**Exploring the Roots of the Slave Mentality: Phallicism, Genocidal Violence, Homoeroticism and Rape in the Jewish Holocaust and American Police-State**

**Abstract**

Filling a gap in knowledge in gender theory, genocidal, and Holocaust studies, this paper operationalizes the concept of phallicism as an analytic explanation of the simultaneous killing and sexual victimization of racialized men in western, capitalist, patriarchal societies. The theory of phallicism posits that racialization lays the basis for a sexualization process wherein racialized males are caricaturized as both salacious savages (who can be raped by the men or women of the dominant racial group) and bestial/wanton creatures deserving of immediate death for the sake of liberal civility. Breaking with the dominant interpretive lenses in scholarly discourses around race and gender that understand racialized femininity as the basis of dehumanization, this paper will operationalize the notion of phallicism through historical and comparative analysis of the writings of political prisoner George Jackson and Primo Levi, a survivor of the Jewish Holocaust. With the theory of phallicism—the guiding theoretic of the paradigm of Black Male Studies—we can sharpen our conceptual acumen to account for the function of misandric patterns of intergroup violence and its role as the organizing principle of the negrophobia characteristic of Western, patriarchal, capitalist regimes.

*Keywords*: Black Male Studies, Philosophical Anthropology, Existentialism, Africana Philosophy, Black Thought, Genocide Studies

***Introduction***

While scholars readily associate genocidal and other extreme race or ethnic-based forms of violence with the brutal killing of Black, Jewish or other racialized men and boys, gender theory/genocidal/Holocaust studies have left us with no way to explain the imposition of rape and other forms of sexual violence on these bodies during times of lethal inter-group conflict and war (Del Zotto & Jones, 2002). As a result of an emphasis on heteronormative narratives of genocidal violence through a cultural association of killing with the male body and rape or sexual violence with the female body, Western scholarship has left a deafening silence on the rape and sexual violence inflicted on racialized males during counterinsurgencies, instances of genocide and intergroup conflict until recently (Khalili, 2011; Del Zotto & Jones, 2002; Curry, 2017, 2020).

However, racialized men’s sexual vulnerability is inextricably tied to caricatures of racial dehumanization, a dynamic that is supported by historical scholarship and testimonies of survivors of the Jewish Holocaust and black US prisoners. Despite evidence that suggests the sex-specific patterns of violence and the population level dynamics that characterize Black America’s structural relationship to the US as “one of colonizer and colonized,” the insights of internal colonialism theory or other empirically informed theoretical methodologies concerned with explaining racism as a form of gendercidal intergroup conflict is rarely engaged by scholars in the Western Liberal university system writ large (Taylor Saito, 2020, p. 110; Del Zotto, 2004; Allen, 1968, 2005; Pinderhughes, 2010, 2011; Ball, 2010; Clay-Gilmore, 2022, 2023).

In fact, the intellectual discourses and justifications which have been historically integral to “the implementation of policies designed to control” African descended peoples in the US have crystallized around the development and maintenance of a carceral regime for Black males premised on anticipatory “police counterinsurgency strategies” since WW2 (Stewart, 2002, p. 108; Hinton & Cook, 2020, p. 264; Clay-Gilmore, 2023). Within the broader schema of Western Liberal thought, the figure of the Black male is characterized by an ontological negation. Within scholarly discourses “dominated by progressive and liberal thinking” the figure of the Black man is constructed as “a ‘depository of negativity’ par excellence,” while the most aggressive currents of neoconservative thought prefigures African American males as “the equivalent of Frankenstein’s monsters” whose relative inferiority to their women can only be managed by targeting this group with more punitive social policies (Ajari, 2023, p. 75; Stewart, 2002, p. 102).

Against the dominant intersectional rubrics of race-gender in the Anglophone University-system, the paradigm of Black Male Studies and its guiding notion of phallicism offers us a theory formulated to explain the peculiar gendercidal targeting *and* sexual victimization of Black and other racialized males across colonial, western, capitalist, and patriarchal societies in an empirically and conceptually rigorous manner (Curry, 2017; 2018; Ogungbre, 2020; Ajari, 2023). The theory of phallicism posits that racialization lays the basis for a sexualization process wherein racialized males are caricaturized as *both* salacious savages (who can be raped by the men or women of the dominant racial group) and bestial/wanton creatures deserving of immediate death for the sake of liberal civility.

With insights from the emerging field of Black Male Studies and its guiding theoretic, Black philosophers and Black Studies scholars can fill a gap in knowledge left by the popular scholastic historiographies and theoretical discourses which are premised on a delegitimization of the Black Power movement in Black Studies and in the canonical knowledge systems of the Anglophone world-university system writ large (Rojas, 2007; Wynter, 2005; Thomas, 2007; Curry, 2017). Under this scholarly milieu, all variations of Black nationalism are aprioristically deemed ‘hypermasculine’, accused of being obsolete and thus in opposition to newer and ostensibly more progressive (assimilationist) Black thought centered on intersectional paradigms of inter-group stratification (Curry, 2014).

Rather than following dominant tendencies of thought in Black feminist theory that simply reinterpret the greater evidence of death and dying of racialized males in western capitalist regimes as male privilege, phallicism is an empirically valid theoretical methodology that predicts gendercidal (misandric) logics of racism in the patterns of dehumanization, ‘enemy’ target acquisition during counterinsurgencies, and in the extreme levels of militarized-police violence imposed on Black people in the US and other racialized populations around the world during and since chattel slavery (Clay-Gilmore, 2022, 2023; Curry, 2018; Purdue & Eibach, 2008; Khalili, 2011; Del Zotto & Jones, 2002; Edwards, 2021; Del Zotto, 2004; O’Reilly, 1991). Moreover, phallicism recognizes the tendency of outgroup racialized males to be configured in ways that allow the reality of their sexual victimization and rape by men and women of the dominant group to be denied.

Despite the priority of autobiography, testimony and cultural narratives in the intersectional methods that have assumed priority in Black Studies, the influence of these methods has not yielded any exploration of how the ontological negation of racialized male subjects as a hypermasculine (formidable/dangerous) threat to civility *and* a sexual threat (which is simultaneously being subjugated to rape by the dominant racial groups) within capitalist, racist and patriarchal societies or how these dynamics have impacted these groups on a psycho-existential level (Clay-Gilmore, 2022). Rather, the mimetic thesis, “or the idea that Black males seek to emulate and ultimately realize themselves as patriarchs next to white men,” has cemented itself in the disciplinary agenda of race-gender theorists and ideologically overdetermined the study of Black men through rubrics that stem from racist criminological formulations of Black masculinity (Curry, 2017, p. 10; 2021).

Breaking with reigning theoretical regime in Black Studies and Black philosophy, this paper will operationalize the notion of phallicism to conceptualize findings from history and a comparative analysis of the prison writings of George Jackson and Primo Levi, a survivor of the Jewish Holocaust. In his account of the death camps at Auschwitz, Levi describes a world constructed towards the extermination of Jewish men (and thus Jewish people). The structure of the concentration camp imposed an amoral order wherein Jewish men were understood as nonhuman entities – Muselmänner – who only had limited methods to escape “selections [for the gas chamber] or from death by exhaustion” (Levi, 1958, p. 117). Like Black nationalist thinkers before him, George Jackson describes the racial order of the US as functioning to impose an alienation on Black men that seeks to make them “interiorize an unhealthy and self-destructive form” of self-consciousness (Ajari, 2023, p. 12; Sawyer, 2020; Stuurman, 2017; Newton, 2002). The young Black male, Jackson explains, is confronted with an ontological program of the US that is so precisely configured to remove him from society and into the prison that he is conditioned to accept the inevitability of this condition from his birth.

This essay will contain two parts. I begin by exploring the genocidal logics of Auschwitz in the testimony of Primo Levi. Levi’s work provides a visceral account of the brutality of the Holocaust and its methods of killing Jewish men, and thus Jewish people. In the same section, I will turn to insights found in the arguments of philosopher Sylvia Wynter as it relates to the dehumanization and gendercide of Black males in (American) society. As she argues, the classificatory logics (ethno-disciplines) of the Western academy which guide the social organization of knowledge reify a moral universe of obligation that poor young Black men are shut out of. After observing these patterns of dehumanization in history and tracing their epistemological genesis to renaissance humanism, Wynter argues that young Black males occupy a similar place in American society as that of Jewish or Armenian males during their respective instances of genocide.

Her claim that the normative categories of the American educational system inform the dehumanization of those groups deemed racially inferior or unworthy of life in society is supported by the writings of Black prison intellectuals like George Jackson and historical scholarship on the formation of Nazi Race Laws in the Third Reich. Together, Levi and Jackson’s works provide psycho-existential accounts of violence that our dominant scholarly rubrics cannot explain in any systematic way. In the second section, I draw on insights from Black Male Studies to fill a gap in our understanding of the sexual assault of racialized men in the now dominant paradigms of wartime sexual violence in Holocaust or Genocidal Studies. I then outline the theory of phallicism to increase our conceptual acumen to account for the function of misandric patterns of intergroup violence and its role as an organizing principle of the negrophobia characteristic of Western, patriarchal, capitalist regimes.

***Part One: Portraits of Death and Survival in Auschwitz and the American Police State***

In his memoir, *Survival in Auschwitz (1958)* Primo Levi describes a brutal initiation into the genocidal camps of the Nazis and its visceral implications on the Jewish people as a whole. After describing the psychological toll of being transported like cattle and assigned prisoner numbers, he turns toward describing the brutal conditions of Auschwitz. Levi emphasizes the mass confusion of the entire ordeal. Being separated from their families, stripped naked, and thrown in a cargo shuttle caused much angst for him and his peers. He also explains that the confusion was paired with noisiness. In his own words, “we talk, everybody talks to everybody else, we make a great noise (Levi, 1958, p. 29).

Levi also writes of the denaturing of moral capacities and a break with the promise of futurity (temporality), language barriers, starvation, and the quotidian nature of sexual violations, intensive and backbreaking labor in wretched conditions. Within the context of Auschwitz, extermination entailed the complete deprivation of Jewish men materially *and* subjectively. However, men like Levi were particularly targeted because they were not able to speak Yiddish or German and were “ones who did not know how to work” and were “slapped from morning to the evening” as a result (Levi, 1958, p. 61). Writing on the amoral ontological register of this experience he termed ‘the bottom’, Levi (1958) avers that:

The two classes of pessimists and optimists are not so clearly denned, however, not because there are many agnostics, but because the majority, without memory or coherence, drift between the two extremes, according to the moment and the mood of the person they happen to meet. Here I am, then, on the bottom. One learns quickly enough *to wipe out the past and the future* when one is forced to. A fortnight after my arrival I already had the prescribed hunger, that chronic hunger unknown to free men, which makes one dream at night, and settles in all the limbs of one’s body. (p. 44-45)

In other portions of his text, Levi gives shape to the sex-specific and existential crisis generated from within the highly complex system of the work camp in terms of a brute calculus of division. For instance, he writes that the camp differentiates men on two bases: the saved and the drowned. While the outside world may have a cohesive social fabric in place, the Lager is simply “a struggle to survive” (Levi, 1958, p. 115). Those seeking assistance “will find no one to extend a helping hand; on the contrary someone will knock him aside, because it is in no one’s interest that there will be one more ‘musselman’ dragging himself to work every day” (Levi, 1958, p. 115). These ‘musselmen’ were those men chosen for more immediate death given the lack of usefulness of their labor or skills in maintaining the class dynamics of the camp that the Nazis saw fit to impose. As Levi explains, “[W]hosoever does not know how to become an ‘Organisator’, ‘Kombinator’, ‘Prominent’ soon becomes a ‘musselman’. In life, a third way exists, and is in fact the rule; it does not exist in the concentration camp” (Levi, 1958, p. 115).

These men engender no compassion or other moral affect because they were damned. Once identified, they were routinely ignored by other prisoners who hoped not to become them in the eyes of the Kommandos—those who hope not to be identified with those musselmen or “men of decay” who “die or disappear, without leaving a trace in anyone’s memory” (Levi, 1958, p. 116). Levi explains that musselmen exemplify the gruesome racial logics of the Lager. He writes that these entities “form the backbone of the camp” as “an anonymous mass, continually renewed and always identical, of non-men who march and labour in silence” with the “divine spark dead within them, already too empty to really suffer” (Levi, 1958, p. 116). He continues to explain that one “hesitates to call them living: one hesitates to call their death death, in the face of which they have no fear, as they are too tired to understand” (Levi, 1958, p. 116). Painting a portrait of this tragic figure, Levi writes:

They crowd my memory with their faceless presences, and if I could enclose all the evil of our time in one image, I would choose this image which is familiar to me: an emaciated man, with head dropped and shoulders curved, on whose face and in whose eyes not a trace of a thought is to be seen. If the drowned have no story, and single and broad is the path to perdition, the paths to salvation are many, difficult and improbable. (Levi, 1958, p. 116)

In his writings, Levi also makes constant reference to a break with futurity as a human attribute. Futurity and history had no legitimate references on this lower register of existence of ‘the bottom’. Futurity is a human quality and accordingly, non-men had no use for it because they were set to die *any minute*. Close attention to Levi’s observations on history and futurity as features of Aryan/human existence that are inapplicable to the Muselmänner can provide insight into the pre-conceptual, psycho-existential content of racialized men enduring conditions of terrorism, counterinsurgency, genocide, or other forms of intergroup ethnic warfare. Recounting the exhausting labor and its wrecking of any sense of hope in the future for him and other prisoners, Levi (1958) writes that

Day by day everyone felt his strength vanish, his desire to live melt away, his mind grow dim; and Normandy and Russia were so far away, and the winter so near; hunger and desolation so concrete, and all the rest so unreal, that it did not seem possible that there could really exist any other world or time other than our world of mud and our sterile and stagnant time, whose end we were by now incapable of imagining. *For living men, the units of time always have a value, which increases in ratio to the strength of the internal resources of the person living through them; but for us, hours, days, months spilled out sluggishly from the future into the past, always too slowly, a valueless and superfluous material, of which we sought to rid ourselves as soon as possible*. With the end of the season when the days chased each other, vivacious, precious and irrecoverable, the future stood in front of us, grey and inarticulate, like an invincible barrier. For us, history had stopped. (pp. 151-152)

In her article *No Humans Involved (NHI) (1994)* philosopher Sylvia Wynter argues that Black males occupy a similar place within the structure of American society as Jewish or Armenian men during their respective instances of genocide in the post-Jim Crow US. She explains that it is the humanism and knowledge systems of modernity that stabilize our subjectivity or “inner eyes” as one which place jobless, young Black males outside of the scope of reciprocal moral obligations (i.e., humanness) based on their distance from how these normative and epistemological conceptual categories that define humanness using rubrics which derive from the philosophical anthropology of western Europe—drawing on the work of Aime Cesaire, she terms this abstraction MAN (Cesaire, 1952).

The incongruence between the normative representation of the white human or MAN and the darker races of mankind that organizes Western disciplines structures a reality wherein young poor Black males can be treated as dangerous or subhuman entities who *ought* to be eliminated from society (Wynter, 1994, p. 46). Thus, the acronym N.H.I. (No Humans Involved), which was found in various police reports of officers of the Los Angeles Police Department in the wake of the assault of Rodney King, is identified by Wynter as causal and “clearly having genocidal effects with the incarceration and elimination of young Black males by ostensibly normal and everyday *mean*s” (Wynter, 1994, p. 43). Said differently, Black males are sociogenically (at the level of bios *and* mythos) liminal and so are condemned by the aspirational, ontological and epistemological categories of the dominant society that sustain the post-Jim Crow domestic American racial order. Explaining this post-civil rights dynamic of racial control, she writes after the “wake of the Civil Right movements, and of the Affirmative Action programs which incorporates a now new Black middle class into the ‘American Dream,’” young unemployed Black males “have been made to pay the ‘sacrificial costs’ for the relatively improved conditions since the 1960s” that moved “many Black Americans out of the ghettoes into the suburbs” (Wynter, 1994, pp. 44-46).

Tracing the current configuration of Western disciplines to Western Europe’s Enlightenment conceptions of humanity as being in possession of reason and its secularizing of knowledge since the end of the 18th century, Wynter argues that Western schemas or disciplines of knowledge are premised on the racial stratification of the human population. The basis of this racial difference was initially on whites’ ontological possession of (and the Black savage’s lack of) reason and moral capacity during the renaissance period (MAN1) but was sophisticated into a racist (western humanist) scientific doctrine that spawned modern sociocultural (anthropological) theory that still prefigures non-whites as biologically inferior at an evolutionarily level next to white humans (MAN2) – in both iterations of Western humanism then, Blackness was (and remains) the “central image of the non-western other by which the West distinguishes itself” (Pandian, 1985, p. 85; Stuurman, 2017; Stocking, Jr., 1978).

The classificatory logics or humanism conceptualized by Wynter as targeting young Black males in particular with incarceration and police brutality generate from two fallacies at the core of Western Europe’s culturally unique representation of the human Self through its academic disciplinary paradigms: (a) the technocultural fallacy and (b) the fallacy of supraculturalism. The first is animated by the “master” discipline of economics (in the place of theology) and its premise that “human behaviors are primarily motivated by the imperative common to all organic species of securing the material basis of their existence” (Wynter, 1994, pp. 48-49). In this way, the overall conditions of existence for nonwestern culture and the diversity of nonwhite peoples’ local conception of the Self are ignored.

This problem generates the second fallacy which depends on the overrepresentation of our present Western local culture’s mode of knowledge and depiction of the human as if it were the human itself. The dictum of economic/material well-being paired with the culturally specific but biologized and over-represented conception of mankind projected from Western humanist sciences provide the basis for the reification of the white human, and thus the NHI acronym and global logics of social stratification between the rich and poor. Wynter’s explanation of this dynamic of reification or sociogeny is worth quoting at length:

It is only within the terms of our present local culture, in which the earlier feudal-Christian religious ethic and its goal of spiritual redemption and eternal salvation has been inverted and replaced by the goal of material redemption, and, therefore, by the transcendental imperative of securing the economic well-being, of the now biologized body of the Nation (and of national security!), that the human can at all be conceived as if it were a mode of being which exists in a relation of pure continuity with that of organic life. Whilst it is only within these terms, that the NHI acronym and its classificatory logic is to be understood as part of the genetic status-organizing principles of which the phenomenon we have come to know as ‘race’, is the expression. The feudal-Christian order of Europe had conceived of the case organizing principle of its order as being divinely ordained. Equally it is only on the basis of our present conception of a genetic status organizing principle, based on evolutionary pre-selected degrees of biological value, as iconized in the White/Black invariant differential, that our present world system and its nation-state sub-units, can be hierarchically allocated on the basis of each category’s ostensible pre-selection for higher and lower degrees of genetic worth. Once ostensibly ‘verified’ by the individual or category’s place on the social ladder. (Wynter, 1994, pp. 50-51)

Before sketching out some of the implications of a new kind of humanism and calling for intellectuals to marry their thought to the jobless poor and the environment destroyed by industrial capitalism, Wynter synthesizes insights from historian Carter G. Woodson and anthropologist Ansrom Legesse to establish the relationship intellectuals have to the sociogenic replication of White/Black invariant differentials in American culture and society (and as a result of Western imperialism, the world). Through the configuration of “prescriptive categories of our present world system, as disseminated in our present global university system and its correlated textbook industry” we come to know ourselves within generalized horizons of subjective understanding that “induce the collective behaviors of each [cultural] order’s subjects” (Wynter, 1994, p. 55).

Within this paradigm, intellectuals function “as the grammarians of our order who are well-versed in the techniques of ordering a select body of facts within a framework that is completely consistent with the system of values, the weltanschauung and, above all, the cognitive model of the society to which they belong” (Wynter, 1994, p. 55). Within the American system of education, Carter G. Woodson identified the extra-cognitive function of school curriculum/textbooks which “was that of inducing the White students to believe that their ancestors had done everything worth doing in the past, and at the same time, to induce the Black students to believe that their ancestors had done nothing worth doing, whether in the human or in the American past” (Wynter, 1958, p. 58). For Wynter, Woodson’s insight is an “epistemological break” and amounts to the identification that the prescriptive categories promulgated through educational systems provide the basis for the dehumanization of those groups deemed racially inferior or unworthy of life. Drawing a correspondence between racism in the US and the perpetration of the Jewish Holocaust, she writes that “in most respects the Germans were the *best educated* people on earth” (Wynter, 1994, p. 60).

Wynter’s observation that the methods of elimination utilized by the US government and the Third Reich achieve similar genocidal ends through the elimination of Black males is supported by recent historical scholarship and writings of Black political prisoners like George Jackson. Introduced as a refutation of previous scholarship which took the position that the Nazis were ultimately uninspired by American Race Law, James Q. Whitman argues in *Hitler’s American Model (2017)* that the Nazis took a sustained, eager, and inspirational approach to assimilating American legal paradigms of race and citizenship. As Whitman observes, “as early as 1928 Hitler was speechifying admiringly about the way Americans had “gunned downed the millions of Redskins to a few hundred thousand and now keep the modest remnant under observation in a cage [reservation system]” (Whitman, 2017, p. 9).

Making it clear that the goal of the Nazi officials was to drive the Jewish people into exile and create conditions of general attrition and intentional displacement, Whitman also turns attention to how the misandric logics of US and Nazi Law were reflected through Race Laws. Immigration laws in America, for instance, were references for Nazis seeking to keep the “body of the nation” pure of mixed Jewish persons [i.e. those fathered by a Jewish male] who posed a threat to social stability. They found inspiration in Amerika’s immigration law that stripped citizenship from white women who married outgroup racialized males. Whitman (2017) explains this legal technique thusly,

The implementation of the Nuremberg Laws focused in a similar way on marital choices: the Nazis faced the question of which half-Jewish Mischlinge, “mongrels,” would count as “Jews” by law. The answer they gave, in part, was that “mongrels” were “Jews” if they chose to marry other “Jews,” thus revealing their Jewish “inclinations” or the “strength” of their “Jewish blood.” Like an American woman who took a Japanese spouse, these were individuals who had chosen to associate themselves with a foreign element abhorrent to the healthy *Volk*-community. (p. 59)

Moreover, the legal devices used against Black Americans during this time were recognized by Germans to have the effect of internally colonizing the population, rendering their citizenship as “‘a dead letter’” (Whitman, 2017, p. 59). In fact, the US stratagem of semi-colonialization through Jim Crow ‘dead letter’ citizenship to contain its Black population was a frequent reference for the Nazis and motivated them to draft the earliest anti-Jewish legislation “to exclude Jews from government, universities, and the legal profession” (Whitman, 2017, p. 66). Like other colonized populations, the Germans used an ethnographic cultural essentialist lens of “biculturalism” wherein “the colonized were capable of switching strategically between European and local semiotic codes, thereby eluding the colonizer’s understanding and control” (Steinmetz, 2008, 594).

In accordance with this view, Nazis constructed Blacks and Jews on a similar basis of racial inferiority. As Whitman observes, in Nazi literature “American blacks were not a desperately oppressed and impoverished population, but a menacing “alien race” of invaders that threatened to get “the upper hand,” and therefore had to be thwarted” (Whitman, 2017, p. 67). But importantly, Nazi documents indicate that German state administrators argued on several instances that the American social classificatory logics of race and its system of Jim Crow segregation were *too harsh* to be fully implemented in Germany. One reason for this was the common law basis upon which American judges enforced the racial classification system of the dominant culture—what Whitman terms “mongrelization law.” As Whitman writes, American law represented “the only body of foreign jurisprudence offering an extensive corpus of doctrine that Nazi policy makers found” complementary enough for them “to investigate and exploit” (Whitman, 2017, p. 80). Nevertheless, “the Nazis were not ready to import American law [on matters of race] wholesale” partly due to the fact that they found it to be “too harsh to be embraced by the Third Reich” (Whitman, 2017, p. 80).

Paradoxically, the post-WW2 period “fear of the revolt in the periphery on the one hand, and an embarrassment over the racialized language and practice of Fascists and Nazis on the other hand” spurred a reinvention of colonial racial logics by the Western world (Khalili, 2013, p. 236). In the place of racial eugenics, a cultural valuation schema emerged that ranked peoples “according to an exclusive set of criteria” and “in a predetermined fashion placed European and American cultures on one end of the spectrum and the colonized on the other end” (Khalili, 2013, p. 236). This new cultural grammar provided “a basis for counterinsurgency action” in formerly colonized areas *and* within the US (Khalili, 2013, p. 236; Newton, 1974; Clay-Gilmore, 2023).

As historian Elizabeth Hinton explains, this cultural grammar led American policymakers toward “cultural interpretations of racial inequality” which rationalized new domestic agendas that encouraged “the continual flow of law enforcement resources into low-income African American communities” (Hinton, 2017, p. 18). In the end, this precipitated “a new scale and scope in” domestic police counterinsurgency campaigns within the US (Hinton & Cook, 2021 p. 274; Allen, 2005). Contrary to the dominant narratives in American scholarship that “the rise of a national crime-control program at the height of the civil rights movement” was simply “a logical response to rising crime rates,” Hinton explains that this was in fact a response “to demographic transformations, the victories of civil rights protest, and the threat of large-scale urban disorder” posed by Black America (Hinton & Cook, 2021, p. 271).

To manage the threat of ghetto riots and the Civil-Rights cum Black Power movement, officials at all levels of government crafted public policy which allowed for “an unprecedented federal investment in law enforcement” that “would prevent future disorder” (Hinton & Cook, 2020, p. 272). Indeed, the riots of the 60s “demonstrated massive unrest among inner-city residents, for whom civil rights and voting rights did not change the impoverishment and dehumanization of their lives” (Allen, 2005, p. 2). To ensure law and order against Black rebellion through the cutting-edge application of the “concept of counterinsurgency,” US officials administrated the Black population like a foreign threat and socially engineered “the demonization and criminalization of young black men in earnest” which gave birth to “an enormous prison industrial complex that thrives on the incarceration” of this group (Allen, 2005, p. 2; Newton, 1974; 1980; Burton, 2023; Clay-Gilmore, 2023).

So, despite the fact that the “acceleration of mass incarceration became modus operandi in the United States after the Reagan era wars on drugs and gains in the 1990s,” Hinton’s work shows that the roots of the post-Jim Crow US carceral regime towards Black Americans lie in the successful implementation of oil-slick/comprehensive tactics of counterinsurgency in policies to crush revolt during the 60s and 70s (Hinton & Cook, 2021, p. 274; Clay-Gilmore, 2023). Today, in the aftermath of the oft-touted triumphs of the civil rights movement, “African Americans are incarcerated at seven times the rate of whites, nearly double the disparity measured before desegregation” (Perkinson, 2010, p. 8). In a similar manner that Levi describes language barriers characterizing his confrontation with the labor camp in Auschwitz, many Black men who are captured by the criminal justice system are functionally illiterate. As historian Robert Perkinson explains,

Along the margins of American society, however—in poverty-blighted rural areas and struggling urban cores—imprisonment has become commonplace. One out of every six African American men has spent time in prison, one out of every thirteen Hispanics. If one takes a snapshot of those currently incarcerated, the socioeconomic indicators read more like a fact sheet from Afghanistan than the first world. Roughly half of today’s prison inmates are functionally illiterate. Four out of five criminal defendants qualify as indigent before the courts. (Perkinson, 2010, p.8)

In his most popular collection of prison writings *Soledad Brother (1970)* Black Panther and political theorist George Jackson provides readers with a gut-wrenching, embryonic portrait of the post-Jim Crow US police state. In the work, Jackson conceptualizes the US racial order as one which seeks to organize the interiority of the Black male for a life in prison from birth. As he explains, for the prison to be properly understood there must be a break with western disciplinary systems of knowledge (especially criminology) and an examination of the attributes within the basic social structure of the “American historical experience” (Jackson, 1970, p. 22). Jackson offers a precise depiction of the depths of violence Black men experience and its impact on the existential contours of their being under American colonial logics—which he analytically defines as fascism. Jackson (1970) writes that,

After one concedes that racism is stamped unalterably into the present nature of American sociopolitical and economic life in general (the definition of fascism is: a police state wherein the political ascendancy is tied into and protects the interests of the upper class — characterized by militarism, *racism*, and imperialism), and concedes further that criminals and crime arise from material, economic, sociopolitical causes, we can then burn *all* of the criminology and penology libraries and direct our attention where it will do some good. (p. 22)

In his descriptions of Soledad prison Jackson echoes Levi, reporting regularly instances of beatings, sexual violations (being stripped naked and skin-searched arbitrarily by administrators/guards), forced labor, the social stratification between *kinds* of men premised on their race (Blacks and Jews were at the bottom) and a deep subjective alienation generated from the function of the prison which itself is configured on the aspiration of whites’ group racial consciousness to effect the complete physical and spiritual *submission* of the Black men within its grasp. Jackson writes that in maximum security and general population, prisoners are subject to grueling conditions. On max row, Jackson writes the prisoner under suspicion of attempted escape “is so brutalized” by the guards that “he will never heal again” (Jackson, 1970, p. 24). On the main line though, Jackson argues that a “very important feature” of life is “terrorism” (Jackson, 1970, p. 24). As he explains, a “frightening, petrifying diffusion of violence and intimidation is emitted from the offices of the warden and captain” (Jackson, 1970, p. 25). Indeed, Jackson argues that the organizing principles of American society targets the Black male with the prison as a stratagem of social control. In his own words,

Black men born in the U.S. and fortunate enough to live past the age of eighteen are

conditioned to accept the inevitability of prison. For most of us, it simply looms as the

next phase in a sequence of humiliations. Being born a slave in a captive society and

never experiencing any objective basis for expectation had the effect of preparing me

for the progressively traumatic misfortunes that lead so many black men to the prison

gate. I was prepared for prison. It required only minor psychic adjustments. (Jackson, 1970, p. 13)

Within the milieu of fear that characterizes Soledad, Black males are forced to labor for “emoluments that range from nothing to three cents an hour” (Jackson, 1970, p. 25). But there is little choice in choosing which job one is assigned. As Jackson writes, when “workers are needed, it isn’t a case of accepting a job in this area” because if the job assigned by the prison administration isn’t carried out “you’re automatically refusing to work, even if you clearly stated that you would cooperate in other employment” (Jackson, 1970, p. 25). A fortiori, like Levi and other ‘musselmen’ in Auschwitz, as it relates to labor and other aspects of life within the regime of the prison, “any type of minor mistake could result not merely in a bad conduct report and placement in adjustment center, but death” for Black male prisoners (Jackson, 1970, p. 25).

Like Wynter, Jackson also diagnoses Western/American education and its university system as one which socializes Black people into interiorizing the false knowledge of their oppressors and manifesting a corrupted self-consciousness. Thus, for Jackson too the Western disciplines function as ideological projections of white supremacy which systematically erase the historical contributions of Black people to human civilization. As he writes,

The young black who comes out of college or the university is as ignorant and unlearned as the white laborer. For all practical purposes he is worse off than when he went in, for he has learned only the attitudes and ways of the snake, and a few well-worded lies. The ruling culture refuses to let us know how much we did to advance civilization in our lands long ago. (Jackson, 1970, p. 44)

Trapped within the prison, Jackson’s thoughts on time and the imperative of immediate survival also suggest a break with the hope of futurity and agency that is associated with the liberal humanist Self (the white human). In this context, Jackson describes the Black male as experiencing a negated interiority or psycho-existential perspective centered around confusion, hunger, defeat, and fear. Said differently, Jackson posits the inapplicability of white categories of morality and futurity to the criminalized Black male. He describes this incongruency with time/futurity/agency in gripping language, writing that:

But everyone in here is locked up 24 hours a day. *They have no past, no future, no goal other than the next meal*. They're afraid, confused and confounded by a world they know that they did not make, that they feel they cannot change, so they make these loud noises so they won't hear what their mind is trying to tell them. They laugh to assure themselves and those around them that they are not afraid, sort of like the superstitious individual who will whistle or sing a happy number as he passes the graveyard. Confinement in this small area all day causes a buildup of tension. The unavoidable consequence is stupidity, a return to childish behavior, overreaction. (Jackson, 1970, p. 50)

Jackson understands this neurotic condition imposed on the Black male prisoner to be a product of Western philosophical anthropology and its overdetermination of Black males as inferior forms of life whose only hope of futurity lies in full submission to white supremacy as beasts of burden. Jackson explains that “too many times, too many of us choose to live the crippled existence of the near-man, the half-man” (Jackson, 1970, p. 64). Rejecting this temporal formula, he writes that “I may not live but another five minutes, but it will be five minutes definitely on my terms” (Jackson, 1970, p. 64).

In later portions, Jackson reiterates his rejection of the philosophical anthropology of Western humanity and its axiology. His descriptions of the American police-state and the prison portray a basically anti-ethical instance of life for Black men—wherein the strong simply conquer the weak. This kind of brutality targets the full subjective experience of Black males, seeking submission from them in body and spirit. Contrary to the contemporary interpretive rubrics that use his work to conceptualize the dehumanization associated with Blackness to be typified by a maternal register of existence whose subjects are targets of America’s domestic war agenda going back to slavery who are “disproportionately exploited, impoverished, policed, imprisoned and executed by state violence and vigilantism,” Jackson argues that the function of the US police-state is actualized in the material and psychic subordination of Black males and that this misandry is a core component of how Blacks are subjugated as a race (James, 2023).

In a letter to his mother, Jackson (1970) writes that the proposition of Americanism (the American ‘Way of Life’) targets the psyche of the race “is a nightmare” for the masses and that as a “criterion for the measurement of individual merit and worth in this society” it spurs a defective self-consciousness wherein Black people “cannot help but come out with a very low opinion of ourselves” (Jackson, 1970, p. 103). From “the womb to the tomb” this false self-consciousness “plays in our minds” and convince us that we “are not worth more than the amount of capital we can raise” (Jackson, 1970, p. 103). But for the young Black male, this neurosis of being is even more acute. As Jackson explains, for Black men “this whole thing goes even deeper” because “no man or group of men have been more denuded of their self-respect, none in history more terrorized, suppressed and denied male expression than the U.S. black” (Jackson, 1970, pp. 103-104).

In a letter to Angela Davis, Jackson reiterates the sexual configuration of American repression and the tendency to target Black males as potential threats to the status quo as opposed to Black females. Qualifying this observation, he makes it clear he thinks that intellectually, “there is very little difference between male and female” (Jackson, 1970, p. 168). Nevertheless, he explains that the fact “a woman wasn’t considered dangerous” in the eyes of white society and coerced filial relations between white men and black women under chattel enslavement conditioned “the white male’s “coming into manhood”” led to the solidification of the black woman as the figurehead and matriarch of the slave family. Because the maternal figurehead wanted to see “her son survive in a grim and murderous” white society, Jackson continues, she teaches him “to fear death” (Jackson, 1970, p. 168). For Jackson, this pacification must end so Black men can be the “head and the first” to lead an assault on the US slave system cum police state. That is to say, in Jackson’s thinking, the targeting of the young Black male as a basic principle of the US fascist regime has the dialectical consequence of placing him in the position to be “the catalyst in any great changes” that will improve the condition of Black people more broadly (Jackson, 1970, p. 168).

For Jackson, Black men constituted the bottom caste among the prisoners *and* in the broader society. This is also expressed by a network of ethical relations generated at the core of American liberalism which ultimately places Black males outside of any boundaries of human reciprocal obligations. This dehumanization of Black males (and thereby Black people) animates the basic structure of American society and is what prematurely doomed the non-violent protest strategy of the mainstream Civil Rights movement in Jackson’s estimation. As he writes, while some may assume the “existence of a restraint mechanism that in other breeds and other animals precludes the harming of one’s kind” on behalf of whites, “history shows no justification for so wild a presupposition” given the brutality of the colonial situation (Jackson, 1970, p. 126). Thus, Jackson argues, Blacks ought to understand their colonial administrators as flat-out “merciless” from the start rather than depending on non-applicable ethical ideals (Jackson, 1970, p. 126).

To reiterate, the observations Jackson makes about the acquisition of targets among them and how this reflects a structurally subordinate relationship Black males have to the broader social order has been engaged by social scientists for some time. In fact, sociologists James B. Stewart and Joseph W. Scott have attempted to explain the “long-run persistence of a dramatic imbalance in the sex ratio among Blacks” by arguing that Black men are institutionally decimated by “various institutions in American society” which work in concert to “systematically remove Black males from the civilian population” (Stewart & Scott, 1978, p. 82). Stewart and Scott deploy the term ‘institutional decimation’ to “characterize the process by which Black males are programmatically eliminated from the Black community” (Stewart & Scott, 1978, p. 82). They justify the appropriateness of this description being that “the term ‘decimate’ is ‘to select a lot and kill every tenth man,’ and the sex ratio among Blacks has, in fact, fallen approximately 10 percent between 1920 and 1970” (Stewart & Scott, 1978, p. 82).

Stewart and Scott explain that “the principal systems that directly reduce the size of the Black male population are the penal correction system and the military” (Stewart & Scott, 1978, pp. 82-83). While they view both as particularly “effective,” the carceral system in the US has targeted Black males with much more aggression since the 1970s (Stewart & Scott, 1978, p. 83). As sociologists Lawrence Bobo and Victor Thompson argue, the “label ‘mass incarceration’ obscures the role of race” in the broader explosion of America’s prison population since the 80s (Bobo & Thompson, 2010, p. 327). They explain that “while the overall U.S. rate of incarceration is up very substantially, this shift has fallen with a radically disproportionate severity on African Americans” – particularly Black males (Bobo & Thompson, 2010, p. 327). In their own words, recent research found that “a black male born in the 1990s faced almost one in three lifetime odds of ending up in jail or prison as compared to well under one in ten lifetime chances for non-Hispanic white males” (Bobo & Thompson, 2010, p. 329).

What has been covered so far demonstrates a deep symmetry (on a psycho-existential and societal level) between the brutal forms of violence imposed on men in both the Jewish Holocaust and the American liberal-democratic police state that Black Studies scholars nor Africana philosophers can explain systematically. With insights from thinkers like Sylvia Wynter, we understand how the classificatory logic of American society targets young poor Black males as threats to civility and places them outside the boundaries of humanity and ethical obligation. This allows for the incarceration and elimination of young Black males through police murder by ostensibly normal and everyday *mean*s.

Their gendercidal elimination from society (through prison and early death) is understood to be a crucial aspect of young Black men’s racialization. But to understand how sexualization (rape and homoeroticism) described by Levi and Jackson is also inextricably tied to this same register of dehumanization, we will need to turn to a rubric that stemming from the paradigm of Black Male Studies. Black Male Studies scholars have provided the only empirically sensitive philosophical framework to understand the contradictory function of the caricatures imposed on racialized males in intergroup contexts whereby members of the dominant group depict them as both predatory or dangerous (deserving of death) and sexually desirous or an object of lust through fetishes (i.e. they are made rapeable and sexually vulnerable to dominant group men and women).

***Part Two: Beyond the “Inner Eyes” or Conceptual Grammar of MAN—Rape, Homoeroticism and the Racialized Male Body***

In *Thinking Through the Silence (2020),* Black Male Studies scholar and philosopher Tommy Curry points to a gap in our understanding of the sexual assault of Jewish men using the now dominant paradigms of wartime sexual violence in Holocaust or Genocidal Studies. While there has been a recent push by some to theorize these things in the postcolonial terrain of genocides in Africa (Congo and Rwanda respectively) or Yugoslavia, there is a tendency to overlook the sexual vulnerabilities of men in these instances (Curry, 2020, p. 2). As he explains, the “association of maleness and men with the perpetration of violence, rape, and war dissuades researchers from perceiving actual differences between groups of men” (Curry, 2020, p. 2). Furthermore, scholarly inquiry has been “unlikely to recognize the evidence of various forms of male sexual victimization during war, genocide, or other mass atrocities, even when the evidence of such violence is encountered in the archive” (Curry, 2020, p. 2). As a result, speaking of male sexual vulnerability “to rape and other sexual violence infringes on a well-established ontological problem” stemming from the study “of gender and sex within academic disciplines” (Curry, 2020, p. 2).

Curry notes that there has been the acknowledgement of a “strong connection between rape and genocide,” but in Holocaust Studies there has been almost no investigation of this phenomenon (Curry, 2020, p. 2). He explains further that this neglect in Holocaust Studies is a consequence of a “female-specific account of gender and gendered violence utilized throughout the research on rape and sexual assault” which “did not include or even consider the rape Jewish men and boys suffered during the Holocaust” (Curry, 2020, p. 3). This was the case even though the “same archive also houses almost seventy stories of gay male sex (sexual activity between men), and by my cataloguing in January of 2017, over forty personal stories and observations of men raping other men” (Curry, 2020, p. 3). Even more, when scholars attempt to theorize these phenomena, they indicate no conceptual capacity to understand the circumstances by which racialized male bodies have been made to penetrate others at the threat of death or sell their bodies for food under circumstances of genocide historically. This is evidenced by a biased scholastic orientation toward these stories and the lack of writing or reflection thus far on the accounts of Jewish males.

On this lacuna, Curry explains that the “scholarship surrounding male rape in war and genocide is new and perplexing for many scholars and poses a challenge to many of the established theories simply assumed that women were rape victims and men were the perpetrators of rape,” but nevertheless “the discovery of male victims of rape has forced many researchers to rethink the politicized nature of the older paradigms of gendered violence” (Curry, 2020, p. 5). Indeed, previous scholarship leaves theorists “simply unable to interpret males, even men subjugated within genocide and war, as victims because their encountering of the male rape victim in real life conflicts with the pre-determined view of men as perpetrators of rape in theory” (Curry, 2020, p. 5).

Before pointing us toward new theoretical resources to understand these phenomena, Curry considers the rape of Jewish males found in the archive. As he explains, these could “involve any number of agents within the camp” and that “the testimonies of Jewish men seem to indicate that the sexual assault and rape of boys was well known among Jewish men in concentration camps” (Curry, 2020, p. 7). He explains further that, “[T]he male rape victim could emerge from any of the conditions in the camp: the threat of death, starvation, or the will of other men. German SS, kapos, Blockältesten, even other pipls (boys used for sex) could be agents of sexual violence” (Curry, 2020, p. 8).

Furthermore, he calls for scholars to be sensitive to the context and terms in which these men understood the sexual violence imposed on them. Within the Jewish Holocaust, it “was not uncommon for Jewish boys to describe the sexual violence of male-to-male rape as homosexuality” (Curry, 2020, p. 8). Outlining survivor testimony on this matter, Curry explains that for many young boys, “the camp was the first time they saw or understood homosexuality” (Curry, 2020, p. 8). For them, homosexuality “does not seem to mean gayness or queerness” but instead expresses “male-on-male sexual assault by German officers, kapos, or building elders” (Curry, 2020, p. 8).

Drawing attention to the similarities between the dehumanization of Black and Jewish men, Curry observes the simultaneous prefiguring of negative and feminine traits within biocentric racial anthropologies throughout history. These projections show that Jewish and Black men were both positioned at the bottom of racialized cultural and ontological systems of value generated during the colonial period and thus were seen as scientifically deficient in their masculinity compared to the dominant white human variants. In his own words, European antisemitism “lent credence to stereotypes of Jewish men as unclean, dangerous to women, and threats to the existence of whole populations (Curry, 2020, p. 16).

Explaining further, Curry writes that sexual configuration of Jewish men as “the rapist” in Nazi ideology shows how they were racialized and “cast in images very similar” to those imposed on Black men in the US (Curry, 2020, p. 16). Indeed, like “Black men, the Jewish male was thought to be incapable of actual love or affection towards women” and thought of as prone to using “his sexuality, his insatiable lust, for power” – illuminating “a central aspect of sexual racism directed at racialized males, namely that they are defined as bodies of contradiction” (Curry, 2020, p. 16). Said differently, the racialized male is “feminine in relation to the dominant group male, but hyper-masculine and rapists at the same time” (Curry, 2020, p. 16).

Scholars have noted that historical construction of Black males as “the minstrel brute who is sexually perverse and thuggish” informs how this group is stereotyped as “sex-crazed” today (Jackson II, 2006, p. 79). Indeed, the primary measures of punishment to sustain the system of chattel slavery when Black males exhibited “ferocity, aggression, or disobedience,” entailed “one of two activities: emasculation or murder/lynching” (Jackson II, 2006, p. 79). As communications scholar Ronald Jackson II explains, emasculation “refers to cutting off the penis” (Jackson II, 2006, p. 79). This “symbolized the denial of black masculinity” and “would prevent the black male’s body from performing its normal sexual reproductive function and eliminate” them as sexual competitors with white men (Jackson II, 2006, p. 79). Furthermore, Jackson notes that in many cases “the Black male was sexually mutilated before execution” when killed. (Jackson, 2006, p. 79). Nevertheless, Jackson explains that the black male body under slavery “was at once an object of disgust and admiration” (Jackson II, 2006, p. 79). So, the historical dynamics of slavery and Jim Crow have given birth to a white group consciousness premised on a “horrific ontological fantasy and projection about Black men that” construes them as feminine or non-men in comparison to white men yet primordial rapists of and threats to white (and other groups of) women (Jackson II, 2006, p. 80).

In his essay, *Killing Boogeymen: Phallicism and The Misandric Mischaracterizations of Black Males in Theory (2018),* Tommy Curry introduces the concept of phallicism—the guiding theoretic of Black Male Studies— to explain this contradiction and the broader inter-group dynamics from which they stem in western patriarchal regimes. He begins by tracing the deployment of stereotypes against Black males through academic theory and argues that this process has been typified by a process of ungenderization whereby Black men’s condition “marks a boundary between civil society—the world of work, citizen, and life—and phantasm” (Curry, 2018, p. 5). Curry begins by empirically debunking the application of hegemonic masculinity theory to the historical, subjective and material realities of Black males. There is simply no evidence for the notion that Black males seek hegemony or hold the attitudes found in ruling class white men or women. In his own words, Curry writes that if “Black men emulated white hegemonic masculinity, and truly saw themselves as opposed to women, then” we ought see verification of such a “theory empirically in the voting and surveyed opinions of Black men and women” (Curry, 2018, p. 12). But “no such claim can be established empirically” (Curry, 2018, p. 12).

Given that the evidence suggests “hegemonic masculinity both as a theory and as an account of Black male socialization in the United States does not apply” Curry offers an intellectual history of negative sexual stereotypes of Black men found in American scholarship (Curry, 2018, p. 12). He explains that after the dissolution of chattel slavery the modern concept of gender was deployed around two concerns: manhood and Black male citizenship in the post emancipation south with a special focus on the relationship between whites and the Black male savage outside the cage of slavery. Ethnology was the late 19th century intellectual axis through which Black males were initially projected as both savage/monstrous and feminine/sexually vulnerable. But this gave way to early 20th century social sciences (sociology, economics, criminology, etc.) and then to gender theory through the Black feminist critique of Black Power. As Curry explains, there is “no social scientific account or theory of Black (male) patriarchy prior to the various Black feminist reactions to Black Power” (Curry, 2018, p. 21). Before this, white social scientists and racists alike “were firmly committed to the racial inferiority and sexual effiminization of Black males” (Curry, 2018, p. 21). Consequently, “the idea that Black men were patriarchs simply did not” exist within the broader corpus of “white sociological, psychology, or historical accounts of” Black masculinity in the twentieth century (Curry, 2018, p. 21).

However, it is only after his analysis of the analytic failures and heteronormative commitments of theories like intersectional invisibility and social dominance theory that Curry proposes the racially subjugated male thesis or phallicism. Taking issue with the “bio-logic” assumptions about theories of patriarchy that animate intersectional invisibility, or the accounts of sexual violence found in social dominance theory, Curry writes that one framework assumes that male genitalia must be “conceptualized as a weapon wielded against women by a body prone to rape and violence interpersonally” while the other simply theorizes arbitrary-set and other genocidal forms of violence along homosocial lines of deadly aggression and patterns of social predation (Curry, 2018, p. 30). This has led both to ignore “the rape and sexual violence historically perpetrated upon racialized male bodies” (Curry, 2018, pp. 30-31).

Clarifying how Black maleness has been configured to be “devoid of a sexuality,” Curry writes that “racialized maleness suffers from impositions of social force that denature Black male flesh into phantasm” which makes it an entity that doesn’t exist “within the mind of individuals as an expression of particular wills or lusts, but rather is positioned as an imagination of the society, whereby individual Black men can all be substituted for the activity of this imagining interpersonally” (Curry, 2018, p. 31). Thus, Black manhood is “framed by this irredeemable confinement” and “indicted for being of such savagery that it is an idea no male could wish to possess” (Curry, 2018, p. 31). On the incongruities to which phallicism refers, Curry writes:

Phallicism refers to the condition by which males of a subordinated racialized or ethnicized group are simultaneously imagined to be a sexual threat and predatory, and libidinally constituted as sexually desirous by the fantasies or fetishes of the dominant racial group. This concept is meant to guide a seemingly inexplicable tension if not contradiction between the description of racialized males under repressive and murderous regimes and their hyper-sexualization as objects of desire, possession, and want. The racialized male is conceptualized as the substantive (social) meaning of rape, while simultaneously being subjugated to rape by both the male and female members of the dominant group who disown their sexual violence because the hypervisibility of the racialized male is only as the rapist. The peculiar sexualization of racialized men and boys as objects has routinely been dismissed because savage men are thought to be super-agentic—choosing their prey, not being victims of predation. The idea of the rapist imposed upon racialized men from Africa, Asia, and Indigenous America suggest there is a structure of patriarchal imposition and imperial conquest which rationalizes the disposability of male victims of genocide or conquest as a honorific, insofar as the elimination of the male threat is ridding the world of primitivity, or evil, while nonetheless denigrating their flesh by sexual violence. (2018, p. 31)

To reiterate, this concept suggests that the function of rape and the simultaneous stereotyping of Black maleness as a sexual threat operates beyond the lethal and genocidal logics of social dominance theory. Rather, phallicism conceptualizes Black [and other instances of racialized] maleness as a “register of sexual inversion to the established modern gender hierarchies suggested as universal to all sexed bodies in which maleness is the category of societal violence and inter-personal imposition, and transubstantiation in which racialized maleness is transfigured as not male, and feminine, while not female but rapist” (Curry, 2018, p. 32).

As a “complementary dynamic” by which racialized males are killed and raped while having their brutal treatment “rationalized as being in service of the of idea of protecting women, society and civility,” phallicism is expressed within western liberal (imperial) states and in foreign theatres as part of a global counterinsurgency complex that serves empire under the guise and grammar of liberal humanism, progressive gender politics, and human security (Curry, 2018, p. 32; Clay-Gilmore, 2023). Said differently, phallicism can explain the tripartite schema of stratification that emerges from contemporary counterinsurgencies campaigns whose roots go back to 18th and 19th century European colonial imperialism: on the top exists imperial [white] masculinity and femininities, and below them are the “imperial grunts” and “working class white women” who “find themselves elevated above the colonized men they are charged to monitor, control or subdue” (Khalili, 2011, p. 21; Clay-Gilmore, 2022; 2023). In so doing, it improves our conceptual acumen to understand anti-black misandry as a first principle of racism, how it organizes the negrophobia characteristic of Western patriarchal, capitalist regimes, and how it is expressed through the demonization and acquisition of racialized men as targets for lethal and sexual violence.

***Part Three: Conclusion***

This paper was a comparative analysis of instances of genocidal violence, rape, and homoeroticism found in the Jewish Holocaust and the US post-Jim Crow police state. We readily associate these social systems with brutal forms of violence imposed on racialized males, but we don’t have a conceptual apprehension of the sexual violence experienced by these men using the reigning theoretics in Black Studies or Black/Africana Philosophy. However, from a Black Male Studies perspective, I demonstrated how racialization has historically generated its own sexualization processes—placing these men on a register of existence outside the boundaries of reciprocal human relationships. Black Male Studies scholars conceptualize this phenomenon as phallicism and see this seemingly contradictory dynamic as a reflection of gendercidal inter-group conflict in racist, capitalist, patriarchal regimes.

In the first section, I explored the genocidal logics of Auschwitz in the testimony of Primo Levi. Levi’s testimony anticipated insights found in the arguments of philosopher Sylvia Wynter as it relates to the dehumanization and gendercide of Black males in (American) society. As she argued, the classificatory logics (ethno-disciplines) of the Western academy which guide the social organization of knowledge reify a moral universe of obligations that poor young Black men are shut out of.

Testimony from George Jackson and historical scholarship were also covered to reveal the deep psycho-existential and legal continuities between the regimes of the post-Jim Crow US police state and the Third Reich. In the second section, I turned towards the field of Black Male Studies to fill a gap in our understanding of the sexual assault of racialized men in the now dominant paradigms of wartime sexual violence in Holocaust or Genocidal Studies and the propaganda of Black Studies scholarship. I also introduced the theory of phallicism to increase our conceptual acumen and account for the function of phallicism as an organizing principle of intergroup conflict and negrophobia in Western patriarchal capitalist regimes that target racialized males with gruesome forms of death as well as sexual violence through the psycho-sexual impositions and fetishes of the men and women of the dominant racial group. With the theory of phallicism, Black Studies scholars and philosophers can theorize patterns and dynamics of genocidal and sexual violence with more systematicity and explore the historical archives and literary works of Black and other racialized men with a sensitivity to the context in which these men have been sociogenically targeted at a psycho-existential and material level by modalities of counterinsurgency and intergroup conflict that sustain Western patriarchal, racist, capitalist societies.

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