Modern Day Bigger: *Gangster Rappers and the Incarnation of a Myth*

Negro writers must accept the nationalist implications of their lives, not in order to encourage them, but in order to change and transcend them. They must accept the concept of nationalism because, in order to transcend it, they must posses and understand it. - Richard Wright

In 1996, famed rapper and entertainer Tupac Shakur[1] was gunned down in Las Vegas. Journalistic sentiment at the time suggested he deserved the brutal death. *The New York Times* headline, Rap Performer Who Personified Violence, Dies, suggested Shakur, who was twenty five when he died, deserved his untimely death. - (Pareles, 1996) A product of a fatherless home, raised poor in the ghettos of San Francisco, Shakur, notes Ernest Harding of the *L.A. Weekly*, lived in a society that still didn’t view him as human, that projected his worst fears onto him; [so] he had to decide whether to battle that or embrace it. (Hardy, 1996) As these fears forced Shakur into a corner, Shakur, in the music magazine *Vibe*, alludes to his own interior battle noting there’s two niggas inside me, adding one wants to live in peace, and the other won’t die unless he’s free. (All Eyes on Him, 1996) While many of his lyrics sensationalized gang violence and ghetto politics, dramatizing the murder of fellow African Americans and, especially, police officers, he also labored over trying to come to grips with African American self-realization, breaking free from imposed societal chains. Unfortunately, as Barry Glassner muses in his book *The Culture of Fear* (1999), it seems to me at once sad, inexcusable, and entirely symptomatic of the culture of fear that the only version of Tupac Shakur many Americans knew was a frightening and unidimensional caricature. (127) In order to
get out of the ghetto, Shakur intevented himself as a gangster rapper, personifying violence, reveling in a contrived world of misogyny and excess, and while in the twilight of his career he may have tried to deliver more positive messages to his fans, mainstream America, at the incessant proding from the mainstream media who cultivated and projected this violent image in efforts to increase record sales, viewed him as an untrustworthy hellion who would sooner shoot you in the face than give you the time of the day.

In many ways, Bigger Thomas, the protagonist in Richard Wright’s *Native Son* (1940), parallels Shakur in his efforts to come to terms with who he actually is, what (if anything) he stands for or believes in, all the while struggling within the preconceived notions and borders of a racist society. A victim of the same impoverished environment as Shakur, Bigger personifies violence in the form of the real murders of Mary Dalton and Bessie, unlike Shakur who only talks and sings of murder. In *Native Son*, Wright, for better or for worse, presents his readers with an entity in Bigger Thomas who achieves self realization *only* after murder, and this characterization suggests violence presents a kind of road which winds down into self consciousness and self awareness, a road many African Americans, most notably gangster rappers, cannot help but continue to travel on today.

While one can argue that violence in African American culture owes its origins to the days of slavery, I would contend that violence and the reaction to fear(s) is what constitutes authentic African American experience, and while violence may have stemmed from slave days, it has been adopted into popular culture as what defines and
comprises the idea of quintessential Black-ness. In this paper I aim to show how the American system that birthed Bigger continues to birth Biggers today, and how both media in *Native Son* and present day media work to exploit the popular perception of these Biggers, suggesting that while we may seem to have made great strides in racial equality, the exploitation of an identity of violence as a desirable mode to establish an authentic black experience continues to manifest itself inexorably in the minds of many African Americans. To do so I will explore James Baldwin's assertion in *Many Thousands Gone* (1955) that Bigger was an incarnation of a myth, suggesting that Bigger was a very stereotypical black character, poor, afraid, full of angst, and without a release for his mounting frustrations, quick to lash out violently at both blacks and whites. I will then show how modern day gangster rappers like Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls continue to reinforce this myth, whether consciously or unconsciously, drawing from it in efforts to define themselves, and discuss how the propagation of this myth impacts the African American youths who see the choices these artists make and the lifestyles they lead as both legitimate and desirable ways to escape poverty, only to continue the vicious cycle.

**An Identity of Violence in *Native Son***

First it is important to understand Richard Wright's intentions in creating Bigger Thomas. In his essay *How Bigger Was Born* (1940), Wright creates Bigger out of a mold of multiple people and personalities he experiences throughout his childhood. These preliminary Biggers were the only black people Wright knew who got away with bucking the system, at least until the whites put them in check, as it seems all of Wright's early Biggers suffer violent ends (like so many gangster rappers of the mid nineties). As
Wright moves out of the South and into the industrialized North, he notices the propensity of these Biggers to react more violently in urban environments where there are more stimulating elements than in the South. Wright elaborates, [Bigger] was trying to react to and answer the call of the dominant civilization whose glitter came to him through newspapers, magazines, radios, movies, and the mere imposing sight and sound of daily American life, adding in many respects his emergence as a distinct type was inevitable. (Native Son 439) Increased population, explicitly segregated housing, constant barrage of mainstream media, and decreasing hopes for upward mobility forced the archetype of Bigger to reject the prototypical norms of society while simultaneously denying him any outlet to thrive. According to Wright, Bigger was an American product, a native son of this land, a product of a dislocated society, [living] amid the greatest possible plenty on earth; however, Bigger was looking and feeling for a way out, and no matter the level of fear and disquietude present in him, Bigger [would] not become an ardent, or even a lukewarm, supporter of the status quo. (NS 446-447) After the publication of Native Son, Wright responded to the backlash that many African Americans believed Bigger was not a fitting representation of black Americans by insisting that Bigger was infinitely more important than any critique or political inquiry, a necessary amalgamation of hatred and fear, a by-product of the American system that birthed him. If Wright is right, then Bigger, as an archetype, achieves an almost mythical status, rising above individual concerns of accurate representation, assuming a place on the mantle of popular perception of African American identity. Wright, it seems, might argue that while the character of Bigger may not encapsulate every African American, there is no doubt that his persona remains at large in our society, and, more importantly,
he may be the image white America most closely identifies with when considering African Americans in totality.ii[2]

Like Wright, in his essay Many Thousands Gone (1955), James Baldwin argues that Bigger achieves mythical proportions, stating that Biggers force comes, not from his significance as a social (or anti-social) unit, but from his significance as the incarnation of a myth. (113) Baldwin reinforces my claim that Bigger has transcended his own characterization and assumed a much grander burden of representation. Simply put, Bigger became a kind of black idol, a talisman that many African Americans looked to in efforts to define themselves. What did it mean to be black? Well apparently it meant defining yourself via a violent reaction to fear and hate. In her article What Bigger Killed For: Rereading Violence Against Women in Native Son (2001), Sondra Guttman quotes from Angela Davis Women, Race and Class (1981) stating, for Wright, the most appropriate way to make clear the plight of blacks in capitalist America came via the narrative Angela Davis calls the myth of the black rapist. Native Son is about what happens when black resistance is named rape. (170) How then does Bigger enforce this in Native Son?

In her article Boys in the Hood: Black Male Community in Richard Wrights Native Son (2006), Aime J. Ellis argues that Biggers environment conditions him to act violently in reaction to the pressures surrounding him. She contends that for many young urban blacks in northern ghettos of the1930s, Biggers violent rage was an understandable, if not identifiable response to American racism and poverty, adding that as a product of reform schools and the macho environment of the neighborhood poolroom, Bigger
reflected the worst of black male rage and affirmed for many the prevalent stereotype of poor urban black males as irresponsible, savagely immoral, and inhumane. Even as Wright tells the story, Bigger was a bitter embodiment of the hatred of and injury inflicted on black people living in America's ghettos. (183,184) Throughout *Native Son* we see Bigger struggle to make sense of his surroundings, succumbing to a deepening feeling of hysteria (NS 28) - hoping for an outlet to channel his energies into. As the totality of his existence is racially imprinted on him, where he is supposed to live, the jobs he is supposed to do, etc, this outlet is in many ways Bigger's yearning for an identity which he can claim as his own. It seems the only time Bigger can act normal is in the company of his three friends, Gus, Jack, and G.H. (Even then Bigger is not totally at ease with his cohorts.) Ellis elaborates:

For poor urban black males who regularly endured racism, police brutality, unemployment, and scrutiny from within black communities and from their own families, the social and cultural world that those poor urban black males created for themselves on the streets, in poolrooms, and even in the balconies of segregated movie theaters was a place to commiserate over and recover from the absurdity of living within a culture of terror. Indeed, these urban homosocial spaces represent sites of black male community that foster the development of black male identities against (though largely informed by) an environment of racist repression and negation. (185)

Ellis astute observation that poor black males are largely informed by this environment of racism and repression serves to highlight this paper's premise that violence as an identity continually manifests itself within the black community. It is also important to note that
African Americans are the ones creating these homosocial spaces in response to oppression, and whether they are aware or unaware of it, younger African Americans will look to these spaces in efforts to define themselves, namely, to decide how to act black. Wright seems to hint at this easily influenced upcoming generation when Buddy tells Bigger that if you didn’t do it, just tell me and I’ll fix em. Ill get a gun and kill four or five of em (NS 296) While it is only a small scene, I think the ramifications are considerable.

I said before that Bigger achieves his self realization/actualization after the murder of Mary. Previous to the crime, Bigger lived in a constant state of fear, unable (or unwilling) to handle the constant bombardment of imposed repression. Ironically, the act of murder itself frees Bigger from the fear that dominated his life:

The thought of what he had done, the awful horror of it, the daring associated with such actions, formed for him for the first time in his fear-ridden life a barrier of protection between him and a world he feared. He had murdered and had created a new life for himself. It was something that was all his own, and it was the first time in his life he had had anything that others could not take for him. (NS 105)

I’m not suggesting that Bigger wasn’t somewhat violent before the murder as he did steal from businesses in the Black Belt and he also physically terrorized his pool-hall buddies, but Mary’s murder signaled a major shift in the victims of his crimes, that of black to white, and this integral awakening Bigger experiences is paramount in establishing violence as an identity in the novel. Ellis also suggests this key act as pivotal in Bigger’s process of self actualization by asking, Do not Biggers violent behaviors also constitute the very expression through which he is able to gain consciousness, restore his self-
respect, and assert his humanity? (186) Bigger stipulates that his crime felt natural, like his whole life had been building in anticipation of it. Henceforth, he would know how to act, not needing to hide from fear anymore, he felt he could control himself now. (NS 107) Post murder, Bigger's eyes begin to shine as his body became less tense like he had shed an invisible burden he had long carried. (NS 114) Bigger's thought process also kicks into high gear after he kills Mary. Lines like, Oh! He had an idea! (NS 124) illuminate Bigger's functioning on an entirely different plane than previously. If he was a drab lowlife before, now he seemed a cunning instigator, testament to the fact that he no longer felt the need to blot out a day and night of doing nothing. (NS 141) Most importantly, Bigger is aware of this transformation and the new choices that accompany it:

A new feeling had been born in him, a feeling that all but blotted out the fear of death. As long as he moved carefully and knew what he was about, he could handle things, he thought. As long as he could take his life in his own hands and dispose of it as he pleased, as long as he could decide just when and where he would run to, he need not be afraid. He felt that he had his destiny in his grasp. He was more alive than he could ever remember having been; his mind and attention were pointed, focused towards a goal. For the first time in his life he moved consciously between two sharply defined poles: he was moving away from the threatening penalty of death, from the deathlike times that brought him that tightness and hotness in his chest; and he was moving toward that sense of fullness he had so often but inadequately felt in magazines and movies. (NS 149)

Here, Bigger expounds upon his newly created freedom as for the first time in his life he understands what he [is] about. (NS 105) Ellis concurs stating:
Understanding Biggers rage as, at times, enabling or as a source of his agency challenges us to reconsider Biggers humanity as an assertion of his dignity, self-worth, and somebodiness in a world that simultaneously dehumanizes him and renders him invisible. It is in this sense that Biggers humanity is inextricably tied to the pursuit of his freedom, inextricably bound up in each violent assertion of Biggers rage. (186)

No longer afraid, Bigger has succeeded in creating a new violent identity for himself, an identity Wright perpetuates via his treatment of mass media in the novel.

Every piece of information Bigger receives in *Native Son* comes from some form of mass media. He notices billboards of political hopefuls, he tracks his own capture and prosecution in newspapers, and he watches newsreels in movie houses. While trying to evade capture, wondering how close the police are to his location, he exclaims, If only [I] could read that paper! (*NS* 199) This is important because it is specifically these forms of media that reinforce Biggers perception of himself, as evident when Max realizes that the boy got the idea from the newspaper (*NS* 292), alongside convincing white America that Bigger was the norm, not the exception to the rule. Specifically, the description of Bigger in the newspaper as a beast utterly untouched by the softening influences of modern civilization, and in speech and manner lack[ing] the charm of the average, harmless, genial, grinning southern darky so beloved by the American people, (*NS* 280) positions Bigger as an evil nigger. Consequentially, if an African American refuses to ascribe to the virtues of the southern darky, they too shall be considered evil. He becomes disengaged from the political when he sees the billboard, he understands the headline *AUTHORITIES HINT SEX CRIME*, (*NS* 243) - ensures certain death if he is captured,
and, in the case of the newsreels, Guttman suggests that, Wright uses a newsreel to make clear that [the] link between [African American] political and sexual desire is maintained by an American mass culture aiming to transform the collective political unrest of the black male community into a less dangerous form. (172) All three forms of media then act as a kind of amplifier for popular perception of African Americans in Wrights America, pumping up the volume of racist stereotypes and broadcasting this distorted signal across Americas airwaves.

Lastly, while Bigger undergoes a kind of self awakening, he continues to remain poor and ignorant. As a character, while he may feel an internal sense of self, his external disposition remains the same throughout the novel. However, he does achieve a kind of stardom in that the whole of Chicago is talking about him, the entire police force is dispatched to arrest him, and when the policeman tells Bigger that hes in every one of the newspapers and Buckley asks, boy, did you ever think youd be as important a man as you are right now? (NS 292), Bigger does become something of a celebrity, albeit a reluctant one.

**An Identity of Violence in Gangster Rap**

Beginning in the early nineties, scholarly discourse began to focus on the effects of gangster rap on the African American community, and many articles and books ranging from the treatment of women in rap to its glorification of violence were published (and continue to be published) on the topic. While these examinations are undoubtedly broad and somewhat exhaustive, my specific interest is the establishment of violent identities via the projection of violence in gangster rap. I will first explore this
idea of projection, or rather performance, then focus on the treatment of rappers in the media, ending with a connection between two rather disparate forms, the novel (Native Son) and gangster rap music.

In her article Raps Unruly Body (2003), Annette Saddik makes very clear that she believes the violence gangster rappers project is nothing more than a theatrical representation of violence, one that addressed the growing pain and rage of disenfranchised American black males through language and rhythm instead of through actual physical violence. There are never any calls in the song[s] to translate discourse into action. Instead, there is a passionate expression of shared social anger that could lead to physical destruction if not acknowledged and dealt with. (Emphasis added, 115) She elaborates, Gangsta rap is even more specifically about redefining American identity by revealing identity and the power relations it generates not as something fixed in essentialist concepts such as race and gender, but as a performance which, like all things American, can be commodified and sold as truth.iii[3] (112) It is this truth that interests me, and, while there may not be any overt calls to illicit violence, a closer look into some of these passionate expressions (in the form of song lyrics) may yield insight into the potentially destructive power of this art form.

Tupac Sakurs song Crooked Ass Nigga, from the album 2Pacalypse Now (1991), is chock full of violent imagery, sensationalized gang violence, and ghetto politics. Lines like the more I shot, the more motherfuckers dropped and even cops got shot when they rolled up, and cause cops should mind they business, when we rush, now you're pleadin like a bitch, cause you don't know how to hush suggest both a complete disrespect for authority and forfeiture of any valuation of life. In defense of many gangster rappers,
many run-ins with the law were fraught with questionable police officers, instances of racial profiling, and an overall presumed-guilty-before-proven-innocent attitude. This is not to suggest all rap artists were angels, but many were usually guilty of nothing more than being black in the wrong place at the wrong time. But if this is the case, how did mainstream America arrive at the conclusion that gangster rappers were violent criminals?

In The Political, Economic, Social, and Cultural Tensions in Gangster Rap (2006), David Canton notes that by the mid-nineties rappers, such as Snoop Dogg and Tupac Shakur, were on the nightly news and their trouble with the law further legitimized their gangsta image. Before Snoop Doggs 1993 solo debut album *Doggystyle*, he was on trial for murder, and the jury ruled he was not guilty. In mainstream media Snoop and Tupac were viewed as criminals. It seems while these artists may not have actually *committed* murder, white America was convinced that they were quite *capable* of doing so. Canton concurs furthering that, gangsta rappers concluded if most whites think that the ghetto is all about drugs, violence, and gang warfare, then this is the story they will get. iv[4] (249) If gangster rappers were most concerned with their gangsta authenticity and record sales, (248) - than it is logical to assume they would do anything and everything to maintain their gangster image. Arrests were now canon fodder for increased record sales. Snoop Dogg was a passenger in a car that was involved in a drive by, but America (aside from those sitting on his jury) was convinced he was the one that pulled the trigger. Both rappers and the mainstream media were involved in a kind of mutual misrepresentation, each using the other to fuel the fire of racial unrest, in turn skyrocketing record sales through the roofv[5]. While modern-day rappers like 50 Cent
(aka Curtis Jackson) have been convicted of felonies (peddling heroine and crack cocaine), it is important to note that most gangster rappers in the early nineties personified violence mainly for financial ends, failing to participate in violent acts. For example, Ice Cube and Dr. Dre (Andre Young) of NWA (Niggas With Attitude) were not gang members, nor were they ever in jail, but their first-person narratives convinced audiences that they were gang bangers. Similar to actors who portray gangsters in film, the majority of gangsta rappers were not gang members and some attended college: they were getting paid to talk about a life that they were extremely familiar with, but did not live. Ice Cube attended an art school in Phoenix, Arizona, before he became a rap star.

Nevertheless, gangsta rappers lyrics and persona were authentic enough to convince the real gang bangers in the neighborhoods. (247) Similarly, in her article Social Context and Musical Content of Rap Music, 1979-1995 (2006), Jennifer Lena insists that rappers felt pressure to craft an identity suitable (and saleable) in the mainstream recording industry while keepin it real, remaining congruent with an older value system. Despite the surface-level tension that exaggerated violence in hardcore rap provokes between reality and art, it still manages to represent a religion and ideology of authenticity. (Perkins 1996:20)

(490) Both black and white listeners are then influenced by the personas these rappers adopt. The record labels push the image to sell records, the artists dress the part (wearing gold chains, driving expensive cars, flashing guns, etc), and the consumers engage in a kind of suspension of belief, likening the rappers to the violent criminals they portray. As Lena observes, protagonists of hardcore rap have one foot in the world of extreme bourgeois consumption and success and the other in the ghetto, (486) - and this means rappers toe the line between ghetto bad boy and rich superstar[6].
Perhaps one of the best examples of this type of double persona in gangster rap is that of Christopher Wallace and his identity of The Notorious B.I.G. (aka Biggie Smalls, aka Big Poppa) The East coast equivalent to Tupac (the East vs. West conflict was a battle that gangster rappers engaged in through the mid-nineties and was rumored to be the underlying cause for both Christopher and Tupac's murders), Big Poppa reveled in the same excess and ghetto politics Shakur hitched his career to, and, like Shakur, was murdered at the height of his artistic contribution to the genre. Wallace is an interesting case study because, as Michael Collins notes in his article Biggie Envy and the Gangsta Sublime (2006), Wallace let himself be swallowed up on disc in a persona his sharp ironies cut open a persona perfected for black males of his approximate class and generation in New York City at the beginning of the 1990s. (911) Is there a line between these two identities? If Collins is right, and the crucial element of his persona, the intensity and violence of his subject matter came, as Biggie himself asserted, from the intensity and violence of the environment that molded his imagination[vii][7], (913) - then could there be any real separation between the two? If you live a lie long enough do you become it? Like the aforementioned media representations of Snoop and Tupac, Collins provides that the original convictions and blanket media coverage nevertheless provided invaluable reinforcement for the late twentieth-century stereotype of young black males as incarnations of violence. In a sort of gesture some have compared to minstrelsy, Biggie pulled the stereotype on like a mask. (912) Part of Biggies allure (and all of gangster rap for that matter) was that rap like Biggies, full of all the dangers and striving in the world, superconducts in the sense that it induces listeners to translate their identity styles (including modes of speech and dress) into the terms set forth by the rapper. (936) What
we are left with then is a cross section of listeners across America ascribing to the terms these rappers are establishing: a nation of youths hot to blast fools and hand out beat downs, all highly attuned and ready to emulate their gangster heroes. As Collins posits:

In spite of the numerous controversies in hip-hop music—such as the use of the term nigga, the promotion of violence, and the negative images of black women in videos—hip-hop remains at the center of American popular culture, and one can see its influence across the globe. During the 1990s, Republican and Democratic politicians and some black leaders blamed, not all hip-hop music, but gangsta rap for all of the black communities social problems: drug use, teenage pregnancy, unemployment, gang violence, and high school dropouts. Even though these problems existed in the black community prior to gangsta rap, this music and culture has provided a convenient target to avoid addressing the causes of the real problems of black America: racism, sexism, and poverty. (244)

It is precisely this idea that images of gangster rappers exist at the center of American popular culture which reinforces my claim that violence is the overriding trait many African Americans conform to in the eyes of white America. Further, understanding that this promotion of violence only begets more violence, forces us, like Canton implicitly suggests, to address the real causes of problems in black America.

Modern Day Bigger
How then can we compare Richard Wrights influential character and gangster rappers? Lyrics from Tupac Shakurs song God Bless the Dead, released on *Greatest Hits* (1998), parallel many of the same themes Bigger Thomas wrestles with in *Native Son*: we all hoods, and all we ever had was dreams. Money making motherfuckers plot scandalous schemes. In the gutter, you learn to have a criminal mind. I was addicted to tryin Like Tupac, Bigger also has dreams; dreams of flying planes, a desire to acquire wealth, and, in the playing white scene, daydreams about occupying white professions in a white world. At the end of the novel Max, Biggers attorney, suggests that it is the external pressures of the ghetto (or gutter) that turn Bigger into a murderer. Like Tupac, Bigger learns to have a criminal mind. Tupac and Biggers identities are intricately wrapped up in their treatment in mainstream media because it both informs and reinforces their perceptions of themselves. Lastly, both Bigger and gangster rappers re-invent themselves by incorporating violence as a mode of identity, and while Bigger commits violent acts in the fictional realm, the deaths of Biggie Smalls and Tupac Shakur indicate that gangster rap is fully capable of inciting the same level of violence in the real world. What then are the consequences of this identity of violence? Is there a solution?

As Collins observes, as the hip hop community itself recognized in the wake of the murders of Shakur and Wallace, a crucial limit that needs to be observed is the one between the performer and the personae he creates. It is a line which Shakur, the more fully developed if not the greater poet of the two, is widely noted to have had trouble keeping sight of. (935) Perhaps rappers need to make both themselves and their fans fully aware of the differences between their adopted stage personas and their real identities. Unfortunately in the nineties (as mentioned above), the record labels continued to insist
that the line be blurred in efforts to sell more records. However, what we have seen in
more recent rap, the increased proliferation of female rappers in the genre combating
entrenched misogynistic stereotypes and the shift from a violent gangster mode to an
increasingly socially responsible one, at least on the surface, suggests both artists and
labels have learned from the perils and pitfalls of gangster rap in the nineties. But this
optimism is fleeting as a closer look into the genre reveals startling contradictions.

As the information age has provided more and more fans access to their favorite
artists personal life, the distinction between the rapper and the person is becoming
increasingly easier and easier to make. What is unfortunate is that this new privileged
access comes with a fair amount of risk as rappers like 50 Cent are taking advantage of
these new methods of information dissemination, utilizing their criminal private personas
to facilitate record sales, convincing the public they are indeed violent. In fact, todays
gangster rappers are much more dangerous than their earlier predecessors in that the
public can so easily access information to see if they are indeed keeping it real, by
committing real crimes and living a real gangster lifestyle, or faking it like so many of the
initial gangster rap wave. It is vital we realize the significance of this new form of
gangster rap because it is continuing to perpetuate violence in popular American culture.
Ellis argues that this realization is crucial as we attempt to grapple with the plight of poor
urban black youths in contemporary U.S. society. For as we push forward into a new
millennium, there are more not fewer Bigger Thomas who are becoming less and less
afraid to assert themselves even in the face of prison or death. (196) If Ellis is correct,
then it seems the American system of racism and capitalist greed that birthed Bigger
continues to birth Biggers today, and until we as a society can begin to reconcile this
systematic subjugation of other races, the mythical representations of characters like Bigger Thomas and rap artists like Tupac Shakur will continue to form dangerously incorrect perceptions of African Americans in popular culture.

Notes:

i[1] Canton elaborates on Tupacs life and contribution to rap music. His life and career symbolized the tensions in gangsta rap within the context of changing terms and conditions of black cultural politics in the United States (p. 173). Tupacs mother Afeni Shakur and his aunt Assata Shakur were Black Panthers. Similar to NWAs first album, Straight Out of Compton, Tupacs first album, 2Pacalypse Now contained a number of political songs such as Trapped, that talked about black male incarceration. Tupacs lyrics were critical of conservative government policies and extolled the virtues of the Black Panthers. Quinn states that the G-Funk era in gangsta rap focused on the gangsta lifestyle and less on social issues, but this argument does not account for the fact that Tupac, for example, incorporated political issues in G Funk. One of his most popular songs Dear Mama is an ode to his mother and all single black mothers. During the last year and a half of Tupacs life, his music mirrored gangsta raps shift from marginalized social commentary to nihilism and commercialization. However, Quinn contends that Tupac tried to synthesize his Black Power roots with his thug life image by using his songs to create political awareness among working-class, underemployed, and uneducated black youth (thugs) in a post-civil rights society. Tupac realized that the strategies (nonviolent protest) and rhetoric (beloved community) of the sixties were not viable during the individualistic nineties. (254)

ii[2] Considering the novel made the book-of-the-month-club and went out to a multitude of households, it is possible many club members joined in on equating Bigger to other African Americans.

iii[3] Saddik also offers that similarly, the displays of black masculine power and violence in much of hip hop can be read both as a window into the reality of the pressures of economically disenfranchised urban black Americans and as a conscious unveiling of what these rappers see as the hypocrisies of the capitalist, patriarchal values of the mainstream American Dream. Of course, despite the sense of empowerment, there are obvious problems with the gangsta pose not the least of which involves violence as a solution to injustice, as well as the dissing of women in general, and black women in
particular. We must remember, however, that misogyny and violence are not unique to hip hop but deeply embedded in many parts of American culture. (123)

iv[4] As Canton suggests, gangsta rap musicians and producers refused to present an image that was acceptable to white America and they reminded middle-class African Americans about the realities of the inner city. (251)

v[5] This explosion of records was partly achievable because the lyrics came instead from the minds of what many white Americans considered to be the most violent and threatening segment of America—young angry inner city black men. (245)

vi[6] Lena furthers, Sincerity and a ghetto identity were deeply associated in early rap lyrics, a facet of authenticity work. (Peterson 2005) The early focus of rap lyrics on local people, places and things could reasonably be a function of familiarity alone. These artists used for inspiration the source material in their environments. (487)

vii[7] Collins quotes from Elijah Anderson saying, In his Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City, Elijah Anderson explains, in sociological terms, the sort of transaction Biggie dramatizes. By the time they are teenagers, Anderson explains, most young people [in the Philadelphia neighborhoods he studied] have internalized the code of the street, or at least learned to comport themselves in accordance with its rules. [. . .] [T]he code revolves around the presentation of self. Its basic requirement is the display of a certain predisposition to violence, and possibly mayhem, [showing that] when the situation requires it, that one can take care of oneself. [. . .] Even so, there are no guarantees against challenges, because there are always people around looking for a fight in order to increase their share of respecter juice, as it is sometimes called on the street. (7273) (915)
Works Cited

Baldwin, James. Many Thousands Gone, *Notes of a Native Son*.
    Boston, Beacon Press, 1955
Canton, D. A. The Political, Economic, Social, and Cultural Tensions in Gangsta Rap.
    *Reviews in American History 34.2*, 2006, 244-257.
    *Callaloo 29.3*, 911-938.
    *Callaloo 29.1*, 182-201.
Hardy, E. (1996, September 20). Do Thug Niggaz Go to Heaven?
    *L.A. Weekly*, p. 51.
    *Social Forces 85.1*, 479-495.
    *The Drama Review 47.4*, 110-127.
Wright, R. (1940 Reissued in Harper Perennial Modern Classics in 2005).
The Doctrine of the Incarnation, that Jesus Christ was both truly God and truly human, is the foundation and cornerstone of traditional Christian theism. And yet, this traditional teaching appears to verge on incoherence. How can one person be both God, having all the perfections of divinity, and human, having all the limitations of humanity? This is the fundamental philosophical problem of the incarnation. Perhaps a solution is found in an analysis of what the traditional teaching meant by person, divinity, and humanity, or in understanding how divinity and humanity were united in a single person. Reports from those on the ground claimed that by later that day the White House was closed up tight and remained so as of right now. Evidently Biden’s team was not in the White House, but detained and arrested behind the scenes. The US Military was expected to have arrested Harris on charges of treason, while invoking the 25th Amendment on Biden because of his dementia and subsequent inability to hold office. (The Deep State had plans to invoke the 25th on Biden, put Harris in his place and Pelosi as VP. They had to do something with them before who knows what happened. Tricky times even for the elite pedophiles and the child demand and supply chain. More importantly, Trump did not specify what the “orderly transition” means. He didn’t say there would be a transition to Biden being installed as president. He might be referring to the transition of America away from the tyranny of the deep state and the return of power to the People. In fact, Trump’s statement seems to be designed to disarm those calling for his immediate removal under the 25th Amendment so that Trump can continue to work the military solution that would seek mass arrests of the traitors who attempted to pull off their criminal coup against America. The meeting comes days after Trump took part in a scripted video where he finally said: “A new administration will be inaugurated on January 20. But he hasn’t said outright that Joe Biden won, even as Vice President Mike Pence finally called Vice President-elect Kamala Harris and began what appears to be a farewell tour. Trump has been hunkered down in office, with bizarre White House schedules saying only that: “President Trump will work from early in the morning until late in the evening. He will make many calls and have many meetings.” A message to Lindell was not immediately returned. The