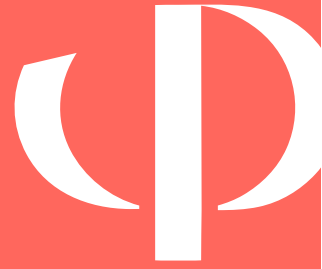


Philosophy and the Black Experience



FALL 2021

VOLUME 21 | NUMBER 1

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APA NEWSLETTER ON

Philosophy and the Black Experience

DWAYNE TUNSTALL, EDITOR

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FROM THE EDITOR

Dwayne Tunstall
GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

This issue of the newsletter begins with the “Footnotes to History” section. In it, Stephen C. Ferguson II (NC State University) shines a spotlight on the life and legacy of George Jackson (1941–1971). Ferguson claims that “Jackson’s writings, largely ignored in political philosophy and theory, place him as one of the most significant proletarian intellectuals—behind Hubert Harrison and Malcolm X—of the twentieth century.” I hope that reading about Jackson will motivate readers to learn more about his political philosophy and his place in African American political thought.

I am excited to publish Anwar Uhuru’s contribution to this issue of the newsletter. In “The Polemical as Non-Violent Protest: James Baldwin and the ‘Gendered,’ Black Body,” Uhuru invites us to consider James Baldwin’s work beyond its contributions to queer theory. Uhuru contends that Baldwin’s work can be better understood on its own terms if we think of him as a gender/genre theorist rather than as a queer theorist. That way, we can appreciate how Baldwin’s work is a non-violent contestation of whiteness and the erasure of Black Male existence within and outside of heteronormative spaces.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION

The *APA Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience* is published by the committee on the status of Black philosophers. Authors are encouraged to submit original articles and book reviews on any topic in philosophy that makes a contribution to philosophy and the black experience broadly construed. The editors welcome submissions written from any philosophical tradition, as long as they make a contribution to philosophy and the black experience broadly construed. The editors especially welcome submissions dealing with philosophical issues and problems in African American and Africana philosophy.

All article submissions should be between 10 and 20 pages (double spaced) in length, and book reviews should be between 5 and 7 pages (double spaced) in

length. All submissions must follow the APA guidelines for gender-neutral language and *The Chicago Manual of Style* formatting. All submissions should be accompanied by a short biography of the author. Please send submissions electronically to apa.pbe.newsletter@gmail.com.

DEADLINES

Fall issues: May 1

Spring issues: December 1

EDITOR

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FORMATTING GUIDELINES

- The *APA Newsletters* adhere to *The Chicago Manual of Style*.
- Use as little formatting as possible. Details like page numbers, headers, footers, and columns will be added later. Use tabs instead of multiple spaces for indenting. Use *italics* instead of underlining. Use an “em dash” (—) instead of a double hyphen (--).
- Use endnotes instead of footnotes. Examples of proper endnote style:

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 90.

See Sally Haslanger, “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?” *Noûs* 34 (2000): 31–55.

FOOTNOTES TO HISTORY

George Jackson (1941–1971)

Stephen C. Ferguson II
NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

. . . there is some considerable awareness that ever since the days of slavery the USA is nothing but a vast prison as far as African descendants are concerned. Within this prison, black life is cheap, so it should be no surprise that George Jackson was murdered by the San Quentin prison authorities who are responsible to America’s chief prison warden, Richard Nixon.

– Walter Rodney, “George Jackson: Black Revolutionary” [November 1971]

It is quite obvious that where [W. E. B.] DuBois and myself were observing a situation, taking part, organizationally in our various ways, but guided by theoretically, that is to say intellectual development, the generation to which Jackson belonged has arrived at the profound conclusion that the only way of life possible to them is the complete intellectual, physical, moral commitment to the revolutionary struggle against capitalism.

– C. L. R. James

Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.

– Mao Tse-Tung

People who come out of prison can build up the country. Misfortune is a test of people's fidelity. Those who protest injustice are people of true merit. When the prison doors are opened, the real dragon will fly out.

– Ho Chi Minh

George Lester Jackson (September 23, 1941–August 21, 1971)

There are probably five major theorists associated with the Black Panther Party: (1) Huey Newton, (2) Eldridge Cleaver, (3) Angela Davis, (4) Fred Hampton, and—last but not least—(5) George Jackson. While some prominent Black Panther figures at the time dabbled in Marxism-Leninism and the ideal of a socialist government, Jackson was heads and heels above everyone. Jackson's writings, largely ignored in political philosophy and theory, place him as one of the most significant proletarian intellectuals—behind Hubert Harrison and Malcolm X—of the twentieth century.

The life and legacy of George Jackson has to be seen in the context of the penal institutions in the United States. Punishment under capitalism "must be viewed not as a social response to criminality of individuals, but, above all, as a mechanism which is deeply implicated within the class struggle between rich and poor, bourgeoisie and proletariat."¹ Penal institutions play a significant role in strategies of class rule. It is an expression of State power.

Born September 23, 1941, on the West Side of Chicago, George Lester Jackson was murdered on August 21, 1971, at the age of twenty-nine. While serving an indeterminate sentence for armed robbery in 1961, the young criminal Jackson was transformed into a Black liberation philosopher.

Jackson grew up in a working-class family in Chicago, Illinois, and Los Angeles, California. He was the second of five children of Lester and Georgia Jackson; his sisters Delora, Frances, and Penelope in addition to his brother Jonathan. His father, Lester, was a postal worker. Lester Jackson obtained a transfer from the post office and moved his family to Los Angeles, California, in 1956.

On September 18, 1960, Jackson allegedly drove the getaway car after his friend robbed a Bakersfield, California, gas station of \$70.20. Jackson was offered a plea bargain

in exchange for a lighter sentence. On February 1, 1961, less than one year later, Jackson was tried and convicted of second-degree armed robbery and accessory after-the-fact. However, the judge sentenced Jackson to an indefinite imprisonment despite the initial offer of a plea bargain. Jackson was imprisoned at the California Training Facility in Soledad, California, in 1961 at the age of eighteen.

Jackson's one-year sentence became life imprisonment. Bourgeois penal law effectively made the parole board, not the judge or jury, the sentencing body; it alone decided when and under what criteria people had proven themselves sufficiently "reformed" to be released from prison. He spent the rest of his life—eleven years—in the California prison system, seven in solitary confinement. Jackson's accomplice, who confessed to having played the lead role in the gas station robbery, was released from prison after two and a half years. In prison Jackson read widely and transformed himself from "pure prison gangsterism" into an activist and political theoretician who defined himself as a Marxist revolutionary. He self-described himself—at one point—as a "Marxist-Leninist-Maoist-Fanonist."² Jackson was committed to transforming the "black criminal mentality into a black revolutionary mentality."³ David Johnson observes: "Comrade [George] was an exceptional individual and driven by his passion for revolution. The immense amount of knowledge he had acquired prior to our meeting he had honed to be as sharp as a samurai sword. While in prison, he studied economics, history and philosophy, transforming himself into a political theoretician and strategist."⁴

San Quentin's prison boxing champion W. L. Nolan, a major figure in the developing prison-based political movement, was the first to introduce Jackson to radical philosophy. As Jackson's disciplinary record grew, he was forced to spend up to twenty-three hours a day in solitary confinement. There he read Karl Marx, V. I. Lenin, Leon Trotsky, Friedrich Engels, Mao Tse-tung (Ze-Dong), Che Guevara, Kwame Nkrumah and other political theorists. In 1968, Jackson, Nolan, David Johnson, James Carr, and other revolutionary convicts began leading "ethnic awareness classes"—which were essentially study groups on radical philosophy.

In January of 1969, Jackson—along with Nolan—was sent to Soledad Prison (California). On January 13, 1970, W. L. Nolan, Cleveland Edwards, and Alvin "Jug" Miller were shot on a prison exercise yard, during an altercation with white prisoners. Three days after the killings were ruled justifiable homicide, a guard named John V. Mills was killed. Despite a lack of evidence, Jackson and two other prisoners—Fleeta Drumgo and John Wesley Clutchette—were charged with Miller's death. The three of them became known as the "Soledad Brothers."

The same year, Bantam Books published *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*, a political manifesto of sorts. Through personal letters, written between 1964 and 1970, we witness the personal and political transformation of Jackson into a Marxist theorist. From Jackson's early anti-authoritarianism, we witness the emergence of the red dragon.

Jackson's inner thoughts, observations, and cogitations offer insights into the impact of imprisonment on an individual. Jackson embodied the discontent of many prisoners within the penal system. As Jackson observes, confinement is "the closest to being dead that one is likely to experience in this life."⁵ Reading and studying was the only way Jackson survived imprisonment. "I met Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Engels and Mao when I entered prison and they redeemed me," he wrote.⁶ Jackson was constantly teaching, learning, and organizing.

Historically, prisons have transformed criminals into "proletarian intellectuals" such as Malcolm X. Jackson reflects: "There are still some blacks here who consider themselves criminals—but not many. Believe me, my friend, with the time and incentive that these brothers have to read, study, and think, you will find no class or category more aware, more embittered, desperate, or dedicated to the ultimate remedy—revolution. The most dedicated, the best of our kind—you'll find them in the Folsoms, San Quentins, and Soledads. They live like there was no tomorrow. And for most of them there isn't."⁷

Two months before the publication of *Soledad Brothers*, Jackson's seventeen-year-old brother, Jonathan, entered the Marin County Courthouse with automatic weapons. (Several of these weapons were registered in the name of Angela Davis. Reportedly, a .38 caliber pistol, a .30 caliber rifle, a .30 caliber M-1 carbine, and a 12-gauge shotgun were registered to Davis.) Jonathan Jackson entered the courtroom in which Judge Haley was presiding over the trial of San Quentin prisoner James McClain, who was charged with the attempted stabbing of a Soledad guard. Jonathan Jackson armed McClain and, with prisoner witnesses Ruchell Magee and William Christmas, herded the assistant district attorney, Judge Harold Haley, and three jurors into a van parked outside. Law enforcement officers fired upon the parked van without regard for the hostages, as was prison policy, killing Christmas, McClain, and Jackson; wounding Magee; and killing Haley and wounding other hostages.

In the summer of 1971, Jackson, Drumgo, and Clutchette were transferred from Soledad to the "adjustment center" at San Quentin. In his cell, 1-AC-6, on the first floor of the adjustment center, George spent long hours working on his second book, *Blood In My Eye*—a political treatise on urban guerilla warfare and fascism. It was published posthumously in 1972. *Blood In My Eye* is one of the most significant books in Black political philosophy.

While in prison, Jackson met Huey Newton. Subsequently, Jackson was appointed "field marshal" of the Black Panther Party, and was tasked with recruiting more prisoners to join the Black Panther Party.

Jackson's initial political awakening came through the critique of religion. Jackson's militant atheism is evident in the following passage:

Forget the Westernized backward stuff about god. I curse god, the whole idea of a benevolent supreme being is the product of a tortured,

demented mind. It is a labored, mindless attempt to explain away ignorance, a tool to keep people of low mentality and no means of production in line. How could there be a benevolent superman controlling a world like this. He would have to be malevolent, not benevolent. Look around you, evil rules supreme. God would be my enemy. The theory of a good, just god is a false idea, a thing for imbeciles and old women and, of course, Negroes. It's a relic of the past when men made words and mindless defenses for such things as seas serpents, magic, and flat earths.⁸

Jackson spent most of his prison sentence shuffled between San Quentin and Soledad Prison. Jackson presaged: "Anyone who passed the civil service examination yesterday can kill me today with complete immunity. I've lived with repression every moment of my life, a repression so formidable that any movement on my part can only bring relief, the respite of a small victory or the release of death. In every sense of the term, in every sense that's real, I'm a slave to, and of, property."⁹

Jackson, prisoner A63837, was killed at the hands of San Quentin prison guards during an alleged attempted prison escape on August 21, 1971, a month shy of his thirtieth birthday. The exact circumstances of Jackson's death still trouble historians.

Three days before his murder, Jackson rewrote his will, leaving all royalties as well as control of his legal defense fund to the Black Panther Party. At the time of his death, Jackson had spent eleven of his twenty-nine years—and almost all of his time as an adult—behind bars; a good portion of that time was spent in solitary confinement.

In the aftermath of Jackson's murder, there were chants throughout the prison: "The dragon is free!" And "Funerals on both sides!"

Blood in My Eye was completed only days before Jackson was killed. It is composed of letters and essays dealing with fascism, urban guerilla strategy, and Marxist political theory. It is a significant contribution to the philosophy of revolution.¹⁰ And it should be required reading for political philosophy courses.

Jackson's writings about political consciousness, fascism, the sociology of racism, and Marxist-Leninist political philosophy served as a central counter-argument to Richard Nixon's "law and order" politics.

Jackson's funeral was held at St. Augustine's Episcopal Church in Oakland, California, on August 28, 1971, nearly one year after his younger brother Jonathan's funeral. Thousands of Panthers and sympathizers raised their fists at Jackson's funeral, where Huey Newton gave a deeply emotional eulogy, emphasizing Jackson's "love for the people."

A month after Jackson's assassination, the largest prison revolt in US history occurred at Attica Correctional Facility in upstate New York.

In 1972 George's mother—Georgia Jackson—petitioned the United Nations to investigate the circumstances of his death.¹¹

The murder of Jackson sent Archie Shepp, Bob Dylan, and Steel Pulse into the studio to record tributes to him. Jackson was eulogized in the jazz, pop, and reggae idioms. The jazz saxophonist Shepp released "Blues for Brother George Jackson" on his 1972 *Attica Blues* album. Dylan did a single, "George Jackson," and the British reggae band Steel Pulse recorded two songs, "George Jackson," a cover of Dylan's song, and "Uncle George," on their 1979 album *Tribute to the Martyrs*. The group actually re-recorded "George Jackson" and "Uncle George" on the 2004 album *African Holocaust*. Jackson's impact was so great that Warner Bros. attempted to cash in on his image by producing a 1977 film *Brothers* starring Bernie Casey, Vonetta McGee, and Ron O'Neal. The soundtrack was performed by Taj Mahal. The 2007 film *Black August* directed by Samm Styles and starring Gary Dourdan (based largely on Gregory Armstrong's 1974 book *The Dragon Has Come*) covers the last fourteen months of George Jackson's life.

NOTES

1. See Tony Platt and Paul Takagi, *Punishment and Penal Discipline: Essays on the Prison and the Prisoners' Movement* (San Francisco, California: Crime and Social Justice Associates, 1982), 13.
2. Jackson, *Blood In My Eye*, 139.
3. *Ibid.*, xi.
4. David Johnson, "The 40th Anniversary of the Assassination of George Jackson." October 17, 2011. <https://sfbayview.com/2011/10/the-40th-anniversary-of-the-assassination-of-george-jackson/> (Last accessed September 11, 2021)
5. Jackson, *Soledad Brother*, 14.
6. *Ibid.*, 16.
7. *Ibid.*, 26.
8. *Ibid.*, 204-05.
9. Jackson, *Blood In My Eye*, 7.
10. Ferguson, "Another World Is Possible."
11. Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* was published in 1975. From 1970 to 1972, Michel Foucault was involved in a prison activist project called Le Groupe d'information sur les prisons (GIP). The group published a pamphlet on George Jackson's assassination. See Le Groupe d'information sur les Prisons, *L'Assassinat de George Jackson* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971). For the English translation, see Michel Foucault, Catherine von Bülow and Daniel Defert, "The Masked Assassination," in *Warfare in the American Homeland: Policing and Prison in a Penal Democracy*, trans. Sirène Harb, ed. Joy James (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007), 140–60.

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ARTICLE

The Polemical as Non-Violent Protest: James Baldwin and the 'Gendered,' Black Body

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How does an individual go from being a subject of grief to being a subject of grievance? What political and psychical gains or losses transpire in the process?

– Anne Anlin Cheng¹

The Black male body is polemical. It is a site of public and private contestation.

– Bryant Keith Alexander²

James Baldwin's writings, speeches, and interviews are in a moment of resurgence in both the public and academic sphere. The release of Raoul Peck's documentary *I Am Not Your Negro*³ and subsequently the cinematic release of Barry Jenkins's film adaptation of Baldwin's novel *If Beale Street Could Talk*⁴ has centered Baldwin as a cultural icon. The publication of Eddie S. Glaude's book *Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own*⁵ is another recent instance of the resurgence of Baldwin in the public and academic sphere. Yet, Baldwin's work must be read without the risk of an ahistorical interpretation because of the implicit bias of centering a twenty-first-century intersectional reading of his work. Instead, readers of Baldwin should take the context in which Baldwin wrote into consideration. By reading his work fully, and not with the intention of looking for mere slippage as a way to insert a post-theory application, it will situate Baldwin as an authoritative thinker. Despite his clear articulation in his speeches, writings, interviews, and conversations that constantly pushes against a neo-liberal apologist mode of appeasing white guilt and anti-Black and anti-Black misandrist methodologies, his work is still read in the form of fragmentation. What I mean by fragmentation⁶ is a watered-down post-structuralist approach to reading that does not see texts and thought as a whole. Because the general approach to reading Baldwin's writings, his personal life, and legacy are articulated in a now canonical and rhetorical methodology that adheres to identity politics and inclusivity.

The purpose of this essay is to argue that Baldwin's intellectual property is a contestation against whiteness and the methods of Black erasure in general and Black male annihilation in particular. In pushing against traditional, or what has become traditional, ways of analyzing Black thought, it will highlight why figures like Baldwin are read in fragmentation. Rarely, if ever, does that mode of reading see texts as a critique and contestation of systems of power and oppression. Instead, it fragments the already fragmented form of critique. Hence, if a critique of a system or systems of power appears in the written critique, it is only at the benefit and exercise of the loss of white power.

Fragmentation involves only looking at texts through lenses that only reify the displacement and non-being of those who are oppressed and marginalized. Fragmentation is another method of incorporating intersectionality that at best only sees parts of people and their writings. A fragmented reading of Baldwin's writings will view his writings as protests of the displacement of Black beings in terms of "the negro problem."⁷ He would argue that Negroes or Black people are not problematic; the problem is whiteness.

Another aspect of a fragmented reading of Baldwin's writings is to have Baldwin's sexuality and his use of bisexual and queer-affirming characters in his novels only serve as discourse on Black marginalization. Yet, Baldwin's articulation of sexuality in his writings goes beyond heteronormativity. He does not and refuses to privilege sexual difference as adhering to a model minority status. Instead, what is consistent is Baldwin's articulation of a Black male body. His articulation of a Black male body pushes

against the strictures of how the system of whiteness works without ceasing to annihilate the Black male body.

During an interview on the Dick Cavett show in 1968, the Yale Philosopher Paul Weiss, in an attempt at policing and silencing Black rage, asks Baldwin, "Why must we always concentrate on color?" Baldwin knows that Weiss's question is a way to appease white guilt. He replies to Weiss's question by explaining why he left the United States in 1948 and even mentions Malcolm X's saying that Sunday is the most segregated day in America. Baldwin does not stop with quoting Malcolm X. He concludes his reply to Weiss with this eloquent, and dare I say mic drop, response:

I can't afford to trust most white Christians, and I certainly cannot trust the Christian church. I don't know whether the labor unions and their bosses really hate me—that doesn't matter—but I know I'm not in their union. I don't know whether the real estate lobby has anything against Black people, but I know the real estate lobby is keeping me in the ghetto. I don't know if the board of education hates Black people, but I know the textbooks they give my children to read and the schools we have to go to. Now this is the evidence, you want me to make an act of faith, risking myself, my wife, my woman, my sister, my children on some idealism which you assure me exists in America, which I have never seen.⁸

Baldwin's response to Weiss has to be given a bit of context. Baldwin is reacting to the state of Black life in 1968. It is three years after the release of the Moynihan report and the assassinations of Malcolm X and John F. Kennedy. This dialogue takes place one month after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and it is a month before the assassination of Bobby Kennedy. The importance of retaining the oppression of Black people and Black manhood is met with death. It is not just death of the Black body, but also those who recognize and uplift Black people. By daring to not only speak, but fully articulate the humanity of Black males and working to end their annihilation, the one daring to speak may be greeted with death.

On the eve of the Early Modern period of Western Modernity, Leonardo Davinci sketched his Vitruvian man. The repurposing of Ancient-Greco Roman male-centrism as complete human and non-male as incomplete human doesn't just centralize the male body, but the white male body. Not only does the Vitruvian man center white maleness, it centers white males as complete and white females as incomplete bodies. Bodies that are outside of whiteness are seen as devoid of a body. Bodies outside of the lens of whiteness are seen as nonhuman/nonbeing. The only body outside of the ideal body that may obtain secondary status is the body of white women. The bodies of non-white men and women may obtain tertiary status if white people designated them as belonging to a group that is categorized as the model minority. In the world of whiteness, if you do not fall in one of those categories, then you are rendered and seen as just flesh.⁹

Being seen as just flesh not only categorizes whiteness as phenotypical or aesthetic attributes, but also the metaphysical properties of whiteness. It is more than just the darkness of bodies and being-ness, or in this case, non-being-ness; it is the way their flesh is treated and theorized in the world. Bodies denotes the definition of what it means to be human, whole, central not dark flesh a void pushed into the margins and subsequently erased which are the state/statelessness of Black beings. Therefore, white men and women are the only beings that have human bodies. Black people in general and Black men in particular will never be a body. It is arguably the case that a gendered Black body is not of the genre of Western Man, as Sylvia Wynter would say. They are at best relegated to being flesh.

In thinking of Black being in general and Black queer beings in particular, how does grief transform into grievance when Black being is erased in the discourse? Black corporeality is in a constant configuration of the anagrammatic.¹⁰ It is, as Amir Jaima argues in "On the Discursive Orientation toward Whiteness," that whether it is an encounter of Blackness or how Blackness appears within a text the articulation of Black being in American thought rearranges itself for white reading and un-reading.¹¹ In thinking of Black being and "gendered" being, the anagrammatic articulates "Blackness as a/temporal, in and out of place and time putting pressure on meaning and that against which meaning is made."¹² I understand Christina Sharpe's intimation of anagrammatic, but what I push back against is that if the Black body is a/temporal than that erasure of being erases gender. However, if you want to include gender/genre, then the basis of Black being cannot be seen by the Western (whiteness) definition of male/female. Yet, as Jaima notes, the writing of Black being and "gendered" being is "the epistemological import of this narrative posture is that subjective experiences contribute to the author/narrator's authority as a knower."¹³ In the argument of decentering whiteness, the knower is whiteness whereas the unknown/non-knower is Black being. Consequently, the lasting effect of the Vetruvian man is white male/white being as centrism. Secondly, white male-being and white centrism allows whiteness to insert/import the epistemological definition of being.

Where do we go from here? How do we attempt to go from the reading and to unreading from an antitemporal to the temporal and epistemological notion of Blackness? The state of Blackness is, as Jaima argues, an act of unreading or, as Sharpe and Hortense Spillers claim, as grammar.

* * *

Twenty-one years before Baldwin's birth, Booker T. Washington edited a collection of essays titled *The Negro Problem*. The collection features seven prominent thinkers addressing "the negro problem." In his essay, "The Talented Tenth," W. E. B. DuBois argues,

I am an earnest advocate of manual training and trade teaching for Black boys, and for white boys, too. I believe that next to the founding of Negro colleges the most valuable addition to Negro education since the war, has been industrial

training for Black boys. Nevertheless, I insist that the object of all true education is not to make men carpenters, it is to make carpenters men.¹⁴

Consider DuBois's argument that training to be a man and not a carpenter is an articulation of Black manhood. Considering his intellectual forefathers, Baldwin's definition of manhood is a result of the intellectual capital of Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois. Yet, there is nothing accommodationist about Baldwin's perspective on Black life and the threat of whiteness. This is evident in what Baldwin said during a conversation François Bondy that was published in 1964 in the magazine *Transition*. In that conversation, Bondy stated, "One element which you have very much stressed in your own books is the erotic. I don't think we should ignore it when talking now." Baldwin's responded by saying,

Well, we can't ignore it, but we can't do much about clarifying it either. It is very strange. Black men represent a personal, emotional, sexual, psychological threat for an American. I think it is one of the penalties for the power that the American white man has had over Black flesh for so long. That kind of license is always brutal; it does terrible things to the object, and it does ghastly things to the perpetrator.¹⁵

The license of brutality in thinking through the social dominance of Black lives, which is falsely justified through the psychological, sexual, emotional, and personal attack on whiteness, is what articulates Baldwin's Black masculinity. Baldwin's essays, dialogues, and debates are discourses on gender. However, he is narrowly theorized by many contemporary theorists as being a mere writer of the protest polemic or on sexuality. That is not to ignore the importance of reading him that way, but only reading him that way creates a closed dialectic. Instead, I argue that Baldwin uses polemical prose to constantly articulate the role that whiteness has on the discourse of American power and how white manhood is the source of that power.

Baldwin's exploration of white American power in his work is evident in his articulation of the dynamics between Black men and women. He does this articulation by focusing on the roles of responsibility and "place," or displacement, of Black men in the world of whiteness. His articulation of Black Malehood in his writings, ranging from his essays "Stranger in the Village," "Letter to My Nephew," and "Freaks and American Ideal of Manhood" to his lectures in Europe and his novel *Giovanni's Room*, go beyond a single monolithic narrative. Yet, Baldwin shows in fiction, non-fiction books, and lectures that you cannot escape whiteness, no matter where the Black fleshy being resides. What is even more important is that Black masculinity, or at least constructions of Black masculinity as hypersexual and beastly or palatable and eunuch-like, is what is branded onto the fleshy being. Baldwin does not abandon this project in his work, especially his fiction, which is often read as an exploration of sexuality, family, and class. However, his writings go beyond those rhetorical tropes because they are explorations of Black manhood. I would even make the claim that his true project, which is threaded throughout

all of his texts, is the task of thinking of the complexity and plurality of Black Malehood.

Baldwin's articulation of Black gender dynamics with particular attention to Black Manhood is how he works between the duality of the human body and Black flesh. As Calvin Warren argues in *Ontological Terror*, "'colored people' are nothing precisely because they are not viewed as men in the 'true and proper sense'" Instead of being free in the sense that one resists being swallowed up in non-being, "free Black does not restore ontological resistance"; therefore, "the flesh[y] Black [body] is relegated to the abyss."¹⁶ Re-routing Black flesh from the abyss is Baldwin's project. Flesh for Baldwin is how Black male-ness is not only sent to the abyss but rendered absent of life.

Baldwin's essay "We Be Dragons or Freaks and the American Ideal of Manhood" is his most deliberate discourse on gender. He begins with the concept of androgyny. He states, "to be androgynous is to have both male and female characteristics. This means that there is a man in every woman and a woman in every man."¹⁷ Yet, that duality is not acknowledged until "the chips are brutally down." It is only when Black men are murdered, incarcerated, or exiled that Black women's duality becomes visible. However, if the reverse occurs, Black men will hold or are beholden to "the lady of the races."¹⁸ Whether there is an absence or presence of Black women to be desired for white consumption, the Black male is thingified. His flesh is malleable; he is not allowed to occupy the duality of both provider and protector or nurturer and warrior. Instead, the androgyny of Black men is transformed into both beast of burden and disposable object. Baldwin argues that the notion of the displacement of Black bodies is what Wynter and Tommy J. Curry call "genre"¹⁹ or what Spillers and Sharpe calls "grammar." The abyss is the a/temporality of Black flesh in a white world and imagination. Baldwin's articulation of malehood is from the abyss and embodiment of Black flesh.

From the perspective of Black flesh from the abyss in *Essence* magazine published a conversation between Audre Lorde and James Baldwin in 1984 titled, "Revolutionary Hope: A Conversation between James Baldwin and Audre Lorde." In that conversation, Baldwin stated, "it is assumed that it is safer to be white than to be Black. And it's assumed that it is safer to be a man than to be a woman. These are both masculine assumptions. But those are the assumptions that we're trying to overcome or to confront."²⁰ Yet, the engagement of Black flesh and the abyss is ignored when scholars engage with this text, largely because of the ways in which intersectionality adheres to a lens of whiteness and respectability politics.

Respectability politics is to appear as liberatory while relieving whiteness of any guilt and simultaneously promoting anti-Blackness. Currently, there is a wall between Black cis-gendered men and women in the discourse on gender, despite the shared history of slavery, colonization, and institutional racism. It forces people to think and face the fact that not just Black people in general but Black males specifically are exploited for their intellectual and coalition building labor. Yet, because of this exploitation

it marks Black women as the spot of absolute suffering and annihilation and Black men as the perpetrators of that violence. The result is that it absolves whiteness and anti-Blackness from being the root cause of annihilation of Black people. Therefore, Blackness remains in the abyss as in all of its fleshy identifiers. In my reading of Baldwin, I see him as setting the groundwork for contemporary scholars who work within what Saidiya Hartman calls "the after-life"²¹ or what Wynter calls the "demonic grounds"²² and how those two terms inform what Spillers calls "grammar" and Sharpe defines as "ana-grammatical Blackness."²³

The connection of shared struggle for moving beyond Black flesh to human wholeness is nonexistent due to sociopolitical narratives of Black men as predatory, vile, and fragmented. Feminist and Womanist critiques privilege libidinal capital²⁴ without considering the complexity of enslaved and emancipated Black men. Nor does it take in the betwixt and between-ness that are the existence of Black men in the twenty-first century. The betwixt/between exists because the Western world has not dealt with the legacy of slavery, colonization, and Jim Crow. Instead, it ends with new versions of oppressive regimes. At the close of the second decade of the twenty-first century, more Black men are incarcerated and are killed by state-sanctioned violence than when the laws condoned overt discrimination on the basis of race and biological sex. One argument is that it is the result of a backlash of having a Black man as president for eight years. I will not spend time arguing President Barack Hussein Obama's Blackness, but I will argue his policing of Black male bodies. In response to the murder of Trayvon Martin, Obama instituted "My Brother's Keeper,"²⁵ which is an initiative to mentor Black males. The result is that it taught Black male respectability, which is how to appear and present as "less threatening" to those who inherently see Black males as a threat. His policing of Black males does not stop there. In a commencement speech addressed to the graduates of Morehouse College (a historically Black college for men), he told the graduates to not hold on to past narratives of oppression. Obama also told them:

We've got no time for excuses—not because the bitter legacies of slavery and segregation have vanished entirely; they have not. Not because racism and discrimination no longer exist; we know those are still out there. It's just that in today's hyperconnected, hypercompetitive world, with millions of young people from China and India and Brazil—many of whom started with a whole lot less than all of you did—all of them entering the global workforce alongside you, nobody is going to give you anything that you have not earned.²⁶

That is a false equivalence. Those who are given a fiscal or racial inheritance are granted things that they have not earned. They are given those things because they exist despite previous labor and legislative powers that grants them their privileges. Yet, Black men are not allowed to be given opportunities for being because they are flesh in the abyss. Obama's speech erases this reality, and instead whitewashes their flesh by saying that they are to pull themselves up and make a way for themselves.

Despite educational and fiscal upward mobility, cis-gendered heteronormative and cis-gendered queer/quare Black men are reduced to fetishistic images of either white consumability and respectability or hypersexualized predators. Discourses that acknowledge and include Black men are reduced to being misogynistic, homophobic, privileged, and reverse racist. How is it that a gender that is not only historically, but also in current society a state-sanctioned target of death and dying privileged? Are they privileged because of brute strength, which is hypersensationalized to articulate their monstrous beastly characteristics? Perhaps privilege for Black men and boys is to be seen as the bull's-eye on a target that is marked for death. Being marked for death is not just the abyss but beyond the abyss. It is being marked for annihilation. In the case of Black males, it is to be subjected to suffering until they become extinct.

In an essay titled "5 Signs Your Idea of 'Intersectionality' Is Anti-Black Racism in Disguise"²⁷ Hari Ziyad states, "I thought being free was to walk without the cares and burdens I was forced to carry, and that Liberation became synonymous with whiteness [because] within whiteness, being free means taking up space with no regard for whom you are taking it from." For example, white people can highlight an opioid problem without decriminalizing those who went to jail for possession of crack cocaine and legalize marijuana without decriminalizing those who were in possession of it. I will not only list but explicate each one of Ziyad's five signs of anti-Black racism in disguise. The first sign is, "*You Emphasize Similarities to Gloss Over Differences by stating things like: 'at the end of the day, we are all the same!'*"²⁸ This call for sameness is similar to the abovementioned speech given by Obama. By telling Black men and boys to not expect things but only work for them is a neo-liberal narrative of exploitive labor. Replacing forced labor by paid labor is not only a hypercapitalist discourse, but is also a neoliberal narrative of enslavement and being in the abyss. It merely sees Black men and boys as flesh that can be purchased and exploited. The second sign is, "*You want 'Everyone to be Treated Equally.'*" However, "the 'equality' that we desire is usually a stand in for 'how white people are treated.' Being treated that way always comes at the detriment of others, especially Black folks."²⁹

As stated previously, it denotes inheritance and systemic privileges that are not afforded to Black people in general and Black males in particular. Conversations on Black suffering have to be followed by appeasing white guilt. White guilt is not just for those who identify as white or those who benefit from white privilege; it also appeases the guilt of those who exemplify anti-Blackness. The third sign is that those who benefit from white privilege may seek to elicit empathy, but ultimately "*empathy will always benefit those who are in the position to best be empathized with over those who need care the most.*"³⁰ The third sign of anti-Blackness in disguise is similar to the second one, but it is more expansive in that it argues why intersectionality is not the ideological trope for an anti-racist and anti-Black misandrist discourse. At best, however, intersectionality makes members of marginalized communities recognizable to others in dominant communities. It never addresses systems and tools of oppression used against

marginalized communities. If they are recognized at all, they are recognized because it is currently a moment of political correctness. Wrongs committed against them are excused, and the ones who wrong them yet empathize with them can apologize before actual issues are brought to the table. Those who articulate their systemic oppression are corrected or silenced because it makes someone feel bad. They are also subjected to the retraumatization of reliving their experiences of violence by telling their stories to empathetic white people. Secondly, the reliving/retelling can only be done by using language of inclusivity and padding it with the phrase *trigger warning*. It would also mean acknowledging who can and does experience violence from those who are said to not be capable of such violence.

The fourth sign of anti-Blackness in disguise is, "*It upsets you when people don't celebrate 'progress' or incremental change.* Because incremental change always and only benefits those closest to the people in power in the first place, those farthest away will likely never benefit."³¹ Labeling entire communities as homophobic, oppressive, sexist, or misogynistic is an example of false equivalencies because it seems as though a community is not progressive because progress is marked by white standards of inclusivity. Progress and incremental change only benefit those that are systemically or at the brink of benefiting from privilege. For example, the Women's Rights movements and affirmative action continues to only benefit white women. Marriage equality only benefits white LGBTQ+ identified people. Black LGBTQ+ people are the largest population that suffers from suicide, murder, homelessness, and HIV infection. Yet, those coalitions remain silent on advocacy for eradicating those disparities. Instead, those groups often depict the Black heteronormative community as being homophobic and transphobic.

Lastly, Ziyad's fifth sign of anti-Blackness in disguise is, "*You're more concerned about marginalized people gaining 'rights' than people who are losing power.*" Ziyad notes that "incremental progress should never be the goal (even if it is celebrated), we have to make sure that we are always focused on dismantling the power system in general."³² Marginalized people are often described as model minorities regarding race and gender. When those model minorities lose their power, they rely on coalition building. The biggest example of immediate coalition building is the Women's March in 2017, which was depicted as a protest to the election and inauguration of Donald J. Trump, despite the fact that 54 percent of those who voted for Trump were white women and model minorities.³³ Yet, the resources to coalition build co-opted the labor of Black men, Black women, Black LGBTQ+ people, and minorities of color in order to take back what was once theirs.

Ziyad, by discussing five signs of anti-Blackness in disguise in relation to intersectionality, insists that there be an analysis of and inadvertent dismantling of distorted approaches to intersectionality. Those five signs or points serve as a gateway to think through the ways that the Western invention of gender does not allow for Baldwin or any other Black man to existence as a man. Oyewunmi Oyeronke

argues that the Western invention of gender³⁴ (and, as I mentioned earlier, what Curry and Wynter calls “genre”) problematizes the ways that gender discourse does not allow for a full anti-oppressive theory and praxis of gender. Instead, it situates binary Vitruvian “man-centrism.”³⁵ Vitruvian-Man-centrism is extremely problematic when we are not only looking at cis-gendered Black men and women, but also transgender and gender non-conforming Black people. Thinkers who engage with Africana–Black Thought need to engage with the works of Baldwin to have a Black critique of gender that goes beyond the confines of queer theory and queer of color theory. Like feminist theory, queer/quare theory does not interrogate the ways in which whiteness appears in the form of a racialized Black body nor does it explore the differences within and between cis-gendered-heteronormative racialized Black bodies and LGBTQ racialized Black bodies.

Wynter’s genre theory is important for any Black critique of gender because Wynter sees race and the gendered Black body as being conflated into one thing. As Wynter notes, “I am trying to insist that race is really a code-word for ‘genre’ our issue is not the issue of ‘race.’”³⁶ Our issue is the issue of the genre of “Man.” As she states, “It is this issue of the “genre of ‘Man’ that causes all the –isms.”³⁷ This is why I argue that Spillers and Sharpe’s “grammar”³⁸ and “anagrammar”³⁹ and Warren’s abyss argue that Black flesh and the abyss that it resides in are below the distinctions of gender. Blackness in the white imagination does not distinguish between male/female. Yet, if we are to have a discourse on Black female-ness and the history and contemporary state of their subjugation, we must insist on a discourse on Black male-ness and the state of their annihilation. This is why Curry argues that, unlike in mainstream masculinity scholarship, there have been few efforts to verify non-hegemonic Black masculinities sociologically or conceptually separate from the already established norms in gender studies. As Curry notes,

Black males, who are stereotyped as hyper masculine and violent throughout society, are intuitively marked as patriarchal within theory. Instead of being similarly disrupted by the critiques of hegemonic masculinity’s failure to account for the class and cultural diversity within white masculinities, hyper-masculinity is proposed as the phylogenic marker of Black maleness. Consequently, Black males are thought to be exemplifications of white (bourgeois) masculinity’s pathological excess. In other words, the toxic abnormality of a hegemonic white masculinity becomes the conceptual norm for Black men and boys.⁴⁰

Like Baldwin, Curry is arguing for the space to have a conversation on the exclusion of Black male vulnerability from the view point of patriarchy and intersectionality. Curry, like Baldwin before him, notes that if Black men and boys do not confine to the strictures of white patriarchy and racist constructions of being and the confinement that it imposes, it is grounds for the extermination of Black men and boys.

We need to read Baldwin as a genre/gender theorist because Baldwin never identified with the Gay movement. He made this clear in an interview with Richard Goldstein entitled “Go the Way Your Blood Beats,” which was published in June of 1984, the same year as his published conversation with Audre Lorde for *Essence* magazine. When Goldstein asked him the question, “Do you feel like a stranger in gay America?”, Baldwin responded:

Well, first of all I feel like a stranger in America from almost every conceivable angle except, oddly enough, as a Black person. The word *gay* has always rubbed me the wrong way. I never understood exactly what is meant by it. I don’t want to sound distant or patronizing because I don’t really feel that. I simply feel it’s a world that has little to do with me, with where I did my growing up. I was never at home in it.⁴¹

Then, Goldstein asked him, “Do Black people have the same sense of being gay as white gay people do? I mean, I feel distinct from other white people.” Baldwin responded,

Well, that I think is because you are penalized, as it were, unjustly; you’re placed outside a certain safety to which you think you are born. A Black gay person who is a sexual conundrum to society is already, long before the question of sexuality comes into it, menaced and marked because he’s Black or she’s Black. The sexual question comes after the question of color; it’s simply one more aspect of the danger in which all Black people live. I think white gay people feel cheated because they were born, in principle, into a society in which they were supposed to be safe. The anomaly of their sexuality puts them in danger, unexpectedly. Their reaction seems to me in direct proportion to the sense of feeling cheated of the advantages which accrue to white people in a white society. There’s an element, it has always seemed to me, of bewilderment and complaint. Now that may sound very harsh, but the gay world as such is no more prepared to accept Black people than anywhere else in society. It’s a very hermetically sealed world with very unattractive features, including racism.⁴²

What is important is that Goldstein views himself as a minority in relation to white people who are heteronormative. Hence, anyone who is LGBTQ identified has reason to identify as an oppressed person since they are not fully accepted by their white heteronormative counterparts. Yet, Goldstein fails to realize that he is still seen as a white man; although queer affirming and Jewish, there is a whiteness that he himself cannot deny. Goldstein’s view that a white LGBTQ person can be an oppressed person in the same way that Black LGBTQ people are oppressed ignores Baldwin’s Blackness and instead only sees his being, or personhood, through a queer affirmation. Baldwin refused to affirm his queerness as being the same as white queerness because doing so would entail denying his Blackness, his manhood; it would also become a false passage into white respectability. For Baldwin, who often speaks of his experiences of violence and racism within the white queer community, would have

been silenced because Goldstein's queer/gay identity is saturated in a white imagination and mobility. The saturation is so palpable that Baldwin himself was not willing to affirm and profit from this false passage. He realized that affirming his queerness without affirming his Black maleness would erase his Black Manhood. This is why I insist on Baldwin being categorized as a gender/genre theorist more so than a queer theorist.

Yet, during his 1984 conversation with Audre Lorde, critics have accused Baldwin of "delegitimizing Lorde's struggle as a Black queer woman dealing with many systems of oppression."⁴³ I insist on pushing back against that claim because, as Ziyad argues,

my gender is Black is to emphasize the importance of recognizing how none of us Black folk conform to manhood and womanhood as those constructs have been formed, nor can we even conform to queer, trans and non-binary genders that way either—the way that makes the state recognize us as human. Ultimately, Gender identity under whiteness is a tool, not an end.⁴⁴

Secondly, if critics would read Baldwin's "Open Letter to Angela Davis"⁴⁵ and "Letter to My Nephew,"⁴⁶ they would quickly realize that he (Baldwin) knows fully that all Black Lives Matter.⁴⁷ However, when Black men and boys matter, then there will be a revolutionary moment within the struggle for affirming Black being. Therefore, the goal is to work against an institutional/canonical fixity of the limited scope on what isn't read as politically correct which serves at retaining a specific positionality. Modes of retaining a specific positionality paint the picture of how Black men and boys are perceived when they put their genre up-front and into the conversation. Hence, nonpopular and emerging theories on Black men and boys have to work through that level of minutiae and toxicity in order to circumvent statements like delegitimizing the struggle of a Black women, queer people, and trans-people who are dealing with many systems of oppression.

In his conversation with Lorde, Baldwin states,

for whatever reason and whether it's wrong or right, for generations men have come into the world, either instinctively knowing or believing or being taught that since they were men they in one way or another are responsible for the women and children, which means the universe.⁴⁸

Lorde responds by saying "mm-hm."⁴⁹ Her verbal acknowledgement is not only a signifier that her definition of men centers white men. Baldwin's use of "men" is a rhetorical trope to show that Man is not Black man. Furthermore, man or white men is the nucleus of whiteness. It neither allows nor ever will allow any form of centrality for Black people in general and Black men in particular. However, when Baldwin states, "You don't realize the only crime in this republic is to be a Black man?"⁵⁰ Lorde disagrees and says it is to be Black and that includes me. Baldwin never says that it isn't a crime to be a Black woman, but he said "real crime." "Real crime" for Baldwin is death.

It is articulated in his essay "Letters to My Nephew"⁵¹ that death or perishability is the real crime for Black men and boys who are seen as men. To see death as a Black man and as Black flesh acknowledges the continuity of flesh in the abyss. It is to "un-read" as Jaima reminds us of the ways that whiteness co-opts how language and its signifiers are how Baldwin's articulation of Man is misread.

Baldwin continues his reading of Man during his dialogue with Lorde. Despite institutional/canonical methodologies of reading Man, he does not back off on his claim of Black man as the point of annihilation and extinction. As he states, "A Black man has a prick, they hack it off. A Black man is a nigger when he tries to be a mode for his children and he tries to protect his women. That is a principal crime in this republic." After his statement, Lorde has to admit that she and other feminists are guilty for blaming Black Men instead of institutional racism. For example, in her essay "Man Child," she states, "I wish to raise a Black man who will not be destroyed by, nor settle for, those corruptions called power by the white fathers who mean his destruction as surely as they surely mean mine."⁵² However, she proceeds to say that "but the particulars of a structure that programs him to fear and despise woman as well as his own Black self."⁵³ Hence, she too needs to work to not fear and despise her own son or someone else's son because of the intricacies of power.

Secondly, what Lorde, as well as other womanist/feminist thinkers, is forced to think about is allowing Black men and boys to love their bodies, including their pricks. To love their bodies and pricks does not erase Black women. Nor does it erase non-heteronormative people from exercising their right to be and love who they love. Yet, the intervention in Lorde's essay and conversation with Baldwin fell flat because she identified "man" as a universal qualifier. Subsequently, Lorde herself and those who accept Lorde's universalizing a problematic concept of man and apply it to all males become contributors to the rhetorical erasure of Black malehood.

By accusing Baldwin and her son of the possibility of inflicting violence on themselves and others is reinscribing the trope of Black man as monstrous and the site of inflicting violence. That infliction of violence is not only embracing their body and its parts, but the mere composition and the ability to exercise their masculinity implies erasure of Black women and queer Black people. Her misreading of Baldwin's Man and Black malehood is a key reason why Lorde herself and those who see her as providing the template for articulations of Black queer bodies cannot see Black masculinity as anything other than violent. Interpreting Black masculinity in the way Lorde does is part of a larger discourse and a world, in which the need to police, silence, and contribute to the annihilation of Black masculinity is not only allowed but celebrated. It is as Houria Bouteldja states: "the non-white male gender is just as dominated, maybe even more in white milieus."⁵⁴

Working through a queer existence is another white milieu. That is why Baldwin pushes back against Goldstein's concept of oppression. His oppression is at the expense of Baldwin's Blackness. Even Lorde states, "for survival, Black

children in America must be raised to be warriors.”⁵⁵ This is why, during their discussion, Baldwin states,

what happens to a man when he’s ashamed of himself when he can’t find a job? When his socks stink? When he can’t protect anybody? When he can’t do anything? Do you know what happens to a man when he can’t face his children because he’s ashamed of himself? It’s not like being a woman.”⁵⁶

Sexuality does not matter. Black manhood is predicated on the ability to do. To do is the ability to push through the disfunction of existing while being a target of annihilation.

Bouteldja’s articulation of the oppression of non-white males is a more recent statement of Baldwin’s correct observation that others perceive of Black males as being the perpetrators of real crime. As I mentioned earlier, real crime is not just what can be grounds for incarceration and criminalization; it is the attempt to exist beyond flesh. Being a whole body beyond the abyss of flesh is the real crime that would dismantle and subsequently destroy whiteness. However, it would also mean destroying all the institutions that feed it. It would mean that Black males would no longer face annihilation and extinction. For example, during their exchange, Lorde admits that “we have to take a new look at the ways in which we fight our joint oppression because if we don’t, we’re gonna be blowing each other up.”⁵⁷ Blowing each other up is what those in power hope for and antagonize. Giving illusions of power to oppressed groups works to continue the annihilation of Black male bodies. It continues the tension between Black men and women as well as Black boys and girls.

By thinking of Baldwin as a theorist of and advocate for Black male gender/genre forces is to think of no longer contributing to Black male annihilation. We have to begin, as Baldwin notes, to “redefine the terms of what woman is, what man is, how we relate to each other.”⁵⁸ He continues by stating, “but that demands redefining the terms of the western world.”⁵⁹ For Baldwin, the Western Man is central, and it is through the eyes of DaVinci and Vitruvius that we can see what Man is central. Yet, he argues that the Black sense of male and female is much more sophisticated than the Western idea. This can be argued because “Black men and women are much less easily thrown by the question of gender or sexual preference, and all that jazz.”⁶⁰ To be thrown by Western confines of gender and sexuality is arguably to be thrown by the confines of the Western idea of gender and sexuality or the centrality of Western man. The ability to go beyond Western man is to read Black men in texts that seek to annihilate them. Reading the work of Baldwin as a gender/genre theorist would be an intervention in how contemporary methodologies work to silence, police, and annihilate Black male existence. Current methodologies that do engage in the work of Baldwin covertly work to undo his existence as a Black man and his advocacy for the existence of Black males. His works go beyond an articulation of Black bodies and being while his own state of being resides in the abyss.

NOTES

1. Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief* (Oxford University Press, 2000).
2. Bryant Keith Alexander, *Performing Black Masculinity: Race, Culture, and Queer Identity* (AltaMira Press, 2006).
3. *I Am Not Your Negro*, directed by Raoul Peck, written by James Baldwin (Magnolia and Amazon Pictures, 2016).
4. Barry Jenkins’s film adaptation of James Baldwin’s novel of the same name, *If Beale Street Could Talk* (Annapurna Pictures, 2018).
5. See Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., *Begin Again: James Baldwin’s America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own* (Crown Publishing Group, 2020).
6. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri C. Spivak (John’s Hopkins Press, 1976).
7. James Baldwin and François Bondy, “The Negro Problem,” *Transition* 75/76 (1997): 82–86. Reprint of a 1964 interview.
8. “James Baldwin and Paul Weiss Debate Discrimination in America,” *The Dick Cavett Show*, American Broadcasting Company, May 16, 1969.
9. Hortense Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (Summer, 1987): 64–81.
10. Christina Sharpe states in her book *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Duke University Press, 2016) that “regarding Blackness, grammatical gender falls away and new meanings proliferate; how ‘the letters of a text are formed into a secret message by rearranging them’ or a secret message is discovered through the rearranging of the letters of a text.”
11. In his essay “On the Discursive Orientation toward Whiteness” Amir Jaima states that, in addressing a “white” narratee, we are compelled to negotiate the significantly limited persuasive potential of an interlocutor who is unsympathetic—if not simply hostile—to research questions that pertain to race and racism. “On the Discursive Orientation toward Whiteness,” *The Journal of Intercultural Studies* 40, no. 2 (2019): 210–24.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. W. E. B. DuBois, “The Talented Tenth,” *The Negro Problem*, ed. Booker T. Washington (James Pott and Company, 1903).
15. Ibid.
16. Calvin Warren, *Ontological Terror: Blackness, Nihilism, and Emancipation* (Duke University Press, 2018).
17. James Baldwin, “Freaks and American Ideal of Manhood,” *Playboy Magazine*, 1985. Reprinted as “Here Be Dragons,” in *Collected Essays*, 814–29 (Library of America, 1998).
18. Ibid.
19. Tommy J. Curry, *The Man-Not: Race, Class, Genre, and the Dilemmas of Black Manhood* (Temple University Press, 2017).
20. “Revolutionary Hope: A Conversation between James Baldwin and Audre Lorde,” *Essence Magazine* (1984).
21. Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (June 2008): 1–14.
22. Sylvia Wynter, “Afterword: Beyond Miranda’s Meanings: Un/silencing the ‘Demonic Ground’ of Caliban’s ‘Woman’,” *Out of the Kumbia: Caribbean Women and Literature*, eds. Carole Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory Fido, 355–72 (Africa World Press, 1990).
23. Ibid.
24. Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (Random House, 1981).
25. Obama launched *My Brother’s Keeper* in February 2014 (during Black History Month) to address persistent opportunity gaps facing boys and young men of color and to ensure all youth can reach their full potential. In 2015, the *My Brother’s Keeper Alliance* (MBK Alliance) was launched. In late 2017, MBK Alliance became an initiative of the Obama Foundation, www.obama.org/mbka/.

26. Barack H. Obama, *Commencement Address at Morehouse College*, May 19, 2013.
27. Hari Ziyad, "5 Signs Your Idea of 'Intersectionality' Is Anti-Black Racism in Disguise," *Everyday Feminism*, July 25, 2016, <https://everydayfeminism.com/2016/07/intersectionality-anti-Black/>.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid. Italics added by author.
31. Ibid. Italics added by author.
32. Ibid.
33. Pew Research Center, US Politics and Policy, "An Examination of the 2016 Electorate, Based on Validated Voters," August 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2018/08/09/an-examination-of-the-2016-electorate-based-on-validated-voters/>.
34. Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
35. See Leonardo Davinici's 13.6 in. x 10 in. sketch "Vitruvian Man" c. 1490. The original is in Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice, Italy.
36. Greg Thomas and Sylvia Wynter's interview in which she defines what she means by "genre." "Proud Flesh Inter/Views: Sylvia Wynter," *ProudFlesh: New Afrikan Journal of Culture, Politics and Consciousness* (2006), https://monoskop.org/images/6/65/Proud_Flesh_InterViews_Sylvia_Wynter_2006.pdf.
37. Ibid.
38. See "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (Summer, 1987): 64–81.
39. See Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Duke University Press, 2016).
40. Ibid.
41. Richard Goldstein, "Go the Way Your Blood Beats: An Interview with James Baldwin," *Village Voice*, 1984.
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