like Tony Jackson, the Dew Drop Inn, and Storyville materialized how Blues and jazz functioned as the soundtrack of Black resistance and anti-Black domination. The destruction of Storyville does not stamp out vice or the Black queer and trans geographies that are developed in and around Storyville. They are sonic, ether, underground, and they travel, preserving an expression of the moral hypocrisy of the Bourbon bloc and the centrality of flesh zones, or zones of gender and sexual indeterminacy to the reproduction of race and sex and the metabolism of urban space (Heynen 2014).

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