



# THE CULT OF US

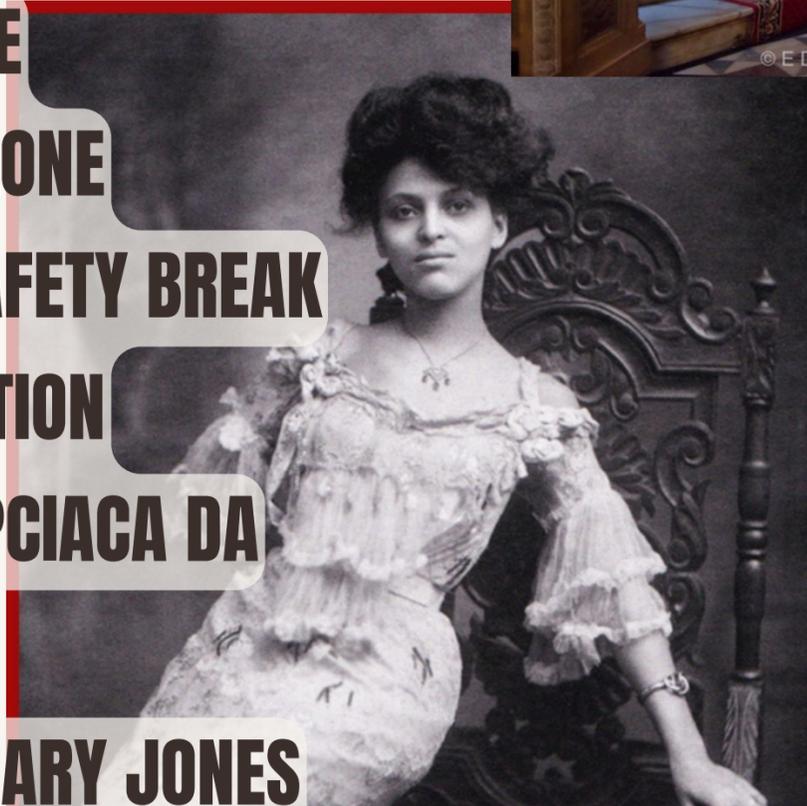
**SEX WORKERS & HISTORICAL  
INTERPRETATION**

# CONTENTS

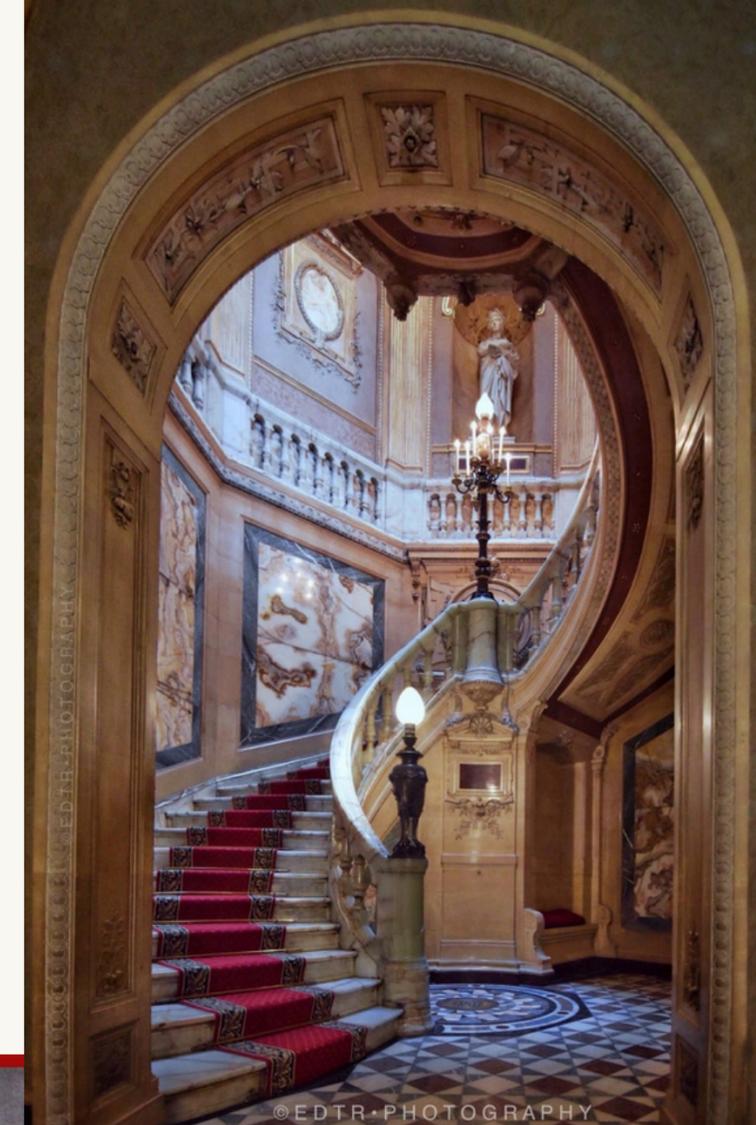


**SAN FRANCISCO, 1917**

- **THE WESTERN TILT & DEFINING “STRUGGLE”**
- **12<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY LONDON**
- **14<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BROTHEL**
- **ARCHAEOLOGY**
- **MEDIEVAL FRANCE**
- **ZUFOLINA - ZUFOLONE**
- **OYSTER MEAL, SAFETY BREAK**
- **CRITICAL FABULATION**
- **ROSA MARIA EGIPCIACA DA VERA CRUZ**
- **THE PEOPLE VS MARY JONES**



**LULU WHITE,  
BORN 1868 IN  
SELMA, AL**



**HÔTEL DE LA  
PAÏVA,  
PARIS**



The stews took their name from mixed-sex Jacuzzis like this one in a 13th century brothel's garden



England started the 12<sup>th</sup> Century with a new



"...THAT THERE BE NO STEWEHOLDER NOR HIS WIFE LET NOT NO SINGLE WOMEN TO GO AND COME ATTE AILE TYMES WHEN THEI LIST AND AS OFTE TYME AS THEI (DO)..." HENRY II, 1161

**THE OUTCAST DEAD**

CROSS BONES GRAVEYARD HAS SHELTERED THE REMAINS OF LONDON'S MOST DESPISED CITIZENS FOR OVER 400 YEARS. THIS IS ITS STORY.

PAUL SLADE ILLUSTRATED





- **14<sup>th</sup> Century Toulouse – Prostitutes petition King Charles VI to repeal sumptuary laws governing public dress.**

- **When Charles VI approved the repeal, the townspeople riot and prostitutes are forced to barricade the brothel.**

- **City officials chose to protect the profit from the brothel which directly funded the university. A new chateau to serve as the town brothel was built on university land.**

1. AM Uzès, BB 1, 29v–30r. 4 April 1357.
 

Valentina de Romano	Romans (Drôme)
Johanetta de Privite	Privas
Johanetta de Valencia	Valence (Drôme) <sup>1</sup>
Janseranda de Livrono	Livron (Drôme)
Pieret de [illegible]	
  
2. AM Toulouse, AA 5, no. 371. 13 February 1425. (incomplete)
 

Johaneta de Corneri	<sup>2</sup>
Marieta de Navarra	Navarre
Johaneta Maleta	<sup>3</sup>
Bernarda de Sancto Petro	Saint Pierre (Haute-Garonne) <sup>4</sup>
  
3. AM Toulouse, CC 2364, no. 72. 13 December 1514.
 

la Bordelesa	Bordelaise
la Johana	
la Tonyma	diminutive of Antonia (Tonia)?
la Serena	“gentle” or “siren”
la Lyonnaesa	Lyonnaise
la Ramonda	
la Francesa	
la Maurilhaca	Mauriac (Cantal) <sup>5</sup>
la Vinhala	“vine-keeper”



**“PHYLLIS & ARISTOTLE”  
C.1486–1520**

# Prostitution in Medieval Society

*The History of an Urban Institution in Languedoc*

Leah Lydia Otis

The University of Chicago Press  
Chicago and London

## Prostitution in Medieval Society:

### The History of an Urban

### Institution in Languedoc Leah

Lydia Otis 1985

- **PARLEMENT DE TOULOUSE:  
PROCÈS DES FILLETES 1462,  
P.61**
- **LES FILHES FROM AMERY'S  
BROTHEL REFUSE TO PARTAKE  
IN LENTEN FAST 1514, P.87**

No. 6b. AM Toulouse, CC 2364, no. 72. 1514. List of expenses incurred by the brothel farmer during Holy Week and Easter Week. (Discussed on p. 87.)

S'ensuit le nombre des filhes de la Bonne Mayson de Tholouse de l'an mil cinq cens et quatorze, et du temps de la Sempmayne Sainte dernièrement passée, et mesmement de celles que ont vescu au despens de l'oste deladite Bonne Mayson durant ladite Sempmaine Sainte et jusques au mercredi après Pasques, et aussi la despence par ledit hoste pour lesdites filhes durant ledit temps sancts.

[For the list of women, see appendix B.]

Ce qu'a esté despendu pour lesdites filhes:

Et premierement la vigile de Rams pour donner à disner ausdites filhes, a fourny le susdit hoste tant en pain, huyle, merlins, arans, escaramdes estimars tant cuitz que rotiz et poisson froiz 17 s. 6 d.

Item le lendemain jour de Pasques Flories dit le jour de Rams, a forny ledit hoste pour lesdites filhes pour companage que dessus 30 s.  
Item le lundi ensuyvent, a forny pour lesdites filhes et provision d'icelles 30 s.  
Le mardi ensuyvent, a forny pour la provision desdites filhes comme dit est 30 s.  
Item le mercredi ensuyvent, pour ce que lesdites filhes ne vouloient point jeuner, a forny 30 s.  
Item le jeudi saint, a forny ledit hoste pour lesdites filhes et leur provision 30 s.  
Item le vendredi saint, pour icelles filhes a forny ledit hoste, pour ce que aucunes jeunoient et les autres non 20 s.  
Item la vigile de Pasques, pour ce que lesdites filhes, ou aulmoins la plus part d'icelles, avoient receu nostre seigneur et ne jeunoyent point, a forny ledit hoste 30 s.  
Item le jour de Pasques, a forny pour lesdites filhes ledit hoste en cher tant chevreaux, moton que beuf et pain 30 s.  
Item le lundi ensuyvent, a forny tant pour le disner que souper 30 s.  
Item le mardi, a forny tant pour le disner que souper des filhes 30 s.  
Item a forny en vin deux pipes lesquelles luy coustoient huit excutz petitz et par ainsi monte par pipe quatre escuz petitz 27 s. 6 d.  
Item en boys pour brusler et abilher le manger ausdites filhes, a forny 15 s.  
Item en charbon une charge, a forny 16 d.  
Item una carrada de fagotz pour lesdites filhes, ledit hoste a forny 15 s.  
Item pour le loyer de la mayson là out lesdites filhes ferent leur Pasques et les litz out dormoient durant ledit temps, a forny ledit hoste 50 s.  
Item pour ung serviteur et une servante que hont servy lesdites filhes durant le temps, a payé 20 s.

## HOW PROSTITUTES IN VENICE DRESSED

Public prostitutes operating in infamous places do not dress all alike. They may be all of a kind in another sense, but their various economic levels determine wide differences in the quality of their clothes. Nevertheless, most of them wear a somewhat masculine outfit: silk or cloth waistcoats adorned with conspicuous fringes and padded like young men's vests, especially those of Frenchmen. Next to their bodies they wear a man's shirt, more or less delicate according to what they can spend, that arrives below the knees, and over it they wrap an overskirt or a silk or cloth apron reaching to their feet, but in the winter season a gown lined in cotton or silk. Their clogs are ten inches high, decorated with fringes, their stockings embroidered silk or cotton, Roman slippers placed inside the clogs. Many of them wear man's breeches, often of ormesin [a kind of silk manufactured in Venice similar to that made in Ormuz in the Persian Gulf], and one instantly recognizes them for what they are because of these trousers and certain little round pieces of silver they use as ornaments. It is difficult to describe their hairdos, especially since one seldom sees them at the window; usually they stand in doorways and on the streets in order to draw passersby into their web. They try to be entertaining by singing little love songs, but most of them sound hoarse and off-key, as women of that low condition well might.

Cesare Vecellio, *Habiti antichi e moderni di tutto il mondo*, Venice, 1590

Lives of the Courtesans, p. 20



Cesare Vecellio, *Courtesan at the Time of Pius V* from *Habiti antichi et moderni di tutto il mondo*. Venice, 1590. Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

## A COURTESAN DRESSED AS A MAN

*In a letter from Pietro Aretino of March 1547 to La Zufolina, a courtesan FROM Pistoia known for her wit, the writer remarks on her hermaphroditic appearance:*

Twice my good fortune has sent your fair person into that house which is mine and others—the first time as a woman dressed like a man and the next time, as a man dressed like a woman. You are a man when you are chanced on from behind and a woman when seen from in front. . . .

Certain it is that nature has so compounded you of both sexes that in one moment you show yourself a male and in the next a female. Indeed, Duke Alessandro [de Medici] did not wish to sleep with you for any other reason than to find out if you were a hermaphrodite in reality or merely in jest. For look you, you talk like a fair lady and act like a pageboy. Anybody who did [not] know you would think that you were now the rider and now the steed—i.e., now a nymph, and now a shepherd; that is, now active and now passive.

What more can I say? Even the clothes which you wear upon your back, and which you are always changing, leave it an open question whether my she-chatterbox is really a he-chatterbox, or whether my he-chatterbox is really a she-one. Meanwhile, even Dukes and Duchesses are diverted by the entertainment of that very salty, very spicy prattle of yours. Vaporishly it escapes from your lips. Your conversation is like pine-nut tartlets, like honey on the comb, like marchpane, to those who find it amusing. Neither Florence nor Ferrara would want you to be a housecat, who are a sly fox amid the hens and roosters.

Pietro Aretino, *Lettere*, VI p. 249 (trans. Thomas Chubb)

**Jan Steen, c.1660s**



10 MIN  
SAFETY  
BREAK



**Frans van  
Mieris,  
c.1669**

# CRITICAL FABULATION

DR. HARTMAN "VENUS IN TWO ACTS" 2008 (PDF AVAIL.)

## CRITICAL FABULATION & THE TENSE OF HISTORY

Lecture by Dr. Saidiya V. Hartman  
University Professor, Columbia University

Tuesday  
March 18, 2025  
6 P.M.

Qatar Auditorium  
Room 112



Preparation for this talk would include becoming familiar with the article "Venus in Two Acts" and *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval*, W. W. Norton & Company, 2019.

• "...STRAINING AGAINST THE LIMITS OF THE ARCHIVE TO WRITE A CULTURAL HISTORY OF [THE CAPTIVE], AND, AT THE SAME TIME, ENACTING THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF REPRESENTING THE LIVES OF THE CAPTIVES PRECISELY THROUGH THE PROCESS OF NARRATION." P. 11

• WHAT IS THE VALUE AND APPLICATION OF THESE METHODOLOGIES FOR STUDYING SEX WORK HISTORY?

MACHETE! MACHETE! MACHETE! MACHETE! MACHETE! MACHETE! MA

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DR. ROSA "ARCHIVE OF THE BODY" (FORTHCOMING)

BELLAQUEO PT. I & II

- ROSA MARIA EGIPCACIACA
- BELLE NALER
- MARY JONES

## LUIZ MOTT IN 2016:

# PARTICIPATION!

also known as Rosa Maria Egipcíaca da Vera Cruz, was a slave and later freedwoman, a renowned religious mystic and author, and the founder of a convent for former prostitutes in colonial Rio de Janeiro. She arrived in Rio as a 6-year-old slave, having come from lands occupied by the Coura people in present-day Lagos, Nigeria. Upon her arrival in Rio, she was baptized at Igreja da Candelária (Candelária Church). When she was 12, she suffered sexual abuse at the hands of her master and was subsequently sold to the Inficionado plantation in the gold-prospecting region of Minas Gerais, some 300 kilometers northwest of Rio. She lived there for fifteen years as a prostitute, the only female in a troop of seventy-seven male slaves.

According to Rosa's own testimony to ecclesiastical authorities, at the age of 29, she came to be possessed by a demon and to receive regular exorcisms from Francisco Gonçalves Lopes (1694- ?), a priest originally from Minho, Portugal, who was known as the "scourge of demons." Rosa and Lopes developed an intimate bond that led to the suspicion of the authorities and, eventually, their persecution and imprisonment by the Inquisition. They were declaimed as lovers.

- WHERE DO YOU GET A HUNCH?
- WHAT DON'T YOU BELIEVE?
- WHAT SEEMS MISINTERPRETED?
- WHERE ARE YOU WANTING TO KNOW MORE?
- IS THERE ANYONE AT ALL WHO IS TELLING THE TRUTH?

## **ROSA EGIPCIACA** *Brazil, c.1719–1771*

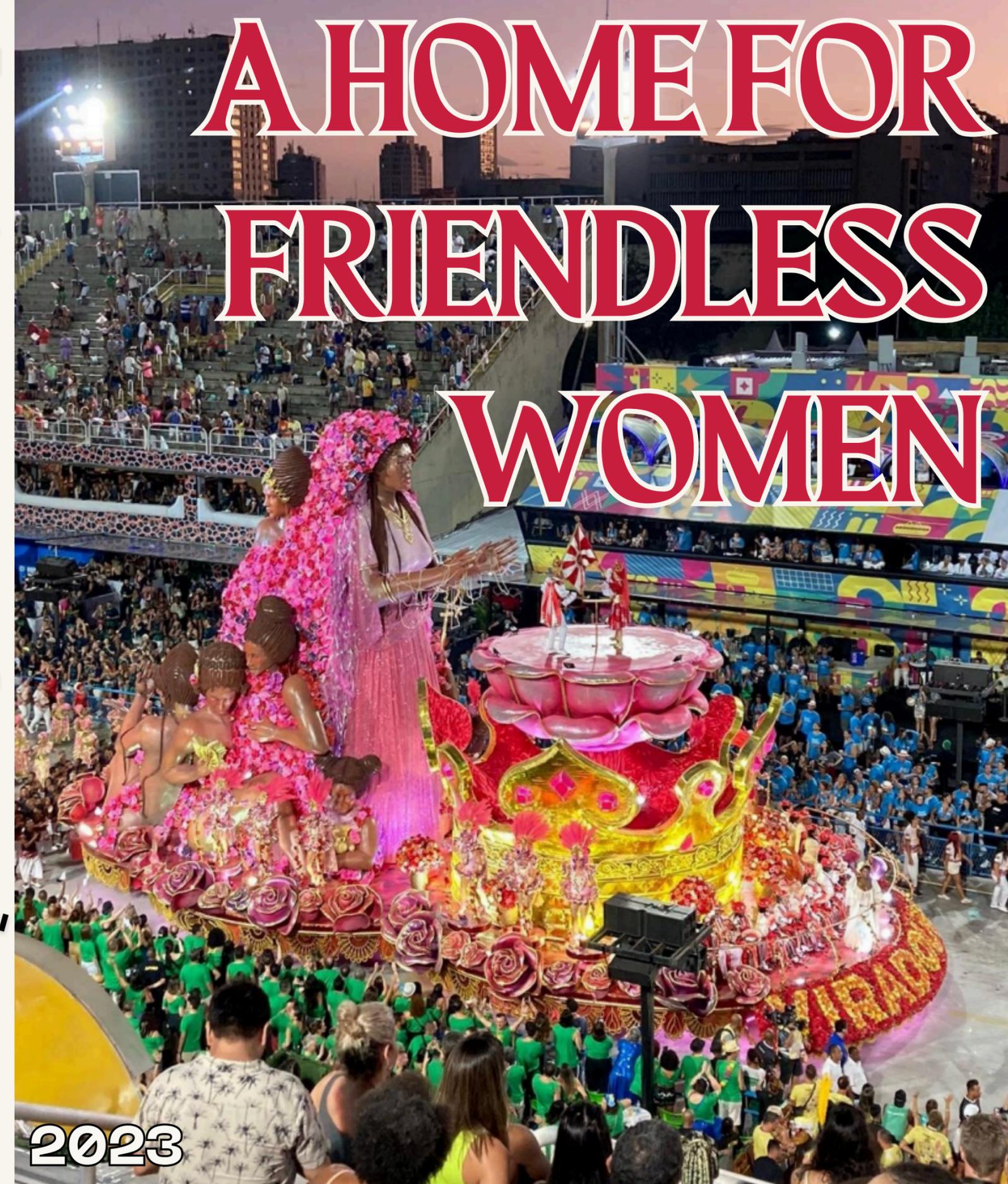
- Trafficked from Ouidah to Rio de Janeiro in 1725 at age 6; started working in a brothel in Minas Gerais in 1733 at age 14.
- Returned to Rio in 1751, established Recolhimento de Nossa Senhora do Parto in 1754 for former "women of the world."

## **MAMIE PINZER** *U.S., 1885–c.1940*

- Sent by her abusive family to Magdalen Home in 1898; began utilizing sex work to "ensure her security" in 1899 at age 14.
- Began to befriend younger prostitutes in 1915 and established Montreal Mission for Friendless Girls.

## **CARMEN MUÑOZ** *Mexico, c.1950–*

- Married at age 12 and a mother by age 14, she was a street-based worker in CDMX for roughly 40 years.
- Secured Casa Xochiquetzal, a shelter for aging sex workers, in 2005 with the help of feminist artists.



# **A HOME FOR FRIENDLESS WOMEN**

2023

partner at the moment of their transaction. The *Sun* told its readership, *in Latin*, how Jones engaged in sex acts with her clients by wearing a “piece of cow [leather?] pierced and opened like a woman’s womb . . . held up by a girdle.”<sup>24</sup> This detail—apparently appropriate only for the eyes of the educated upper class—gave rise to the epithet “Beefsteak Pete,” which appeared recurrently in subsequent media coverage. Though Jones initially served time for grand larceny, in the mid-1840s, she would re-emerge in the press in relation to charges of vagrancy, another iteration of “theft,” which pivoted on her public perambulations and the appearance of freedom. On December 21, 1844, the *New York Herald* informed its readership that “the notorious Beefsteak Pete” had been “sent up to the Island for six months as a vagrant, and since that time . . . has been repeatedly sent back.”<sup>25</sup> Katz also notes, that “on August 9, 1845 . . . the *Commercial Advertiser* reported that ‘a notorious character, known as *Beefsteak Pete*, was arrested on Thursday night, perambulating the streets in woman’s attire.’”<sup>26</sup> The frequency with which the moniker “Beefsteak

the pickup notice, Jones reemerged in the press reiteratively into the twentieth century, even after the formal end of slavery and the period of Reconstruction. In an article entitled “Many Gastronomic Records Established,” published on October 2, 1908, in the *Virginia Enterprise*, “‘Beefsteak Pete,’ a Bowery character” was reported to have “consumed 17 pounds of meat from which he takes his cognomen at one setting, and five days later he raised this figure to 24 pounds, thus making a total of 41 pounds of meat consumed in two days.”<sup>28</sup> Here, Jones, in the twilight of her life, attempted to resignify that epithet constituted by the flesh of what Nyong’o described as a “surrogate vagina” into a “gastronomic record” based on a no less spectacular form of consumption.<sup>29</sup>

As this resignification occurred by way of eating, which, as Kyla Wazana Tompkins has described, functioned in nineteenth-century print culture to attach “extreme commodity pleasure to nonwhite bodies,” Jones’s “gastronomic record” conjoins and highlights the tacit link between certain gustatory practices and aspects of masturbatory gratification.<sup>31</sup> Consuming her surrogate flesh to make a new meaning for her name, Jones exemplifies what Spillers explains in her noted essay on psychoanalysis and race—that “there is an aspect of human agency that cannot be bestowed or restored by others,” such that eating, in this sense, becomes a tactic “for gaining agency” that “is not an arrival but a departure, not a goal but a process.”<sup>32</sup> As an erotic act that emerges by way of a familiar, if not commonplace, practice of racial-cum-sexual exchange, eating precipitates the question “What is (the discourse of) sexuality to the fungible?” (a demonstration of, at least, a temporal disordering of psychoanalytic and sexological rubrics in which these particular acts may be regarded as a psychosexual regression from the genital to the oral phase). Jones’s archival installation also evinces how amalgamation sometimes occurs by way of mastication, wherein the combining of flesh—both hers and not hers—exists as a relay between self-fashioning and an ever-pressing “out there.”<sup>33</sup> Here, Jones’s mouth serves a double function of “processing food into digestible matter and in producing sense,” wherein the eating, in this regard, becomes a way, as Tompkins has argued, “to reembody oneself, both as food and as its container.”<sup>34</sup> Perhaps this reading figures Jones as ever the pragmatist, whose calculation to eat as much as she could of that stigmatized surrogate flesh produced a record in the archive of self-revision by way of accumulation and consumption. This is a consequence of reading the archive for gender as an always racial and racializing construction—as a strategy for living and dying—that in this instance provides a way for thinking about what forms of redress are possible in/as flesh.



**THE MAN-MONSTER,**

Peter Sewally, alias Mary Jones, &c. &c.

*Sentenced 18<sup>th</sup> June 1836, to 5 years imprisonment at hard labor at Sing Sing, for Grand Larceny*

*Published by H. R. Robinson, 48, Courtland St. N.Y.*

**MARY JONES OF GREENE STREET (NY), 1836:**

**"I HAVE BEEN IN THE PRACTICE OF WAITING UPON GIRLS OF ILL-FAME AND MADE THE BEDS AND RECEIVED THE COMPANY AT THE DOOR AND RECEIVED THE MONEY FOR THE ROOMS, ETC. AND THEY INDUCED ME TO WEAR WOMEN'S CLOTHES, SAYING I LOOKED SO MUCH BETTER IN THEM AND I HAVE ALWAYS ATTENDED PARTIES AMONG THE PEOPLE OF MY OWN COLOR DRESSED IN THAT WAY AND IN NEW ORLEANS I ALWAYS DRESSED IN THIS WAY."**

**A  
SHORT  
HISTORY  
OF  
TRANS  
MISOGYNY**  
JULES GILL-PETERSON



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