

FROM THE FIELD

James Baldwin: Interventions: A Session at the 2019 Modern Language Association Convention

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Abstract

“Interventions” was the organizing term for the presentations of three Baldwin scholars at the Modern Language Association Convention in Chicago in January of 2019. Baldwin’s travels and activities in spaces not traditionally associated with him, including the U.S. South and West, represent interventions of a quite literal type, while his aesthetic and critical encounters with these and other cultures, including twenty-first-century contexts of racial, and racist, affect—as in the case of Raoul Peck’s 2016 film *I Am Not Your Negro*—provide opportunities to reconsider his work as it contributes to new thinking about race, space, property, citizenship, and aesthetics.

Keywords: race, space, travel, property, urban development, affect, mediation, James Baldwin

Scholars came together at the Modern Language Association convention in Chicago in January of 2019 in a panel moderated by Adrienne Brown (University of Chicago) to consider a range of James Baldwin’s interventions into contemporary social and cultural contexts, whether during his own lifetime or in the decades since his death in 1987. For Sharon P. Holland, *I Am Not Your Negro* (2016) provided an opportunity to examine contemporary whiteness; Baldwin’s unfinished book *Remember This House* offered an opening for dialogue that intervenes not simply in the present moment, but across generations. For Robert Jackson and Shawn Salvant, Baldwin’s analyses of urban housing and labor in San Francisco in *Take This Hammer* (1963) and late twentieth-century Southern race relations and

law enforcement in *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* (1985) invited examination of Baldwin's interventions into an ever-widening range of issues and contexts.

Despite the quite divergent methods and materials taken up by presenters, we shared a number of larger concerns:

- How did Baldwin see intervention as consistent with the role of the writer? What are the contours of such a role in Baldwin's time and into the twenty-first century?
- How does intervention create links, for Baldwin, between the personal and political, and the private and public? How is the intervention related to the local, the regional, the occasional, the situational? Or to the global, the cosmopolitan, the universal—or perhaps the placeless?
- How does intervention enable new critical understandings of Baldwin's entire career, including his "late" work? How does intervention bring "minor" works to light again? How does it challenge assumptions about Baldwin's "major" works of fiction and nonfiction?

Indeed, Baldwin's life and career dramatize a tension among several vocations: a not always consistent position on how the writer should spend his or her time and energy; where this work is most effectively accomplished; who else constitutes a collaborator; and what, finally, in this widening horizon of performance, counts as a text. At the same time, Baldwin's moral vision remains remarkably consistent and resilient, as Holland notes, generating urgent contemporary questions long after Baldwin has exited the stage. "What is the affective life of white silence and shame?" she asks, linking Baldwin's restive gaze at civil rights quietism in the 1960s to the ongoing crisis of white racial identification in the no-longer-so-early-twenty-first-century United States.

With these interdisciplinary explorations, we seek to emphasize something of the extraordinary range of Baldwin's sojourns, in his own time and ours. Conference presentations are, perhaps necessarily, suggestive, and we present these in a spirit of invitation, hoping not to settle debates but to generate new interventions in, around, and beyond Baldwin studies.

Robert Jackson

I Am Not Your Negro: Forms of American Affect

Haitian filmmaker Raoul Peck's documentary begins with Samuel Jackson's haunting voiceover spliced through with the sounds of a moving train and visuals of the overhead tracks. Above and below, city and sound mix to give us the tenor of the next 80 or so minutes—a pastiche of remembrance rather than a chronological biopic.

Samuel Jackson's voice intones over melancholic music:

And I will be 55, yes 55 in a month. I am about to undertake the journey. And this is a journey to tell you the truth which I always knew that I would have to make, but had

hoped perhaps, certainly had hoped not to have to make so soon. I am saying that a journey is called that because you cannot know what you will discover on the journey; *what you will do with what you find or what you find will do to you*.¹

Baldwin's words come to us from a 1979 letter to his publisher proposing a new book—he left behind only 30 pages of notes—and the words are jarring because I too am 55, was 54 while writing this short paper. Have lived abroad, though not for any real length of time, I have sojourned in Princeton, N.J., and the City, though Brooklyn was my favorite haunt. I too have loved, still love Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*. I have had a white mentor who loved me into books and writing and is a friend of my mind and heart still. And most pointedly, I too have grown bone-tired of this never-ending discussion about how to cure white culture's bad habits. Peck, who once served as Haiti's minister of culture, seems not only interested in bringing the fire this time from Baldwin's text into its prophetic relevance in the now, but also concerned with reminding us of what's missing in our efforts to understand, shall I say "overcome," white supremacy in this new, but very old America.

My article works through the images, soundscape, and text of Peck's 2016 documentary on James Baldwin's legacy to construct a new theory for understanding our current racial climate. Moving through Baldwin's essays and his public persona, I first attempted to engage forms of ambivalence that seem to dominate white affective relationships with blackness, then and now. But I became frustrated with that effort, as the words and snapshots before me began to tell a very different story about affect and its principal calling: to tell a bold lie and to tell it often about white feeling. While trying to write this paper I was reminded of that scene from Aaron McGruder's *Boondocks* when Granddad confronts Huey as he wakes from a nightmare: "You having that dream where you made the white people riot, weren't you?" "But I was telling the truth!" In essence, Granddad schools Huey on the fine art of how to lie—lying, Zora Neale Hurston once reminded us, is the black person's fine art of survival.² Granddad delivers the lesson of interracial feeling here with a slap, in violence we police each other to protect (ourselves) from white feeling, white affect. The lesson of lying is, in fact, never nonviolent. The affective life of white supremacy is a generational knowledge handed down with the back of the hand, a necessary punishment while we wait for white epiphany, in the offing, but not quite yet here. An elevated train at a distance on a platform.

In "Many Thousands Gone" (1951), the second part to a conversation about blackness he began with "Everybody's Protest Novel" (1949), Baldwin notes that "Wherever the face of the Negro appears, a tension is created, the tension of a silence filled with things unutterable."³ Blackness is the game changer, the "Have you stolen anything?" of Alice Walker's *Meridian*.⁴ It is the *thing* that steals, leeches from the community of souls gathered amicably around the conference tables of academe, reminding us of the lie of our being together. In our scholarship on affect from queer studies work on negative or failed emotion to the (new) white fragility—we seem to have a rather unequal accounting. My job seems to be to

perform black anguish or anger for you and in turn I get your tears or crickets and we see little change. The numbers of people of African descent continue to dwindle across a spectrum of places of higher learning as we write about and lament the school-to-prison pipeline or the prison industrial complex. You have my story, but I do not have yours, nor the feeling that would or could produce it in the first place. What is, in fact, your private feeling? When my white colleague speaks to the political moment, he speaks to the thing that barely touches him, bringing rationality and protection to the work at hand. But he rarely brings himself; there is no narrative of becoming here—all attempts at an origin are laughable. Like Topsy, he just grew, there in the position he occupies in its forever.

In my 55 years on this planet and during much of it as a writer, teacher, and scholar, I have witnessed only rarely a white colleague bare his racial self to me in any real way. But I have been thanked profusely for bringing us to the heart of the matter, for bringing fierce emotion to a meeting. I am reading between the lines of what Baldwin is telling us to do in the story of overwhelming death he could not finish or didn't get the chance to finish or didn't care to finish: we have been working a one-way street for hundreds of years and now as you gasp your last breath as a people forged out of the nothingness you have forced the rest of us to occupy, we are saying our goodbyes and it is painful. Artful, at times, but still painful. Perhaps the most salient, racist gesture of all would be to withhold one's story. We can only know who you show up as each and every time. Like Baldwin, I will no longer mistake that silence for ambivalence, for I now know exactly how you feel. "To be a pessimist is to agree that human life is an *academic* matter."⁵ I am brought back to the fierce and perhaps deadly truth of this statement, uttered at the end of Peck's film.

The second story that the doc tells is more pointed in the beginning, and less so as the narrative travels to its close. Three murders, 1963, 1965, 1968. Medgar, Malcolm, and Martin. The story, we learn early, is one of betrayal. Jackson's melodic voice reminds us:

The three men, Medgar, Malcolm, and Martin, were very different men. [. . .] He [Martin] took on his shoulders the weight of the crimes, and the lies and the hope of a nation. I want these three lives to bang against and reveal each other. As in truth they did, and use their dreadful journey as a means of instructing the people whom they loved so much, who betrayed them and for whom they gave their lives.⁶

What then is the nature of this betrayal, so intimate, a stinging truth laid bare in the first six minutes of the doc's digital life? We might never know the nature of such betrayal, as Peck cuts to the first subtitle, "Paying My Dues," and scenes of school desegregation and a clip of Leander Perez speaking for the New Orleans White Citizen's Council. On the other side of the Atlantic, on his way to the States from Paris, Baldwin sees the photographs of 15-year-old Dorothy Counts as she makes her way to integrate a public school in Charlotte, N.C., and he remarks: "It made me furious, it filled me with both hatred and pity and it made me ashamed. Some one of us should have been there with her."⁷ He remembers

the daughters of Malcolm and Martin, both into theater and friendly with one another. The betrayal, at least the second instance, is of a gendered and generational nature, and if I can quote here from Baldwin's "Nobody Knows My Name: A Letter from the South," (1959): "but it certainly has something to do with that as yet unwritten history of the Negro woman."⁸ In the essay the "it" he refers to is the strength of black men over that of white men; in the comparison, black women's lives are forged in an *unwritten* text that mysteriously and perhaps necessarily subtends the lives of black men. Baldwin has returned the racial order to itself—a racial order that cannot be maintained without the subjugation of women at its core. This is the lesson of the 2016 election. This is the lesson of the Kavanaugh confirmation.

The segment on Lorraine Hansberry seems to cut into the documentary, after a scene from Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1961) where Sydney Poitier stands at his mother's working back, making the case for the necessity of being able to direct the life of his male child and take his place at the head of his own table, unlike his father. It is a narrative that recalls how very important gendered notions of family are to the work of liberation in the civil rights era, and how mired they are in the same arid desert of white supremacy's longing for itself. Our hopes and dreams served up to the lie of white affect's un-concealment as something other than what it already is. Like the story of Dorothy Counts, the lives of black women haunt the narrative as the unprocessed life of white affect finds its grounding in the film. Baldwin speaks of Hansberry's famous encounter with Bobby Kennedy (24 May 1863)—at 33; she would be dead at 34—he pauses to mourn first—"I miss her so much," he intones—before telling us what we already know for sure—that the conversation with Kennedy is not productive, that Bobby Kennedy seems wounded by her request for moral leadership from him, from his brother. She was called upon to speak to the president's brother to urge him to escort a black child to school—to show the nation that the White House was and is committed to social justice.⁹ Bobby called it a "meaningless moral gesture," letting Hansberry know that where we would lead white folks had no obligation to follow; that their understandings of the efficacy of anti-racist acts mattered most then and most certainly in the now that the film finds itself, given the debates I have had and witnessed with black and white moderates over the efficacy of the "Black Lives Matter" and "Say Her Name" movements. In many ways, the two-tiered movements demonstrate the leftover and gendered bifurcation of the civil rights struggle.

What is most overwhelming is that you know while looking at this film, yet another journey down the black emotional highway, that the whites around you will change nothing, do nothing about the racial standard which holds and therefore marries Baldwin's 1960s schema to your own. When is the last time you saw a group of white professors sit in to protest the growing numbers of their kind among us? Where is their bus boycott? In that footage of a young, vulnerable Ms. Counts, and the laughing, jeering, phenotypically white students who stand at her back, I too wonder like Jimmy about the adults so absent from this array of bodies at not-so-subtle war with one another. I wonder about the whites who have

refused to jeer, thinking such antics unbecoming. Where are the silent ones? And what can such racialized betrayal mean? “White people are astounded by Birmingham. [. . .] White people are endlessly demanding to be reassured that Birmingham is really on Mars.”¹⁰ Baldwin writes in “Nobody Knows My Name,” “Birmingham is a doomed city.”¹¹ What is the affective life of white silence and shame? When will that life come forward into action? Is the purpose of white affect to secure black feeling for *itself*, while never giving away the secret of its own fragility? We keep occupying an uncomfortable and decades-long silence with our affective lives. But in truth, there is no real answer that can be forthcoming beside the one that we already know and live: that the dance is nearing its end and, like Baldwin, I fear for the worse when the tables turn.

“I have always been struck in America by an emotional poverty so bottomless and a terror of human life, of human touch so deep that virtually no American appears able to achieve any viable organic connection between his public stance and his private life.”¹² This is perhaps why Thurmond met Washington-Williams on Capitol Hill and no one dropped a dime on the open secret. This is perhaps why we can write books about capital and neoliberalism and quotidian prejudice, but do not move toward advocating for equal pay among the staff who order our staples or make meetings happen. Writing, after all, is not doing; I am a rational enough being to know this. And yet the fierceness of the writing, the calling out of others who would deny a population the right to vote or to organize, inundates the pages of so many book projects, finished or unfinished, until the call for justice, social justice is ubiquitous. So much so that our entire profession is stereotyped by a broad populace who believes that the halls of academia are infested with revolutionary leftwing anarchist activists instead of people living quiet lives of desperation.

When Baldwin goes up against Yale philosopher Paul Weiss on the *Dick Cavett* show in 1968, Weiss worries about Baldwin’s emphasis on race in discussions about becoming men: “why must we always concentrate on color . . . there are other ways of connecting men.”¹³ Baldwin’s response is as searingly frank in the now of 2019 as it was in the then of the 1960s; we hear him having *two* conversations.

When I left this country in 1948 [. . .] I ended up in Paris, on the streets of Paris, with forty dollars in my pocket on the theory that nothing worse could happen to me there than had already happened to me here. The years I spent in Paris released me from that particular social terror, which was not the paranoia of my own mind, but a real social danger visible in the face of every cop, every boss, everybody.¹⁴

Weiss’s question is about the universality of mankind—he speaks to the sublime beauty and possibility of connection, he appeals to an ideal—disembodied from one particular and prominent fact: all of these things do pertain, will pertain until your blackness swallows such possibility and replaces it with the violence of the rule of law. Such ideals have no purchase on our present tense unless they are

practiced. Without practice, we are abandoned, “stuck up on that stage singing” of whiteness’s abject longing for a world that we can *both* inhabit.¹⁵

Baldwin is right on two counts and I close with these ringing moments from the film: “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”¹⁶ And, perhaps most contradictory, at least from the vantage point of this panel’s framing: “It is not a racial problem. It’s a problem of whether or not you are willing to look at your life and be responsible for it and then begin to change it.”¹⁷ In many ways this film is a stunning example of how we talk about racist culture and therefore, a good example of how to Stop. Doing. That. This is also perhaps the “why?” question embedded in *I Am Not Your Negro*. What we know, maybe feel, about Baldwin after Peck’s film is that the dead men he failed to write about were spared, through their murders, the particular brand of despair Baldwin arrived at upon the end of the journey that he notes at the film’s beginning. This endpoint is the film’s reckoning all along.

Sharon P. Holland

The Price of the Intervention: *The Fire Next Time, Take This Hammer*, and James Baldwin’s Mediation

James Baldwin had himself quite a week. On 17 May 1963, he was on the cover of *Time* magazine. This was significant not just because the issue’s lead story detailed Birmingham’s civil rights campaign, which was winding down more or less successfully after an extremely eventful and violent spring, but because *Time*’s publisher considered it “appropriate” to have Baldwin follow the previous week’s cover model, Abraham Lincoln, who had been featured for the magazine’s 40th anniversary issue.¹⁸ Seven days later, on 24 May 1963, a new issue of *Life* magazine hit the newsstands; it featured a lengthy photo-essay on Baldwin’s winter lecture tour of the South, sponsored by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), during which he had met James Meredith and Medgar Evers and spoken from the pulpit of his deceased stepfather’s hometown church in New Orleans. His last words in the *Life* interview emphasized his desire to make demands on his audience: “Most contemporary fiction, like most contemporary theater, is designed to corroborate your fantasies and make you walk out whistling. I don’t want you to whistle at *my* stuff, baby. I want you to be sitting on the edge of your chair waiting for the nurses to carry you out.”¹⁹

On the evening of 24 May 1963, Baldwin led a group that included playwright Lorraine Hansberry, psychologist Kenneth Clark, freedom rider Jerome Smith, entertainers Harry Belafonte and Lena Horne, and several others to meet with Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy at Kennedy’s New York City apartment to discuss race relations in the northern U.S. This event became something of a *Rashomon*-like legend, with conflicting accounts of what went down and what it all meant springing up virtually overnight.²⁰ Finally, after the three-hour meeting, Baldwin and Clark went uptown to City College where they were recorded by WGBH-TV for a public television program that drew reviews, like Jack Gould’s

from the *New York Times*, that encouraged not just a rethinking of race relations but new ways of theorizing the medium of television itself:

A television experience that seared the conscience of the white set owner was offered over Channel 13 in an unforgettable half-hour interview with James Baldwin, the author. [. . .] Let the new medium curb the esoteric and pedantic consideration of today's overriding issues, a blight that chanced to hit Channel 13 with particular severity this week, and find the larger excitement and more meaningful education that lies in coming to grips with reality.²¹

In between these two Fridays, Baldwin was in California at the end of another lecture tour for CORE. While he was there, KQED-TV invited him to participate in a documentary film exploring African American life in the Bay Area and trying to present, as local black civic leader Orville Luster put it in the film, “the real situation of Negroes in the city, as opposed to the image San Francisco would like to present.” Like the interview with Clark, *Take This Hammer* (1964)—named for a folk song popularized by Leadbelly in the 1940s—is one of the films from which clips were taken in the creation of Raoul Peck's 2016 documentary film about Baldwin's life and career, *I Am Not Your Negro*. These television programs are valuable historical documents, worthy of serious attention in their own right; in recent years, there has been a grassroots movement to have *Take This Hammer* selected for the National Film Registry.

A central section of *Take This Hammer* features Baldwin as he tours parts of San Francisco that are undergoing “urban renewal,” which he surmises to be a euphemism for “Negro removal.” This segment has several of the film's key elements: shots of the cityscape, including a focus on urban space, land use, architecture, private and public housing, and so on; interviews with black youth, conducted by Baldwin and Luster; and Baldwin's running commentary on these scenes in the larger contexts of contemporary race relations and U.S. history (Figure 1). Over contrasting shots of a middle-class, high-rise development under construction and African-American children playing nearby in overgrown, abandoned lots and makeshift junkyards, Baldwin comments on the comparative lack of human value in this environment:

I conclude that all this has something to do with money. The land has been reclaimed for money. And that the people putting up the houses expect to make a profit. But it seems to me—I'm not attacking what's called the profit motive—there are some things more important than profits. I know New York City has been turned into a desert, really, for the same reasons that it's happening in San Francisco now. It's as though the society made the assumption—it certainly *acts* on the assumption—that to make money is more important than to have citizens. You're paying too high a price for this. It isn't only what it's doing to Negro children, which is, God knows, bad enough. It's what it does to white children, who grow up believing that it is more important to make a profit than it is to be a man. And that's the way the society *really* operates. I don't care what the society says, this is what it operates, and these are the goals it sets, and these goals aren't worthy of a man, and adolescents know it.



Figure 1 New middle-class housing under construction in San Francisco, from *Take This Hammer*, Bay Area Television Archive, <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/sfbatv/bundles/187041> (accessed 18 June 2019).

Much of *Take This Hammer* thus constitutes Baldwin's close reading of San Francisco, about which he generalizes early in the film while being driven around town:

San Francisco is much prettier than New York, and it's easier to hide in San Francisco than it is in New York because you've got the view, you've got the hills; you've got the San Francisco legend, too, which is that it's so is cosmopolitan and forward-looking. But it's just another American city, and if you're a black man . . . that's a very bitter thing to say. Children dying here as they are in New York and for the very same reasons. [. . .] Nobody wants to destroy the image of San Francisco, the old city.

This is precisely what *Take This Hammer* sets out to do: that image of the half-built, high-rise apartment building with no façade is a visual rejoinder to what Baldwin describes as the city's false and hypocritical façade of peace and tranquility.

Baldwin's line about "children dying here" might be the most direct connection to *The Fire Next Time*, which was published in January 1963, and made Baldwin, as *The Guardian's* Marcus Cunliffe wrote, "world-famous [. . .] [a writer with] an appalling authority, as one at the head of a multitude"—the book would sell more than 600,000 copies by the end of the decade.²² In "My Dungeon Shook," the first of two essays in *The Fire Next Time*, Baldwin writes to his teenage nephew James about his worries for James's physical safety and mental health: "This innocent country set you down in a ghetto in which, in fact, it intended that you should

perish.”²³ Considered alongside one another, *Take This Hammer* and *The Fire Next Time* might be taken as primers on urban planning, documents designed to advocate for a more humane—Baldwin’s term, given his Old Testament upbringing, would probably be “moral”—design of the American city from the point of view of its most vulnerable citizens.

Meanwhile, two versions of *Take This Hammer* came to exist: an original hour-long program produced by the KQED film unit and director Richard O. Moore, and another version that was 15 minutes shorter. According to Moore, the Board of Directors of KQED “didn’t want to project the fact that there was a great deal of unrest in the black ghettos in San Francisco.”²⁴ Alarmed by extended interviews with young black men on the street, including expressions of skepticism of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s nonviolent tactics in Birmingham, support for Malcolm X’s militancy, and calls for an armed uprising against whites, the Board ordered Moore to excise 15 minutes of this material, which he did, reluctantly. Baldwin was furious at Moore’s concession, since it was, as Moore later said,

Baldwin’s concept that the film should consist exclusively of the anger and the multiple expressions of these angry kids. [. . .] What he was interested in at that moment was the scenes in Hunters Point. [. . .] He felt that his unspoken agreement with me to use exclusively the footage shot with the kids, that I’d violated it. We simply didn’t correspond after that. Which from my perspective was a tragic loss. [. . .] From his it was, good riddance, probably.²⁵

Baldwin’s writings on theater and film, as well as biographies by James Campbell and David Leeming, make it clear that he simultaneously longed for and deeply resisted collaborative partnerships. This was a particular problem in theater and film where collaboration is an essential aspect of each form’s production. But Moore’s comments reveal something more than just the loss of his friendship with Baldwin; they suggest Baldwin’s vision for *Take This Hammer* to be something closer, say, to Ella Baker’s vision of civil rights organizing, with grassroots activists retaining as much authority as possible without the necessity for “leaders” or “spokesmen” to hold them together or represent them. The fact that Ella Baker is so difficult to account for as a public figure in the civil rights movement despite a broad consensus among scholars and movement-era activists themselves that she was the single most important woman in the entire movement speaks to the challenge of expressing such a vision in mass media forms like television or, indeed, in single-authored literary works like *The Fire Next Time*. How best to get this elusive figure’s influence across when she is constantly undermining the basis of authority itself? In a way it’s like asking how best to portray a network rather than a single location. Baldwin’s vision for *Take This Hammer* had something of this intuition, too, yet the version broadcast on television in 1964 had more of him—which is to say, a leader, a spokesman, a series of close-up shots in which he spoke directly to the camera—and less of the young people out on the streets than he claimed to have wanted (Figure 2). Institutional racism played a role in this, to be sure, but I think it may also express a paradox of celebrity in the age of the public intellectual.



Figure 2 Baldwin addresses the television audience at the conclusion of *Take This Hammer*, Bay Area Television Archive, <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/sfbatv/bundles/187041> (accessed 18 June 2019).

This episode reminds us that James Baldwin's varied activities as a public figure complicate any simplistic idea of the writer's craft. His literary career was complicated long before he got this famous: he rejected, for example, suggestions that he write another novel after *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), producing *The Amen Corner* (1954) and *Notes of a Native Son* (1955) instead: a novel followed by a stage play followed by an essay collection. And this pattern continued for the rest of his life, in a way that made everything he wrote a piece of occasional prose. But he had also grown into a highly performative figure by 1963, fashioning a public self that complemented and competed with all his writings. The fact that the most direct of the direct-action phase of the civil rights movement was in full swing in 1963 is vital here: Baldwin looked to Birmingham as a parallel drama to the one he was writing about—and his literary work during this spring was *Blues for Mister Charlie* (1964), a play based loosely on the murder of Emmett Till in Mississippi, which had been an important catalyst for the civil rights movement a few years earlier. Integration doesn't just mean the struggle for racial understanding and harmony; for Baldwin it also means a kind of blending of the literary and celebrity selves he had derived by this point in his career. This struggle also strikes me as a very American story—or, more fully, a story about America in the world—not least in the sense that Baldwin had reached the point at which the demands for public appearances—and invitations to hang out with other celebrities, which he couldn't resist—grew so clamorous that he had to travel abroad—France, Switzerland, Turkey, Scandinavia—to get any actual writing done. And, sure enough, he was off with his typewriter to work on *Blues for Mister Charlie* at the end of May 1963—not quite abroad, but to Puerto Rico.

There's another paradox here: early in his career, as in the essay "Everybody's Protest Novel" and other writings about Richard Wright, Baldwin argues that "literature and sociology are not one and the same; it is impossible to discuss them as if they were."²⁶ But *Take This Hammer's* method is nothing if not sociological, and consists substantially of Baldwin's fieldwork with the teenagers and others in San Francisco. His experiments with the televisual form parallel his method in *The Fire Next Time* and his other writings of the period; Baldwin compulsively invokes the words of the youth he talks to in interviews and essays, as though he's not a "leader" or even an "interpreter" or "translator" of black youth, but instead derives whatever authority he has simply by bearing witness to their lived experiences and views. Might we even see Baldwin, then, as a kind of media form himself, one that is changing rapidly and experimenting with genre and style in order to find more and more effective modes of articulation?

All this might be taken as evidence of the major shift from "early" to "late" Baldwin, a shift that has preoccupied much of the scholarship of Baldwin's entire career with the problem of reconciling the two periods. Both James Campbell and David Leeming, for example, take the position that "late" Baldwin is inferior, and structure their biographies around this idea. With May 1963 at the center of analysis, however, the shift is not so much one of loss of control or power within established genres as a kind of continually provisional and exploratory quest for new forms which include not just the novel, play, and essay, but the television talkshow interview, the documentary film, and the performance of celebrity itself. This is a brave new world of American public life, and although it may have disparate roots in nineteenth-century New England, classical Hollywood, interwar New York City, the academy, and elsewhere, this mid-century era may have been the only time such performances could work this well: Baldwin's burgeoning life as a public intellectual parallels the civil rights movement from the legal proceedings behind *Brown v. Board of Education* and Montgomery in the mid-1950s to the heat of the Birmingham and Selma campaigns in the early 1960s to such disparate later movements as Black Power, gay rights, feminism, the consumer protection movement of the 1970s, and so on. Baldwin, too, struggled both to perform the most effective public self he could as a means of intervening in his times, and to hold it all together even as the centrifugal forces of personality and history threatened to pull everything apart. A much-maligned book like *The Devil Finds Work* (1976), for example, which combines film criticism, philosophy, and autobiography in highly original ways, might then be better understood as a singular product of Baldwin's searching aesthetics in his "late" writings. He experienced all that came his way in a kind of aggressively open posture, accepting and processing it as best he could, and he tried to derive ways of articulating that experience most appropriate to the occasion, even if the results took him farther and farther afield from older genres and models of citizenship. This Baldwin was prone to fits of despair, and it cost him a great deal in the traditional terms of literary reputation; but this was the price of the intervention, and Baldwin, for one, believed it was worth the cost.

Robert Jackson

James Baldwin's Southern Journey in *The Evidence of Things Not Seen*

In 1981, James Baldwin ventured to the American South one last time. When dozens of black children went missing in Atlanta between 1979 and 1980, *Playboy* magazine asked Baldwin to go to Atlanta to write about the disappearances. At the time, Baldwin was in France, where he had lived periodically for nearly forty years and where he had retreated somewhat from the activist-intellectual role he had played in the U.S. civil rights movement two decades prior. But he had been following the story of Atlanta's missing children in the foreign press. As an aging and increasingly dismissed voice, he had little idea that he would be called upon to comment on the murders, much less serve as witness to the tragedy as it unfolded in Atlanta.

As Baldwin would later admit, his immediate reaction to the idea of returning to America was one of fear. “[W]hat I remembered—or imagined myself to remember—of my life in America . . . was terror.”²⁷ But he would return, and he would write a long essay not only about the murders, but also about Atlanta and the broader social, historical, and economic contexts and meanings of the murders. He published these thoughts as an article in *Playboy* in 1981 and then as a book, *The Evidence of Things Not Seen*, in 1985. Baldwin's writing about the Atlanta child murders would be the last complete work by one of the most prophetic and influential voices in all of twentieth-century African-American and American literature. Baldwin died in France two years after its publication.

Evidence can be read as the culmination of Baldwin's career-long redefinition of the social and racial geography of the American South, an effort that began with his first novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, published in 1953, and extended throughout his fiction and nonfiction writing. I argue that *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* is less a book about the Atlanta child murders than it is a book about the South. The book is Baldwin's final reckoning with his own problematic Southern identity, and the cultural analysis that Baldwin performs of the murders unfolds from within Baldwin's critique of Southern culture, Southern racial relations, and Southern consciousness. Ultimately Baldwin suggests that Atlanta's response to the murders—the public reaction, the delayed response on the part of Atlanta's administration and public officials, the trial of Wayne Williams—all constituted a particularly Southern drama. This not to say that the murders or their meanings were confined to the South; indeed Baldwin suggests the opposite. His model of racial identity prevented him from viewing the Atlanta child murders as strictly a regional phenomenon. But Baldwin looked at the murders as a Southern drama because the South's sense of its own regionalism, its own myths about itself, created the circumstances under which it would take months for an official response to the erasure of young black lives, two years before a suspect was found, and now forty years without a completely satisfying resolution to the murders. Readers interested in gaining much insight on the actual crimes, the child murders, will find little satisfaction in *Evidence*. Instead *Evidence* is Baldwin's reading of the

South as a locus of American racial myth-making and, in the late twentieth century, as the locus of narratives of American racial progress for which Baldwin, as the book's title suggests, saw little or no evidence.

Born in Harlem in 1924, Baldwin was of course not a Southerner by birth—a point he often emphasized—but he was a product of the African American Great Migration. He was heir to black Southern culture by virtue of being raised by two black Southern migrants—his mother Berdis, a domestic worker from Maryland, and his stepfather David, a laborer and Baptist preacher from Louisiana—and he was deeply influenced by the elements of black Southern culture circulating throughout his native Harlem.

He is quoted as saying that if his parents had waited two minutes, he would have been born in the South. This statement can be viewed as one of both relief and reclamation. When Baldwin says this, he lays claim to a certain Southern identity: he was so close to being born in the South that he is virtually a Southerner, that he might as well be a Southerner. "I was, in short, but one generation removed from the South," Baldwin writes in "Nobody Knows My Name."²⁸ To be "but one generation removed" is to lay claim to a Southern identity in transition, a regional identity unrestricted merely by geography but instead forged through migration. Baldwin's investment in the Atlanta child murders must be understood, then, within the framework of this expansive sense of national and regional identity.

Perhaps ironically, Baldwin developed a transnational Southern identity through his travels abroad. Moving from New York to Paris in 1948, he did not visit the American South until 1957, after living in France, Switzerland, and Turkey. His many writings about his time abroad include meditations on the development of a sophisticated sense of place that in turn formed his unique sense of Southern identity. In his essays—as well as fictional works such as *Giovanni's Room* (1956)—he observes how the construction of a national or regional identity can only truly be achieved through travel and migration, only by leaving the space with which one identifies. But this is not merely a matter of gaining distance or perspective or being able to see and comprehend the totality of native space from afar. Baldwin suggests that occupying the space and identity position of the geographical and national "other"—becoming that which one has designated as foreign—allows for the transition in consciousness leading to a deeper, more complete understanding of one's own national identity. Ironically perhaps, only by accepting the elements of that which we deem foreign *in ourselves* can we become comfortable with or even know ourselves as members of a national or regional community. The American in Europe, Baldwin writes in "A Question of Identity" (1954), is forced to confront truths about the American past that the traveler has attempted to leave behind. One must demand this truth, he writes, or "he has otherwise no identity, no reason for being here, nothing to sustain him here. From the vantage point of Europe he discovers his own country."²⁹ Migration and emigration—the trans-ness of transnationalism—allows the subject to construct a national identity not built upon myths and fabrications.

Baldwin's Southern identity is likewise transgeographic. Returning to America after nine years abroad, he writes in his essay "A Fly in Buttermilk" (1958): "it was

ironical to reflect that if I had not lived in France for so long I would never have found it necessary—or possible—to visit the American South.³⁰ Only by virtue of his time spent abroad does he come to understand the uncanny sense of home that the typical black Northerner feels upon arriving in a Southern space that he or she has never actually seen. Describing this feeling, he reaches for an intriguing comparison to European migratory consciousness.

A Negro born in the North who finds himself in the South is in a position similar to that of the son of the Italian emigrant who finds himself in Italy, near the village where his father first saw the light of day. Both are in countries they have never seen, but which they cannot fail to recognize.³¹

Here I want to emphasize that when Baldwin speaks about the journey South as a homecoming, he does so more in social and psychological terms than in geographical terms. It was not the mere space of the South that welcomed him but rather the sociality of the space.

I was very glad I had come South. [. . .] I felt very much at home among the dark people who lived where I, if so much had not been disrupted, would logically have been born. I felt, beneath everything, a profound acceptance, an unfamiliar peace, almost as though, after despairing and debilitating journeys, I had, at last, come home.³²

This uncanny sense of home speaks to the kind of “social geography” explored by Thadious Davis in her book *Southscapes: Geographies of Race, Region, and Literature* in which she discusses how race and geography mutually construct each other, focusing not on the permanent features of geographical space—the fixity of sheer location—but rather on those shifting elements of geographic space, an “idea of space on the margins, in between, liminal, in flux, and interactive.”³³ Baldwin’s sense of place in the South, rooted in disruption as he describes it, comes from such liminality and flux, “almost as though, after despairing and debilitating journeys, I had, at last come home.” It is not simply the space or even the presence of black bodies peopling the South that gives the space its uncanny familiarity for Baldwin. It is rather his sense of movement in relation to space; home is not where you are from, home is where you come to a rest: after travels, after journeys. Through this interaction between the social and the geographic, he comes to recognize the South even though he has never been there. It is this sense of place, achieved only by virtue of those “despairing and debilitating journeys,” that he feels as he says, “beneath everything.”

Yet despite this sense of home, his ideas about the South are not without their deep fears and apprehensions. “The South is very beautiful,” he writes,

but its beauty makes me sad because the lives that people live, and have lived here, are so ugly that now they cannot even speak to one another. It does not demand much

reflection to be appalled by people who dare not speak freely about those things which most disturb them.³⁴

In truth, Baldwin admits in “A Fly in Buttermilk,” “The South had always frightened me. How deeply it had frightened me—though I had never seen it—and how soon, was one of the things revealed to me while I was there.”³⁵

Baldwin’s analysis of the Atlanta child murders was informed by these fears about the South and shaped by the many accounts of violence to black bodies and racist miscarriages of justice such as those he recounts in “Nobody Knows My Name,” where he remembers the Scottsboro Boys, nine black male teenagers accused of raping two white women on a train in Alabama in 1931; he remembers Angelo Herndon, convicted of insurrection for organizing industrial workers in Atlanta in 1932; he remembers Willie McGee, a black grocery deliverer accused of raping a white woman in Laurel, Mississippi in 1945 and electrocuted in 1951—and he remembers Emmett Till.³⁶ More personally, Baldwin remembers his own brother having his teeth kicked out by a white police officer in Atlanta. “I remembered my mother telling us how she had wept and prayed and tried to kiss the venom out of her suicidally embittered son.”³⁷ The Atlanta murders in the 1980s would realize the fears that swelled in him decades earlier during his first trip to Atlanta, as he viewed from his plane the “rust-red earth of Georgia”:

I could not suppress the thought that this earth had acquired its color from the blood that had dripped down from these trees. My mind was filled with the image of a black man, younger than I, perhaps, or my own age, hanging from a tree, while white men watched him and cut his sex from him with a knife.³⁸

Children between the ages of 7 and 14 began disappearing from Atlanta in late 1979 and turning up dead from strangulation in rivers and secluded areas around the city. Over the course of two years, as many as 31 victims were identified. Based largely on circumstantial evidence, particularly fiber and blood evidence, Wayne Williams was convicted of two counts of first-degree murder and sentenced to two consecutive life sentences. Suffice it to say that, despite later DNA testing and re-examinations of some of the murders, questions remain about the case, and Williams maintains his innocence to this day.

Baldwin’s analysis of the murders in *Evidence* unfolds from within his critique of Southern culture, Southern racial relations, and Southern consciousness. He depicts the murders as a particularly Southern tragedy—not because the desecration of innocent black life could not have taken anywhere else, but because the region had charted a false path toward racial progress captured by Atlanta’s slogan as the “city too busy to hate.” He explains how Atlanta’s sense of itself as an exceptional Southern city created the circumstances in which many were slow to believe and accept that these murders were even taking place, for one, and then led Atlanta’s leaders to try to downplay the crimes and then perhaps rush to judgment in order to get back to business.

For Baldwin, the idea that Atlanta was too busy to hate was a lie that the city told about itself. His analysis of the murders is premised on the idea that Atlanta was deeply embedded in Southern history, culture, and racial history in ways that locals often denied. Baldwin often heard people claim: “I’m from Atlanta. I’m not from Georgia.” The claim that Atlanta was somehow not a part of the Southern state in which it was incorporated, Baldwin writes,

struck me as stubborn and stunning delusion. It is as though I should claim, for example, that *I’m from Harlem. I’m not from New York*. The intention, or the meaning, of the claim is clear; but Harlem is not an independent entity or nation. It exists in, and is controlled by, the city and state of New York. [I]f [. . .] I should proclaim [. . .] to be from New York but not from America, one would be justified in worrying about my sanity, to say nothing of my reliability.³⁹

Such “delusions” Baldwin suggests, are efforts toward a kind of socio-historical gerrymandering, a disingenuous way of choosing one’s narratives of geography retrospectively. “Atlanta, however, *is* the South,” he writes in “Nobody Knows My Name”:

It is the South in this respect, that it has a very bitter interracial history. This is written in the face of the people and one feels it in the air. It was on the outskirts of Atlanta that I first felt how the Southern landscape—the trees, the silence, the liquid heat [. . .] seems designed for violence, seems, almost, to demand it.⁴⁰

Atlanta’s own myth of separateness led to failures on the part of Atlanta’s black leadership in dealing with the murders. For many, the rise of black leadership in Atlanta signaled the city’s exceptional racial progress. But Baldwin viewed the city’s first black mayor, Maynard Jackson, as presiding over this economic process in ways that at best papered over and at worst were complicit with the city’s racial inequities. The slogan that Atlanta was a city too busy to hate, after all, was not a statement against hate itself but rather a claim that the city was too invested in capitalist enterprises to admit or confront its hate. Baldwin viewed the city’s black leadership as co-opted into this neoliberal capitalist enterprise. The typical black mayor, Baldwin says, was “a concession masking the face of power, which remains White. The presence of these beleaguered Black men—some of whom, after all, putting it brutally, may or may not be for sale—threatens the power of the Republic far less than would their absence.”⁴¹ Black mayors like Jackson, after all, presided over the gentrification and suburbification that transformed many black spaces into commercial enterprises serving largely white progress and advancement.

In Atlanta, as in other cities, the land on which the blacks had lived was reclaimed, for shopping malls and luxury hotels. In these installations, the grateful poor would—like their ancestors—clean basements, scrub toilet bowls, conquer kitchens, and carry trays. Nor are the Americans at all reluctant to describe this state of affairs as *progress*.⁴²

This commitment to material progress undermined the idea that a black mayor and city leadership would be interested in resolving the murders for the purposes of serving the community; instead this leadership would simply carry out the will of the white business leadership. Baldwin was not so much skeptical of Maynard Jackson or any particular black mayor but of the power of black city leadership itself, precisely because the city cannot be separated from the state of Georgia. As the leader of an American city, the “Black Mayor,” Baldwin wrote, was merely the “interim caretaker of a valuable chunk of real estate.”⁴³ The black mayor was thus in a state of “limbo.” “He has been placed, as we say in the streets in a ‘trick bag,’ attempting to defend and represent a people who do not, for the state, exist. The state intends to reclaim the land, which is why the city has been abandoned, for this moment, to the Blacks.”⁴⁴

In the most complex element of Baldwin’s analysis of the murders and the subsequent trial as part of Southern mythos, Baldwin questions the circumstantial evidence used in the trial just as he questioned the evidence of racial progress in Atlanta and the rest of the country.

I was astounded [. . .] that so many people appeared to believe that Wayne Williams was guilty—were *relieved* to think of him as guilty. It was, precisely, this relief that caused in me a steady chilled wonder, less concerning the accused than those who were so anxious to accuse and condemn him.⁴⁵

Baldwin does not write in defense of Wayne Williams. But he objected to the arrival of a guilty verdict based on circumstantial fiber and blood evidence, a process that he could not help but read in the context of previous miscarriages of justice against black defendants. “The accused may be guilty, for all I know, but I fail to see his guilt as proven.”⁴⁶ Had America and the region already forgotten the Scottsboro Boys, Emmett Till, and the others? If anything, Baldwin suggested, Wayne Williams became another black man incarcerated for a crime for which he was *legally* innocent—guilty perhaps but not *proven* guilty. It could, after all, be quite possible that Williams was both guilty of murder *and* railroaded by a racist criminal justice system that wanted to move on from the bad publicity of the murders.

Finally, by raising the question of evidence—the evidence of things not seen—Baldwin was not only expressing a lack of trust in the criminal justice system. He was also making a subtly classed argument about the trust placed in that system to resolve the crimes. The murders, of course, were the concern of everyone in Atlanta and the nation. But the murders did have class dimensions. As Bernard Headley writes in his book on the murders, many of the victims were

from the city’s black poor and working class, their families in various stages of economic and familial distress. [. . .] [Many] had disappeared while running errands for a parent or neighbor or while engaged in sundry activities they thought would improve their impoverished circumstances—activities the mainstream media would disparagingly call “hustling.”⁴⁷

The charging of Wayne Williams for the murders opened up class rifts within black Atlanta, with middle-class and upper-class blacks supporting the case against Williams, and poor and working-class blacks, along with Baldwin, questioning it. “The problem that many poor and working-class Black Atlantans had with the verdict,” Headley writes, “was not so much disbelief in the defendant’s guilt—nor indeed that ‘one of their own’ had committed the terrible crimes. It was the unconventional and, for them, the ultimately unconvincing way that Williams’s guilt was ‘proved.’”⁴⁸ And although Baldwin could not have known it at the time, witnesses in Wayne Williams’s trial would testify to Williams’s expressed disdain for the black working poor and underprivileged in Atlanta. One key moment in *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* comes in Baldwin’s coupling of thought in two particular sentences; he writes, “The accused may be guilty, for all I know, but I fail to see his guilt as proven. Others may see American progress in economic, racial, and social affairs—I do not.”⁴⁹

In Baldwin’s famous appearance on the *Dick Cavett* show, he angrily confronts the “evidence not seen” of America’s racial progress:

I don’t know what most white people in this country feel, but I can only conclude what they feel from the state of their institutions. I don’t know if white Christians hate Negroes or not, but I know that we have a Christian church which is white and a Christian church which is Black. [. . .] It means that I most certainly cannot trust the Christian church. I don’t know if the union bosses really hate me, that doesn’t matter but I know I’m not in their unions. [. . .] 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 children, on some idealism which you assure me exists in America, which I have never seen.⁵⁰

For Baldwin, the Atlanta child murders epitomized this faith in an unproven progress and unrealized idealism. The circumstantial evidence that convicted Wayne Williams was an extension of the merely circumstantial evidence of American progress, leaving more questions than answers.

Shawn Salvant

Notes

- 1 James Baldwin, qtd. in Raoul Peck, *I Am Not Your Negro* (New York, Vintage, 2017), p. 5, emphasis added. Though not strictly a screenplay, Vintage released a book drawn from Peck’s 2016 film. Where possible, citations for quotations from the film point to pages in this Vintage version.
- 2 In an interview about leaving the show he helped create from a college comic strip, Aaron McGruder discloses that “Huey, Riley, and Granddad are not just property to me. They are my fictional blood relatives. Nothing is more painful than to leave them behind.” The idea of property here is instructive indeed. H. Drew Blackburn, “Aaron McGruder Finally Explains Why He Left ‘The Boondocks,’” 28 March 2014, www.complex.com/pop-culture/2014/03/aaron-mcgruder-explains-why-he-left-the-boondocks (accessed 25 June 2019).

- 3 James Baldwin, "Many Thousands Gone" (1951), in *Collected Essays*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York, Library of America, 1998), p. 22.
- 4 Alice Walker, *Meridian* (1976) (New York, Harcourt, 2003), p. 43.
- 5 James Baldwin, "The Negro and the American Promise" (1963), qtd. in Peck, *I Am Not Your Negro*, p. 108.
- 6 Baldwin, qtd. in Peck, *I Am Not Your Negro*, p. 6; emphasis added.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- 8 James Baldwin, "Nobody Knows My Name: A Letter from the South" (1959), in Morrison (ed.), *Collected Essays*, p. 208.
- 9 In a presentation at MLA 2019, Robert Jackson tells us that the story of what actually happened is quite varied. My account conforms to Baldwin's recollection, as it solidifies both his understanding of the event and his mourning for a lost comrade.
- 10 Baldwin, qtd. in Peck, *I Am Not Your Negro*, p. 34.
- 11 Baldwin, "Nobody Knows My Name," p. 207.
- 12 Baldwin, qtd. in Peck, *I Am Not Your Negro*, p. 56.
- 13 Paul Weiss on *The Dick Cavett Show* (1968), qtd. in Peck, *I Am Not Your Negro*, p. 88.
- 14 James Baldwin on *The Dick Cavett Show* (1968), qtd. in Peck, *I Am Not Your Negro*, p. 88.
- 15 The words "stuck up on that stage singing" are lyrics from Mike Posner's "I Took a Pill in Ibiza" (2016). I choose these lines because the refrain of "all I know is sad songs" seems to be the necessary call and response of black being in relation to white affect.
- 16 Baldwin, qtd. in Peck, *I Am Not Your Negro*, p. 103.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 50.
- 18 James Campbell, *Talking at the Gates: A Life of James Baldwin* (1991) (Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 2002), p. 162.
- 19 Jane Howard, "Doom and Glory of Knowing Who You Are," *Life*, 24 May 1963, p. 90.
- 20 For more on this meeting and its afterlives in contemporary American politics and culture, see, for example, Michael Eric Dyson, *What Truth Sounds Like: Robert F. Kennedy, James Baldwin, and Our Unfinished Conversation about Race in America* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 2018).
- 21 Jack Gould, "TV: Challenge on Racism," *New York Times*, 30 May 1963, p. 29.
- 22 David Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), p. 215.
- 23 James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (1963), in Morrison (ed.), *Collected Essays*, p. 293.
- 24 Richard O. Moore, qtd. in "The Making of *Take This Hammer*," Bay Area Television Archive, <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/sfbatv/bundles/210522> (accessed 18 June 2019).
- 25 One board member stated that: "I believe we would all agree that it is not the function of KQED to produce inflammatory, distorted, sacrilegious, extremist programming under the name of educational television. I believe this program is all of these." <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/sfbatv/bundles/187041> (accessed 18 June 2019).
- 26 James Baldwin, "Everybody's Protest Novel" (1949), in Morrison (ed.), *Collected Essays*, p. 15.
- 27 James Baldwin, *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* (1985) (New York, Henry Holt, 1995), p. xiii.
- 28 Baldwin, "Nobody Knows My Name," p. 199.
- 29 James Baldwin, "A Question of Identity" (1954), in Morrison (ed.), *Collected Essays*, p. 100.
- 30 James Baldwin, "A Fly in Buttermilk" (1958), in Morrison (ed.), *Collected Essays*, p. 187.
- 31 Baldwin, "Nobody Knows My Name," p. 197.
- 32 James Baldwin, *No Name in the Street* (1972), in Morrison (ed.), *Collected Essays*, p. 396.

- 33 Thadious Davis, *Southscapes: Geographies of Race, Region, and Literature* (Chapel Hill, NC, University of North Carolina Press, 2011), p. 4.
- 34 James Baldwin, "They Can't Turn Back" (1960), in Morrison (ed.), *Collected Essays*, p. 623.
- 35 Baldwin, "A Fly in Buttermilk," p. 187.
- 36 Baldwin, "Nobody Knows My Name," p. 198.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 199.
- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 198.
- 39 Baldwin, *Evidence*, pp. 2–3.
- 40 Baldwin, "Nobody Knows My Name," p. 203.
- 41 Baldwin, *Evidence*, pp. 26–7.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p. 39.
- 44 *Ibid.*
- 45 *Ibid.*, p. 56.
- 46 *Ibid.*
- 47 Bernard Headley, *The Atlanta Youth Murders and the Politics of Race* (Carbondale, IL, Southern Illinois University Press, 1998), p. 1.
- 48 *Ibid.*, p. 200.
- 49 Baldwin, *Evidence*, p. 56.
- 50 James Baldwin on *The Dick Cavett Show* (1968), qtd. in Peck, *I Am Not Your Negro*, pp. 88–9.

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