



THE INVITATION

Lecture Series: New Developments in Theory

**BLACK MALE STUDIES AS AN EXPLORATION
OF THE CARICATURE-CASTRATION
COMPLEX IN GENDER THEORY**

Prof. Tommy J. Curry, University of Edinburgh

25 MAY 2021, 6–8pm

Englisches Seminar, Zoom Lecture

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THE INVITATION—BLACK MALE STUDIES AS AN EXPLORATION OF THE CARICATURE-CASTRATION COMPLEX IN GENDER THEORY

Black male studies invites us to rethink the lack associated with Black masculinity within traditional gender theory as describing caricature rather than an actual mode of Black male being. The articulation of the Man-Not, then, not only resists the caricature attributed to Black male being due to lack, but articulates an inability of Black men to be captured within the humanist frames or ontological moldings of gender, masculinity, femininity, queerness, etc. Whereas Kobena Mercer has accurately described Black men as “the invisible men of the late capitalist underclass who have become the bearer—the signifiers—of the hopelessness and despair of our late post-Modern condition,” and Black masculinity as “a site upon which the nation’s crisis comes to be dramatized, demonized, and dealt with... as the apogee of the most Un-American otherness imaginable,” I am interested in thinking of Black men not as a site of the trauma or lack imposed by racist patriarchy, but demonstrating what thinking as an activity would be without replicating the mythologies of masculinity’s crisis or privileging the endurance of (gendered) forms. I would like to reflect on two key conceptual difficulties in this regard: the first is caricature and the other is castration within this presentation.

Tommy J. Curry is Professor of Philosophy and Personal Chair in Africana Philosophy and Black Male Studies at the University of Edinburgh. He is the author of *The Man-Not: Race, Class, Genre, and the Dilemmas of Black Manhood* (Temple University Press 2017), which won the 2018 American Book Award, and of *Another White Man’s Burden: Josiah Royce’s Quest for a Philosophy of Racial Empire* (SUNY Press 2018), which won the Josiah Royce Prize in American Idealist Thought from the Josiah Royce Society. He has re-published the forgotten philosophical works of William Ferris as *The Philosophical Treatise of William H. Ferris: Selected Readings from The African Abroad or, His Evolution in Western Civilization* (Rowman & Littlefield 2016) and is currently co-editing (with Daw-Nay Evans) the forthcoming anthology *Contemporary African American Philosophy: Where Do We Go from Here?* He is also the editor of the first book series dedicated to the study of Black males entitled *Black Male Studies: A Series Exploring the Paradoxes of Racially Subjugated Males* (Temple University Press). His public intellectual work earned him the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy’s Alain Locke Award in 2017. He is the past president of Philosophy Born of Struggle, one of the oldest Black philosophy organizations in the United States.