

FROM THE FIELD

Rebranding James Baldwin and His Queer Others: A Session at the 2019 American Studies Association Conference

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Abstract

“Rebranding James Baldwin and His Queer Others” was a session held at the annual meeting of the American Studies Association in November 2019 in Honolulu, Hawaii. The papers gathered here show how Baldwin’s writings and life story participate in dialogues with other authors and artists who probe issues of identity and identification, as well as with other types of texts and non-American stories, boldly addressing theoretical and political perspectives different from his own. Nick Radel’s temporal challenge to reading novels on homoerotic male desire asks of us a leap of faith, one that makes it possible to read race as not necessarily a synonym for “Black,” but as a powerful historical and sexual trope that resists “over-easy” binaries of Western masculinity. Ernest L. Gibson’s engagement with Beauford Delaney’s brilliant art and the ways in which it enabled the teenage Baldwin’s “dark rapture” of self-discovery as a writer reminds us that “something [has been missing] in our discussions of male relationships.” Finally, Nigel Hatton suggests “a relationship among Baldwin, Denmark, and *Giovanni’s Room* that adds another thread to the important scholarship on his groundbreaking work of fiction that has impacted African-American literature, Cold War studies, transnational American studies, feminist thought, and queer theory.” All three essays enlarge our assessment of Baldwin’s contribution to understanding the ways gender and sexuality always inflect racialized Western masculinities. Thus, they help us work to better gauge the extent of Baldwin’s influence right here and right now.

Keywords: Black queer, James Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*, David Leavitt, Beauford Delaney, salvific manhood, gaze, publishing, Denmark

James Baldwin's titanic presence as a revolutionary Black queer writer, whose reckoning with conundrums of intersectional identities in twentieth-century American literature has yet to be matched, has often meant that his work is explored in narrower contexts than warranted. His recent popularity on social media, and the release of two films—an art-film/documentary by Raoul Peck (*I Am Not Your Negro*, 2016) and Barry Jenkins's adaptation of Baldwin's sixth novel from 1974 (*If Beale Street Could Talk*, 2018)—have branded him as a Black cultural icon, and vaulted his words, often out of context, onto blogs, websites, even merchandize. This “Baldwin brand,” however, often elides, obscures, and at times erases the complexity and urgency of his message on racialized gender and sexuality, a message that is particularly salient in our moment of divisive politics, alt-right white supremacy, and hate speech.¹

A passionate critic of American imperialism, during his lifetime Baldwin was recognized as an international public intellectual and was frequently appreciated more abroad than at home, especially in the wake of his third essay volume, *The Fire Next Time* (1963). First published in *The New Yorker*, Baldwin's passionate indictment of U.S. Cold War politics and systemic oppression of its African-American citizens made him front-page news and a star, while his work was branded as angry and incendiary by U.S. white liberal critics who wanted him to testify to, rather than interpret, the so-called “Negro problem.”² Baldwin's pro-integrationist message that closes the “Letter from the Region in My Mind” also flew in the face of Black nationalism, while his recounting of a meeting with Elijah Muhammad of the Nation of Islam, whose sexism and exclusionary identity politics he rejected, estranged him from Black Muslims and the Black Power generation. Distilled into Eldridge Cleaver's homophobic vitriol in *Soul on Ice* (1968), Baldwin's unflinching honesty and eloquence were seen as betrayals of both race and heteropatriarchal national manhood. As the Penguin Random House web page still advertises its edition of *Soul on Ice*, “What Cleaver shows us, on the pages of this now classic autobiography, is how much he was a man.”³ It is precisely the topic of “being a man,” one who desires other men, that the essays introduced here take on. They do so by bringing Baldwin's works into conversation with those of three other “queer” artists: the Jewish American gay writer David Leavitt; Baldwin's father figure and artistic mentor, the renowned Black American painter Beauford Delaney; and the little-known Danish sculptor Yan Kai Nielsen, who created a beautiful sandstone bust of the author during Baldwin's first years abroad.

The idea for this session originated with Professor Nicholas Radel, who proposed its theme and focus on Baldwin's little-known international and American ethnic interlocutors. Aware that Baldwin, especially after the publication of his second novel, *Giovanni's Room* (1956), had been enshrined as a father figure of the mid-century male gay movement on the one hand, and that his mid-century novel had become something of an ur-“white homosexual abroad” text on the other, Radel was intrigued by the idea of exploring specific cases of Baldwin's cultural and literary historical impact both in the United States and in Europe. Consequently, Radel and I solicited these three essays for presentation at the annual

meeting of the American Studies Association in November 2019 in Honolulu, in a session entitled “Rebranding James Baldwin and His Queer Others.” I served as chair and respondent to all three, and it is my honor and pleasure now to introduce them as examples of new scholarship on the writer to *James Baldwin Review*.

The papers gathered here show how Baldwin’s writings and life story participate in dialogues with other authors and artists who probe issues of identity and identification, as well as with other types of texts and non-American stories, boldly addressing theoretical and political perspectives different from his own. All three essays enlarge our assessment of Baldwin’s contribution to understanding the ways gender and sexuality always inflect racialized Western masculinities. Thus, they help us work to better gauge the extent of Baldwin’s influence right here and right now.

Professor Radel’s temporal challenge to reading novels on homoerotic male desire in “Tainted Love: The Absent Black Gay Man in David Leavitt and James Baldwin” asks of us a leap of faith, one that makes it possible to read race as not necessarily a synonym for “Black,” but as a powerful historical and sexual trope that resists “over-easy” binaries of Western masculinity. Since the mid-twentieth century, such binaries have reinscribed not only love between men, but also how we see ourselves and others in the world, and how we tell stories about all that. Hence Leavitt’s novel *The Indian Clerk*—a 2007 novel about science and desire in a postcolonial framework—can be understood, as Radel argues, “within a narrative of representational relations between African-American and white gay American men in Europe similar to that found in *Giovanni’s Room*.” Radel’s reading emphasizes the agency of the reader within the novel’s complex historical frame of reference. Like one of Shakespeare’s historical plays, Leavitt’s work creates in the reader, in the novelist’s words, a contradictory yearning to “want to read *The Indian Clerk* as a novel written in the 21st century,” and thus as being about us, but also as a novel about the early twentieth century, and thus alien to us. The novel’s temporal dislocations leave us stranded alongside the “absent Black gay man” who haunts both Leavitt’s and Baldwin’s novels.

Professor Gibson’s engagement with Beauford Delaney’s brilliant art and the ways in which it enabled the teenage Baldwin’s “dark rapture” of self-discovery as a writer reminds us that “something [has been missing] in our discussions of male relationships.” Baldwin’s stepfather, David, whose last name the writer inherited after his mother’s marriage to him in early childhood, was a stern fundamentalist preacher who despised his stepson’s sissy mannerisms and bookishness. In contrast, Delaney, a son of a preacher and gay like Baldwin, welcomed him with open arms. As an artistic father figure Delaney introduced the young author to the great cultural heritage of Black America, and mentored him to come into his own as a “painterly” writer.⁴ While Delaney made many portraits of his protégé, the one referenced in Gibson’s essay is the only nude vision of young Baldwin’s body, created in 1941 and entitled *Dark Rapture*. Author of the groundbreaking *Salvific Manhood: James Baldwin’s Novelization of Male Intimacy* (2019), Gibson argues for embracing “the powerful way Baldwin wrote intimacy and love and the possibility of salvation in love between men.” In his deep reading, *any kind* of revolutionary

love challenges the reductives of gender binaries by asking for tenderness, for laying on of hands, for the closeness and honesty missing in normalized, competitive male relationships. Gibson's twenty-first-century reading uncovers a clear narrative scripting tender Black masculinity that flies directly in the face of Cleaver's dismissal of Baldwin and his gendered vision.

Professor Hatton's "The Novel and the Police: *Giovanni's Room* and the Sculpting of Queer Danish Life" suggests "a relationship among Baldwin, Denmark, and *Giovanni's Room* that adds another thread to the important scholarship on his groundbreaking work of fiction that has impacted African-American literature, Cold War studies, transnational American studies, feminist thought, and queer theory." This essay journeys to the space where Baldwin met and inspired the Danish sculptor Yan Kai Nielsen, who sculpted in sandstone a beautiful bust of a twentysomething Baldwin in Paris in the early 1950s. Hatton shows how the meeting of Baldwin and Nielsen in Paris can be attributed to "both the postwar trend of African Americans finding community and freedom in the city and Danish artists leaving the North to seek the latest training in the arts in Europe's cultural capital," thus reminding us how *worldly*, in Edward Said's elegant formulation, literary culture has always been. Indeed, while racism marred the scene of Baldwin's imagined homeland's democracy and liberty, Nielsen's homeland was "deep in homosexual panic, arresting homosexuals for modeling in fear that homoeroticism could lead to prostitution and inevitably widespread crime." In the encounter between Baldwin and Nielsen, Hatton sees narrative, and the genre of the novel specifically, as the key that enables us to restore a humanizing gaze, or the precious ability to "read people." As we have heard, the "Danish roots of *Giovanni's Room*" is another proof that literature makes "things happen," that stories we tell about others teach us what I tell my students every year: If you don't learn how to read books, you will never learn how to read people.

Baldwin's writings on sexual minorities, communities of color, and immigrants in New York, San Juan, Paris, London, or Ankara inspired, and continue to inspire, numerous and varied artists across the world. Vitality and vibrantly, his works create spaces for alternative, novel, and radical types of political and literary critiques and cultural imaginaries, all within, and in solidarity with, communities of color and non-normative sexualities in the U.S. and abroad. Baldwin's international, humanistic, wise-ancestor message reminds us that, while we cling to seeing mostly what divides us, we often neglect to focus on what, however painfully, inextricably connects us all.

Magdalena J. Zaborowska

Tainted Love: The Absent Black Gay Man in David Leavitt and James Baldwin

I want to speak today about the work of two men widely—and I will argue erroneously—imagined to inhabit different, indeed contradictory spaces: the

African-American, sometimes man-loving James Baldwin, a writer justly credited with being one of America's most subtle thinkers on the vexed intersections of race and sexuality, and the white gay American David Leavitt, an author frequently criticized for evading the pressures of race and his own Jewish heritage in exploring the lives of white, middle-class, gay men.⁵ Rather than reinscribe that over-easy binary, however, I am going to argue, to the contrary, that Leavitt's work—exemplified by his 2007 novel *The Indian Clerk*—can be understood within a narrative of representational relations between African-American and white gay American men in Europe similar to that found in *Giovanni's Room*, Baldwin's groundbreaking 1956 novel about same-sex desire.

Giovanni's Room reveals some of the ways homosexual desires were linked historically in twentieth-century American cultural representation to dark-skinned and ethnic peoples. It provides an example of the ways American racialized sexuality associated same-sex desire with a moral depravity frequently represented in explicitly ethnic or racial terms. Baldwin, thus, peers into the paradoxes of an American homosexuality that cannot quite escape its morally murky past and traditional identification with ethnic and Black Americans, as a result of which it can only denigrate dark-skinned, Black, and Black gay Americans. In making such connections, Baldwin anticipated the astute sociological analysis of critics such as Mason Stokes, Siobhan Somerville, and Roderick A. Ferguson. These scholars demonstrated conclusively that starting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, racial purity, including white racial purity, was measured against emerging discourses of homosexuality linked not only with dark-skinned races and ethnic peoples but with moral aberration.⁶ Baldwin's is a prescient vision, then, in which questions of homosexual legitimation are inextricably linked to racial identifications, and the paradoxes he identifies may account for some of the difficulties Baldwin discovered in trying to accommodate Black racial difference to same-sex sexuality—at least in his early writings.

My main point in this paper, however, is to suggest that *Giovanni's Room* narrativized homosexuality in terms of a problematic racial binary that persisted within the cultural memory of post-Stonewall discourses in white gay America. I am not suggesting that Baldwin is Leavitt's explicit source, but, rather, that both *Giovanni's Room* and *The Indian Clerk* come at the issue of homosexual or gay ontology through questions of race and racialized sexuality that precede them both. There are, of course, differences between the two authors. But because cultural scripts that make race central to American—and perhaps Western—conceptions of homosexuality shape both men's apprehensions, I emphasize their similarities. Both authors are the subjects of, or are subjected by, discourses prior to them, discourses that have been formative of both gay white and African-American thought throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In reading them together we see better how racial cultural memories intersect with discourses of sexuality in the United States to render coherent, unitary conceptions of homosexuality—white or Black—nearly unimaginable. That is, we see that there are no homosexualities, even white ones, that fail to intersect with other vectors of power and identity, in particular race.⁷

I take as my point of departure a fantasy of Europe, which both Baldwin and Leavitt employ as a setting to examine male homosexuality and race. In *Giovanni's Room*, David, the gay white protagonist, imagines his expatriation to Europe as a flight that began in his youth, a flight from an erotic entanglement with a dark-skinned boy, Joey, in the U.S. Although as an adult in Europe he is involved with a white woman, Hella, he nevertheless becomes entangled again in a homosexual relationship with an ethnically marked Italian, Giovanni. Baldwin, thus, thematizes within his novel a turning away from American racial complication that, without question, reflects many of his own thoughts and feelings. In Leavitt's case, this authorial turning away from America toward Europe is not so much thematic or a matter of the individual character. It is, rather, to be discerned in Leavitt's decision to write primarily about English characters in post-Edwardian England. *The Indian Clerk* is a historical work about the chaste but eroticized relationship between the famous mathematicians G. H. (Godfrey Harold) Hardy and Srinivasa Ramanujan at Cambridge. In the only sustained exploration of race and sex in his growing body of work, Leavitt turns away from his present context in the United States to write about English history. And in doing so, he effects a double displacement of time and place that recalls Baldwin's narrative of white homosexuality in flight from a darker, unsettling African-American history.

Magdalena J. Zaborowska makes clear some of the ways Baldwin carefully parses the "underlying exclusionary politics" of American racial and sexual identities in *Giovanni's Room*.⁸ She shrewdly argues that when the novel's gay white protagonist leaves the U.S. and acts on his homosexual desire in 1950s Paris, he transgresses not only American sexual but also racial norms—for the hegemonic regime of American masculinity is performed both heteronormatively and as whiteness. In other words, David's gay European sojourn reflects the outside of American heteronormative whiteness. But that European sojourn signals as well David's desire to escape a homosexuality coded in the novel as a kind of darkness, even perhaps specifically as African-American. *Giovanni's Room*, thus, reveals the racial complications everywhere present in American same-sex imagining, even the author's own.

When the white—blonde, of course—protagonist recalls his first "act" of gay "love" as a teenager in Brooklyn, it is with a boy named Joey.⁹ Perhaps not definitively marked African-American, Joey nevertheless has "curly" dark hair and brown skin, which suggests that he may be.¹⁰ Indeed, Zaborowska suggests that "if we read the text closely, [Joey] might be both gay and black."¹¹ But the point is that when David reacts phobically to his desire for Joey, he images his horror in a discourse that links moral abstractions of color to a racially evoked body. He speaks of the "taint" his love causes him to feel.¹² Joey's "body," he says, "suddenly seemed the black opening of a cavern in which I would be tortured till madness came, in which I would lose my manhood."¹³ So, in the course of the novel, David flees to Paris, the city of light. Baldwin's white protagonist might be said to be in exile from a gay desire that references darkness in moral terms and may even be founded literally in an African-American body. David's turn to Europe is a journey away

from the American heart of darkness, an attempt to flee both the African American in his bed and the racial/sexual taint of his embeddedness in homophobic America.

In Europe, David's paranoid efforts to perform heterosexuality lead him repeatedly to associate his intended wife Hella with family and reproduction in ways that necessarily reveal the link between heterosexuality and—in this case, white—racial purity.¹⁴ To put it bluntly, he seeks not only to conform sexually but to regain the whiteness from which he fears he is excluded. But his attempted flight into white heteronormativity is forestalled by the re-emergence of homosexual feelings that in American thought are so often drawn in the moral language of darkness. So Baldwin portrays David as becoming irresistibly drawn into an affair with the dark-skinned, ethnically marked Giovanni. Europe offers David no easy escape from the “taint” of a sexual difference that marginalizes him in terms of its association with threatening racial and ethnic difference.¹⁵ Indeed, Baldwin's novel reveals Europe complexly, as a location where gay American men flee to escape the pressures of heteronormative exclusion, American homophobia, and a racialized sexual morality. Yet Baldwin remains aware that this vision of Europe is only a fantasy of white and homosexual purity. David is trapped anew by the very sexual and racial forces he had sought to flee.

To be clear, Europe is not, of course, an exclusive home to white people; its history is not singularly white. As Richard Dyer argues, the racial notion of whiteness was a concept introduced in nineteenth-century America “as part of the process of establishing US identity.”¹⁶ It was then referred back to Europe, which even in the nineteenth century had a complex history of negotiating cultural life with peoples of varying skin colors, ethnic traditions, and cultural realities from both outside and within the present geographical boundaries of Europe—and which are, themselves, open to continuing contestation.¹⁷ My identification of Europe with whiteness in this essay proceeds, then, largely on assumptions written into the texts I study. In Baldwin's case, Europe initially seemed to represent a space outside an American homosexuality tainted by racial identifications. But in fact, for Baldwin's self-loathing protagonist, Paris, like Giovanni's room itself, is redolent of the “taint” he finds in the body of his first lover, Joey. Indeed, David's operant imaginary seems primarily to be his fantasized idealization of a blonde, masculine self betrayed by his liaison with Giovanni, one, ironically, bound to America as an abstraction of home. We might discern this fantasy in a small moment in the novel when David notices a sailor, “dressed all in white,” on the streets of Paris.¹⁸ The young man's blonde masculinity evokes both desire and identification with David's younger self. And it makes him “think of home,” not as a “place but simply an irrevocable condition.”¹⁹ In this case, home seems consonant with whiteness and the fantasy of white gay desire outside the contaminating taint of a racially inflected homosexuality from which neither Europe nor America offers respite. Such perspicuous revelations of the intersections of race and white gay sexuality point, then, toward ways we might see anew the tensions of race and whiteness in a writer like Leavitt.

In the whole of the white, Jewish Leavitt's work, Europe might seem to stand, as it initially did in Baldwin, as a non-place of the African-American diaspora, and

we can read the representation of such a non-place as signifying something about its author's thoughts on American homosexuality and race. In *The Indian Clerk*, Leavitt specifically revisits the American dialectic between wanting and wasting the racial "other" that Baldwin discerns embryonically in *Giovanni's Room*.²⁰ And he does so—again as we saw in Baldwin—within a paranoid narrative framework that can only struggle to consolidate white with gay identifications. To be sure, Leavitt rejects the homosexual self-loathing that Baldwin's protagonist David expresses in valorizing a reproductive heterosexuality that reproduces whiteness as fetish. The younger writer is concerned, typically, with white gay characters seeking self-affirming gay identifications, especially in middle-class domestic contexts. Leavitt's early works are, without doubt, as Les Brookes suggests, among the first American fictions to utilize newer ethnic models of identity based on an essentialist sexuality rather than the pugilistic constructionist stance of earlier gay liberationists.²¹ But these newer identifications fetishize whiteness, as we might see in the myriad ways they displace their connections with nonwhite races and the history of American racialized sexuality. If in Baldwin gay self-loathing is linked to its protagonist's racial misidentifications, so too is Leavitt's own struggle to legitimize gay desire linked to such misidentifications.

The Indian Clerk seems designed to appeal to a contemporary, white, gay American audience that has moved beyond the conundrums of homosexual desire we find in Baldwin. In this story about the erotics of the never consummated relationship between the white Hardy and the Indian mathematical genius Ramanujan, homosexuality is apparently a historical fact, and therefore a seeming point of over-easy knowing or identification for the contemporary reader. The novel's exposure of a homosocial world in post-Edwardian Cambridge perhaps encourages a sanguine understanding of homosexuality as a universal desire. And, to be sure, the novel also reveals the destabilizing aspect of such modern sexual knowledge as it explores queer, non-homosexually normative forms of desire that emerge between Hardy and his various academic collaborators.

So, for instance, in one intriguing comment, Hardy's colleague John Littlewood contrasts his working relationship with Hardy to his romantic affair with a married woman to suggest, surprisingly, that "Hardy is permanent. Spouse or collaborator, it comes to the same thing."²² As for the homosocial bond between Hardy and Ramanujan, it is summed up in words spoken by the historical figure Hardy himself: "my association with [Ramanujan]," he said, "was the one romantic incident in my life."²³ In imagining the relationship between Hardy and the dark-skinned Ramanujan as a type of romantic relationship, Leavitt usefully explores a version of white, Western homoerotic desire that is not formulated as identity and is not in retreat from the alien, dark-skinned, and foreign. Indeed, the variegated textures of non-specifiable desire woven throughout *The Indian Clerk* seem queer in the sense that we can understand them in terms of that "opacity" of identification that the Antillean poet and theorist Édouard Glissant theorizes in contrast to the transparency of simple difference: "Opacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics," Glissant writes. "To understand these truly one must focus on the

texture of the weave and not on the nature of its components.”²⁴ On its surface, Leavitt’s novel evokes eroticism across gendered, racial, and class boundaries through its multiple interweaving vantage points.

To be clear about it, however, this erotic exploration never quite gets Leavitt’s characters into bed with anyone, much less dark-skinned and foreign peoples. So, any potentially queer reading of the novel does not close down the other ways it creates in the white, English Hardy a highly recognizable, post-Stonewall, white, gay, sexually essential identity.²⁵ Read more carefully, the novel adjudicates the boundaries separating legitimate homoerotic identifications and more ephemeral homosocial ones, such as those felt by Littlewood or Ramanujan. Throughout the novel, Ramanujan functions as the Eastern “other.” He remains the person against whom Hardy judges himself and against whom, in some ways, Leavitt evaluates his protagonist. Ramanujan’s is neither the controlling intellect nor the privileged sexuality of the novel—indeed, Ramanujan represents an ascetic denial of sexuality. So, homosexual agency is primarily imagined in the space of the white, English man, Hardy, whose self-possession fools even the blatantly homophobic character D. H. Lawrence into imagining he is straight. No matter how others might identify with the multiple queer identities of the novel, modern, white, gay-identified sensibilities are potentially privileged in their association with the rationalist, white Hardy, who is able to pass as that most essential of creatures, the straight man.

There is something of a paradox at the heart of the novel, then. Its sexualities straddle the boundary between a queer space outside the homosexual norm and the privileged space in which white male homosexuality speaks as a newly emergent voice of masculinity. To the extent that such paradox wrests power from dominant heterosexual structures and gives them to gay men, *The Indian Clerk* seems progressive. But in so far as it remains sanguine in its vision of the dark-skinned man as object rather than subject of desire, the novel is neither queer nor productive of salutary new formulations of power and privilege. Instead, it seems to replicate that discourse of white gayness in distinction to—and perhaps in flight from—dark-skinned people that we see more explicitly anatomized in Baldwin.

That, however, is not my main point. Rather, it is that when Leavitt moves into white, European history to explore seemingly gay characters, and in particular that famous collaboration at Cambridge in which race, sex, and intellect overlapped to queer English mathematical history in productively racialized ways, he effects a displacement of the figures troubling to his own American present: the religious Jew and the gay African American. These figures almost never appear in Leavitt’s fictional world, and when they do, as in the author’s earlier, 2001 novel, *Martin Bauman; or, A Sure Thing*, they appear as threats to trouble Bauman’s ascendancy into middle-class gay respectability. In *The Indian Clerk*, Ramanujan, the tragic, dark-skinned “other” the white gay protagonist comes to love, can be seen, like Giovanni, as a surrogate for understanding American racial desire in relation to the African American. But that African American, in any case, never appears. And the conflict between Hinduism and atheism that Leavitt explores in the relations between Ramanujan and Hardy seems, as well, a displacement for the

tensions between religious and secular Jewish lives specific to Leavitt's American experience. As surrogate, the religious, dark-skinned Ramanujan does not fully reconstitute these spectral presences in precise American terms. But the novel uses him to stage a series of psychic displacements that attempt—unsuccessfully I think—to distance the darker histories of American homoeroticism from white gay identity in *The Indian Clerk*.

In the first such displacement, the novel's most sexually explicit vision of love between light and dark-skinned people is displaced onto a woman, Alice Neville, who falls in love with Ramanujan. So, the homoerotic love for dark skin the novel teases us with never materializes in any bodily sense. Second, Ramanujan's own ascetic non-sexuality conspires with this dematerialization as it displaces the potential love between white and Black men that Hardy seems to desire. Third, religious irrationalities that arise in relation to Leavitt's explorations of Jewish American life are displaced onto Ramanujan, who, as a Hindu man, serves as a benign symbol of an irrational religion that might otherwise trouble the place of secular gay characters—whether Hardy or any of Leavitt's Jewish characters. Finally, and most troubling of all because of its implication in the tragic diasporic history of African Americans, the English setting displaces gay Black Americans entirely from a place in the history of same-sex relations imagined in the novel. The novel's setting in Europe and its interest in the dark-skinned, different but definitely not African-American Ramanujan remind us of what Leavitt has so insistently left unexplored. *The Indian Clerk* reveals another aspect of the African-American diaspora, then, for it moves the gay African American entirely out of the representational domain of same-sex relations in the white gay American novel.²⁶

Leavitt and Baldwin come closer to one another than we might at first imagine. Both represent their homosexual protagonists within a fantasized but failed white space, Europe, in which they seem at first able to concentrate on questions of sexuality and race outside the compromised structures of racialized sexuality in the United States. And both create protagonists whose sexual agency is negotiated in relation to dark-skinned or seemingly exotic partners. But rather than providing either author a greater understanding of the ways race and sex might intersect productively within an American imaginary, this narrative in fact reveals what Baldwin evocatively suggested was “the black opening of [a] cavern,” literally a black hole in American conceptions of homosexuality: the inability to locate—much less embrace—the African-American man in its midst. To be fair, this was one of the themes of Baldwin's next novel, *Another Country*, and by the time he came to write *Just Above My Head*, Baldwin was discovering increasingly complex ways to engage Black homosexuality.

Nevertheless, both *Giovanni's Room* and *The Indian Clerk* are significant for revealing some of the ways unitary, as opposed to intersectional, gay identities, white and Black, remain problematic and incoherent. They remain so for Baldwin because the moral taint of homosexuality threatens to subsume Black sexual identifications within a supremacist structure in which desire is pure only as whiteness; and they do so for Leavitt because he seems unable to embrace

completely the dark otherness within American homosexuality that might begin to dismantle such supremacist sexual structures. Excluded from both novels is an untroubled image of Black homosexuality. But that exclusion is not simple racism on Leavitt's part or gay self-loathing on Baldwin's. It is the legacy of a cultural memory that makes that figure more difficult to assimilate to flawed modern conceptions of homosexuality than we have previously thought. If Marlon Riggs's famous pronouncement, "Black Men Loving Black Men is the Revolutionary Act," is correct, it may be because it imagines an act of undoing histories of racialist identifications from which Baldwin and Leavitt—and few to follow—have yet escaped.²⁷

Nicholas F. Radel

Dark Rapture: James Baldwin, Beauford Delaney, and Black Queer Joy

If you walk into my office, your eyes will inevitably meet a large-framed print of James Baldwin. The photo offers a profile shot of Baldwin rendered in black and white. The light magnifies a certain intensity in his face, his forehead gently furrowed, his lips on the edge of a smile or a protest. Most striking are his eyes—big and piercing and full of wonder. This is one of the most beautiful shots of Baldwin; or, perhaps, to be more accurate, this is a photo that captures so much of Baldwin's beauty.

James Baldwin begins the introduction to his final and most robust collection of essays, *The Price of the Ticket*, by stating, "My soul looks back and wonders how I got over—indeed..."²⁸ Baldwin tells us how his life in Greenwich Village began at 15 when his friend, Emile Capouya, told him of "this wonderful man he had met" and how "[Baldwin] must meet him."²⁹ That man was Beauford Delaney, the African-American modernist painter who would become mentor, friend, and salvific figure to James.³⁰

I was terrified, once I had climbed those stairs and knocked on that door. A short, round, brown man came to the door and looked at me. He had the most extraordinary eyes I'd ever seen. When he had completed his instant X-ray of my brain, lungs, liver, heart, bowels, and spinal column ... he smiled and said, "Come in," and opened the door. He opened the door alright.³¹

Perhaps it was Baldwin's nervousness that terrified him, perhaps it was the realization of how the dread at home has led him to this man's doorstep and he was uncertain of how he would be received, how he would be viewed.

The way Delaney's eyes capture Baldwin's attention, the way in which Baldwin understands them as "extraordinary," and Baldwin's focus on the artist's "X-raying" situates Delaney's gaze and sight as a necessary point of inquiry in the Baldwin-Delaney relationship. That day, in 1940, the 15-year-old Black boy from Harlem told us how:

I walked through that door into Beauford's colors—on the easel, on the palette, against the wall—sometimes turned to the wall—and sometimes (in limbo?) covered by white sheets ... I walked into music. I had grown up with music, but, now, on Beauford's small black record player, I began to hear what I had never dared or been able to hear.³²

This paper, which might be more meditation than criticism, is interested in the relationship between Beauford Delaney's artistic sight and James Baldwin's Black queer joy. I am curious how Baldwin's symbolic walking into "Beauford's colors" might be recognized as a departure from the dreariness of his home, how Delaney's Black queer and male artistry instituted a reconstitution of Baldwin's vision of himself. I am thinking of how the music of Delaney's studio undermined the silence of Baldwin's stepfather, how an ability to hear something new pushes against the absurd and violent sounds of home, of Harlem, of the United States. I am arguing that somewhere within Delaney's gentle gazing upon Baldwin, within Jimmy's vulnerable need to be seen, and within Beauford's door, we are able to critically examine the relationship between sight and "dark rapture," to identify the tethering of Black male friendship and Black queer joy.

Thirteen years after meeting the man who would recolor a young Baldwin's view of himself, the world received its first glimpse of the author in 1953 with the publication of *Go Tell It on the Mountain*—a semi-autobiographical novel. There are many ways to read this work; however, I argue that at the heart is Baldwin's novelistic catharsis—a wrestling with visibility, vulnerability, and joy. John Grimes's stepfather's inability to see him in the way in which sons wish to be seen by fathers hinders, if not precludes, the possibility of joy. By extension, we learn of Baldwin's personal struggle with joy's attainment, one that is compounded by his queer or non-heteronormative identity.

Go Tell It's metatextual strength presents itself at the precise moment where we can identify how the text mediates Baldwin's reflection of self. In a scene where John Grimes is gazing upon his photographed nakedness on the mantelpiece, the protagonist attempts to objectively see what others saw of him. John, to his own dismay, only sees the details:

Two eyes, and a broad, low forehead, and the triangle of his nose, and his enormous mouth, and the barely perceptible cleft in his chin, which was, his father said, the mark of the devil's little finger. These details did not help him, for the principle of their unity was undiscoverable, and he could not tell what he most passionately desired to know: whether his face was ugly or not.³³

John's pursuit in this moment of self-gazing parallels Baldwin's in the act of writing. For Baldwin, *Go Tell It* allows a textual gazing upon the self, an opportunity to perhaps "discover" an answer to the question of his own perceived ugliness. That John was ugly according to Gabriel, and that he later attempts to verify this ugliness, suggests the inevitable personal confrontation happening at the site of the

text for Baldwin. This particular feeling or wrestling is born out of a father–son relationship, one that is fraught with a heaviness Baldwin would eventually share with his friend Emile. In Baldwin’s official biography, David Leeming reveals the conversation between Jimmy and Emile on a park bench. In that conversation, “Jimmy had burst into tears and revealed that he was illegitimate. He had learned this ‘terrible truth’ about himself in a conversation between his parents.”³⁴ Leeming ends the chapter entitled “Awakenings” with this moment of familial discovery; a moment that foreshadows Baldwin’s departure from the Church and one that points toward Beauford Delaney’s role in his life. For Baldwin, love would become a question of how he was seen, and a source of his happiness would inevitably be connected to its answer.

If *Go Tell It* captures the complex and discordant relationship between Baldwin and his stepfather David, then it is also instructive in its move beyond it. For the young John Grimes, ugliness was not simply imposed from a father who likened him to Satan; rather, it was the result of New York and America’s racial absurdity. Standing atop a hill in Central Park, John thinks:

He remembered the people he had seen in that city, whose eyes held no love for him. And he thought of their feet so swift and brutal, and the dark gray clothes they wore, and how when they passed they did not see him, or, if they saw him, they smirked. And how their lights, unceasing, crashed on and off above him, and how he was a stranger there.³⁵

Baldwin’s choice to locate John’s awareness of white people’s lack of love in their eyes suggests that the racial absurdity and alienation he is to face is based largely in how they see him. While it is clear that Baldwin means to move beyond the limited scope of physicality or the visual, the other’s sight or gaze is an important signifier of Baldwin’s existential wonder. Whether in his fiction or his real world, what remains fixed in Baldwin’s itinerancy is his flight from his father’s house. What is different in the itinerancy is that John climbs a hill in Central Park only to realize how the white world before him cannot see him and will treat him as a stranger. Baldwin climbed the stairs at 181 Greene Street to be fully seen and invited in by Beauford Delaney.

Go Tell It on the Mountain must be recognized for the way in which it echoes Baldwin’s struggle with visibility. Specifically, we must walk away knowing this struggle was located both in home and homeland, and how the feelings of being unseen translated into a sentiment of being unloved. More importantly, we ought to reckon with unlovability as a fulcrum of Black queer vulnerability, where the prospect and promise of joy are seemingly forever evasive. In this way, Black queer male friendships emerge as refuge, as sanctum, as salvific possibilities. And it is within the friendship between Jimmy and Beauford that we see those possibilities actualized, and where, in ways that betray the dark spaces he would inhabit, we see Baldwin bright-eyed, wide-smiled, and full of joy.

In the near forty years of knowing each other, Baldwin and Delaney would experience the best of friendship. A glimpse:

From the beginning the young Baldwin senses a natural connection with Beauford Delaney. He sensed that when he observed him he was really seeing himself as well. Here was a black man, an artist, an outsider, somehow a later version of himself. It was as if Jimmy had found his long-lost father ... Beauford taught his protégé to react to life as an artist ... The vocabulary of color and sounds learned in Beauford's presence was to become the basis of Baldwin's art. Delaney was to reconcile for his protégé the music of the Harlem streets with the music of the Harlem churches, and this helped Baldwin to reconcile his sexual awakening with his artistic awakening. Beauford taught his charge how to see beauty even in the metaphorical and literal gutter.³⁶

Delaney's teaching reached the most vulnerable parts of Baldwin's Black manhood. Not only did he influence Baldwin's artistry, he influenced his self-perception. I would add to Leeming's declaration about Delaney and the teaching of beauty by stating how Delaney also taught Baldwin to see beauty within himself. Such teaching happened through their excursions, through their intimate dinners and gatherings, through their adventures and sojourns in the Village in New York and in the streets of France. This teaching happened through music and dancing, through heartbreak and tragedy. And, without surprise, we see this teaching, or a trace of this teaching, most pronounced in Delaney's art.

Over the course of their friendship, Delaney painted more than ten portraits of James Baldwin. In being painted, Baldwin was able to understand himself as art, as someone worthy of capture, as having something beautiful meant to be rendered in color. Delaney's portraits varied in their artistic depictions of Baldwin. They spoke to the various faces our beloved Jimmy would enjoy throughout his literary career. For instance, in a 1967 oil on canvas portrait,³⁷ the viewer or reader is first drawn to the dominant and slightly heavy red of the background. The combination of blue, yellow, and red creates a backdrop of fire easily reminiscent of Baldwin's acclaimed *The Fire Next Time*, published within the same decade. Baldwin's face is both hard and meshed with this fiery backing, which reflects the radical political voice witnessed in his more popular essays. His eyes remain a focal point, a synecdochic representation of Baldwin's potent Black vocality. The title, *The Sage Black*, exalts and appreciates Baldwin's voice, situates him as a valuable and wise member of the activist community, and reflects a "seeing" back to the author which Baldwin was beginning to question in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

If *The Sage Black* captures the strength of Baldwin's political voice or his position as one of America's fiercest critics, then Delaney's earlier 1963 portrait,³⁸ completed as pastel on paper, offers a counter-vision. This portrait, now housed in the National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian Institute, emanates the warmth of Delaney that many came to know, but also highlights the beauty and joy often found within Baldwin. Saturated in a yellow often likened to that used by Van Gogh, the portrait endures a split interpretation. Within the art world, this portrait is often read outside the language of affection or gentle sentimentality. Instead, some art critics suggest the color and its application are more about Delaney's anxieties than Baldwin's warm state of being.³⁹ Considered within the larger collection of Baldwin portraiture, it proves difficult to ignore the affective elisions

and ruptures happening at the site of the canvas. Undoubtedly, this is a warm rendering of Baldwin. Those big eyes are joyful, wanderlusting, and seeing. The mouth is pleasant, unaffected by the bitter taste of the 1960s that is to come.

I imagine part of the mis-viewing of this portrait stems from the desire to map Van Gogh onto Delaney. If this yellow is meant to convey the angst so characteristic of the darker parts of the artist's world, then there are a couple of ways to read this in a modified context. The heaviness within the yellow might be read as a darkened sun promised to Black folk coming up in the South or Harlem or the United States or the mid-century. Delaney's placing an undeniably contented Baldwin against what some art critics have termed that "heated and confrontational" yellow can therefore represent the resilient capacity to conjure or embody joy in or against the backdrop of racial absurdity. Or folk can simply understand that color application brings about new meaning when mediated by a racialized painting subject. Ultimately, when we view the different iterations of Baldwin throughout Delaney's collection, we find the many ways the latter was able to see Baldwin. And, I argue, Delaney's polyfocality,⁴⁰ or the manifold ways in which he focused his artistic eye upon Baldwin, allowed one of his greatest subjects to gaze upon himself and all of his beauty in new and unmolested ways.

One of the greatest gifts bestowed upon Baldwin in his relationship with Delaney was the latter's teaching him how to see and how to appreciate light. In a musing simply entitled "On the Painter Beauford Delaney," Baldwin states the following: "I learned about light from Beauford Delaney, the light contained in every thing, in every surface, in every face."⁴¹ Baldwin is literally talking about light in this moment—how objects, or our perceptions of objects, particularly their color, are perceptively changed by light. But he is also more abstractly talking about a new way of seeing. Through his friendship with Delaney, he was able to see light in spite of the darkness surrounding him, and he was also able finally to see the light within himself. As he relays, "He was then, and is now, working all the time, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he is seeing all the time; and the reality of his seeing caused me to begin to see."⁴² The gift of vision extended to Baldwin from Delaney would dramatically shift his way of seeing and envisioning the world. Even more, it would reorient how he came to see himself. In that new view we see a Jimmy more joyful in his self-gazing, freer in his artistry, and more loving in his sight.

I want to end with one of my favorite portraits of James Baldwin, painted by those brilliant hands and eyes of Beauford Delaney very early in their friendship; in fact, it was the first he ever completed (1941). It is entitled *Dark Rapture*.⁴³ I will not write much about this, except how the title captures the complex raciality of Baldwin as a darker complexioned Black man caught within the darkness of racial absurdity, and how that is coupled with this idea of rapture, an intense experience or expression of joy. The innocence of Baldwin's young male beauty explodes through this oil on canvas. What else I have to say, I forfeit lest I betray the affecting power to a language unable to hold it. But I will leave us with Baldwin on Delaney, as we gaze upon this meeting of love and joy:

Well, that life, that light, that miracle are what I began to see in Beauford's paintings, and this light began to stretch back for me over all the time we had known each other, and over much more time than that, and this light held the power to illuminate, even to redeem and reconcile and heal. For Beauford's work leads the inner and the outer eye, directly and inexorably, to a new confrontation with reality. At this moment, one begins to apprehend the nature of his triumph. And the beauty of his triumph, and the proof that it is a real one, is that he makes it ours. Perhaps I should not say, flatly, what I believe—that he is a great painter, among the very greatest; but I do know that great art can only be created out of love, and that no greater lover has ever held a brush.⁴⁴

Indeed, Baldwin's manhood was painted out of Delaney's love, and Beauford's sight captured Jimmy's joy—a *dark*, and I'll add, beautiful, *rapture*.

Ernest L. Gibson III

Sculpting a Human Being: James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, and the Police in Denmark

Writers as distinct as the Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka and the U.S. American novelist William Styron have acknowledged James Baldwin as a transnational and "cosmopolite" thinker with a complex moral ethics, a writer who understood love as "the First Principle of the meaning of human existence."⁴⁵ Their claims can be explained through an analysis of Baldwin's essays, but the assertions are more substantive and true to Baldwin's moral vision when examined through his novels, stories, plays, and poetry, sites of epistemological play, prophecy, and correction. This essay demonstrates how that first principle, cultivated in Baldwin's autobiographical existential crucible, imported from New York to Paris, and bound everywhere in Baldwin from his likeness to his pen, found its way north to Denmark and fictively intervened in one of that country's mid-twentieth-century moral dilemmas—homosexuality, or the moral right of two people from the same sex to have a life together. Whereas Denmark recognized same-sex civil partnerships in 1989 and same-sex marriage in 2012, the cultural, social, and political realities were less welcoming in the 1950s when Baldwin's fiction first appeared, resulting in an encounter between Baldwin's prose, homosexuality, and the Danish authorities. The clash represents what Baldwin's novels have done for decades now: elegantly place discarded lives back into their rightful cultural and social spheres.

When he wrote *Go Tell it on the Mountain* (1953), Baldwin began a moral philosophy of his own, enabling a discourse that would extend to a universal being who differed from the universal being of ancient Athens, "the rights of man," or "we the people." *Giovanni's Room* (1956) enriched Baldwin's metaphysics, showing the importance of what Soyinka has referred to as the First Principle of love. *Another Country* (1962), the third novel in Baldwin's oeuvre, envisioned just that—a place where the disjointed lives of New Yorkers would reveal an America antithetical to the master narrative of privileged prosperity and progress. For Baldwin, one of the most neglected and important aspects of his novel was that "a lot of people in that book had never appeared in fiction before. People overlook

this fact. And there's an awful lot of my experience which has never been seen in the English language before."⁴⁶ Lives formerly on the periphery also find recognition in his later novels—*Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* (1968), *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1974), and *Just Above My Head* (1979). By the end of his fictional journey, Baldwin would have shown his definition of a human being to mean any individual, without reservation, wherever they might fall on the continuums of race, gender, sexuality, and possibility.

Like the canonical thinkers of the Western intellectual tradition who continue to dominate modern political theory and humanist thought, from Plato to Kant, Baldwin's work offers compelling ideas about how we should situate and define important concepts such as justice, humanity, fraternity, representation, difference, love, pleasure, citizenship, and companionship. "Negroes want to be treated like men," he reasoned, yet "people who have mastered Kant, Hegel, Shakespeare, Marx, Freud, and the Bible find this statement utterly impenetrable. A kind of panic paralyzes their features, as though they found themselves on the edge of a steep place."⁴⁷ Baldwin, who spent a career attacking this paradox, encountered no such paralysis, and his work restores to humanist and political thought a diverse, dialectical universalism. The writer Toni Morrison suggests that he made the American English language "genuinely international," "modern dialogic, representative, humane."⁴⁸ What is clear is that Baldwin is interrogating the Western intellectual tradition, inserting life where the tradition has assumed lifelessness for particular populations.

Understanding Baldwin's fiction as moral and political thought, I trace a relationship between Denmark, a nation-state, and *Giovanni's Room*, a novel, that adds another thread to the important scholarship on his fiction as a site of deliberation, anxiousness, and disavowal in modern societies. The relationship is also connected to a striking sculpture made of Baldwin by a Danish artist in Paris in 1950, and two translations of *Giovanni's Room* that appeared in Denmark, the first in 1957 (and in a pocket paperback edition in 1966) and again (re-translated) in 2019. Whereas the Baldwin renaissance that opened the twenty-first century resulted in multiple new translations of several of Baldwin's novels and essay collections into European languages (French, German, Swedish, Norwegian), the only new Danish translation to appear was of *Giovanni's Room*. In 2020 a new German translation of *Giovanni's Room* appeared, but alongside several other new German translations of Baldwin's work, and with a different appearance than that of its Scandinavian counterpart to the north. I am suggesting that *Giovanni's Room* has a special place in Denmark, that its "transcendent appeal" has a certain history.⁴⁹ The twenty-first-century Danish and German translations of *Giovanni's Room*, products of the renaissance of interest in Baldwin's work, and their differing entrances into literary public space stem from Baldwin's 1950s Danish encounter. Their shelf lives perform the interplay between novels and nation-states, and embody the extension and limits of how European moral agency simultaneously welcomes and abandons global citizenship as seen in the ghost of a figure, the universal citizen, fictitiously alluded to in international treaties, declarations and covenants, or the unnamed yet European human in human rights discourses.

Baldwin revises the image of this ghost of a human being, a revision I am suggesting comes through a Danish artist's 1950 sculpture of Baldwin as he experienced the milieu that would become his signature Paris novel. *Giovanni's Room* is Baldwin's Enlightenment revision, human rights corrective, and modernity amendment, a rejoinder to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that traveled the same 1948 New York-to-Paris route to fame and global presence as Baldwin himself.

The sculptor and painter Yan Kai Nielsen was born on 21 December 1919, in Copenhagen, Denmark, to artist parents. His father was the well-known national sculptor Kai Nielsen, whose art can be seen in museums and public spaces across Denmark, and his mother Janna Lange was also a painter. Yan Kai Nielsen followed in the artistic footsteps of both his parents, sculpting in a variety of media, with a noted emphasis on welded steel and iron pieces that express abstract meaning. The range of his work differs greatly from the small number of sandstone busts he produced early in his artistic career. He trained at the Norwegian National Academy of Craft and Art Industry from 1938 to 1940, and studied abroad at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris in 1949–50, where he most likely encountered Baldwin for the first time. Founded in 1905, the school was an important space for African-American artists and writers, among them Baldwin and artists like Beauford Delaney, Augusta Savage, Aaron Douglas, and others. Nielsen trained with the Russian-French sculptor Ossip Zadkine, whose son, Nicolas Hasle, was the result of Zadkine's affair with a Danish woman, Annelise Hasle. Thus, the meeting of Baldwin and Nielsen in Paris can be attributed to both the postwar trend of African Americans finding community and freedom in Paris and Danish artists leaving the North to seek the latest training in the arts in Europe's cultural capital.⁵⁰

The intimacy of artist and subject represented in the creation of the sculpture anticipated what would be *leitmotifs* of both Baldwin's and Nielsen's careers: their common ability to recognize the humanity in others. Nielsen's rare portrait bust of Baldwin joins at least one other he made in 1950, that of a woman named Carolyn Stewart from Washington, U.S.A. Baldwin and Stewart are rendered in their separate likenesses, but the style, form, and gaze of the sculptures are similar, making them both unique and the same, a recognition and merging of selves in the hands of the artist. After a 1951 exhibition of Nielsen's work in Denmark, a critic wrote a review asking, "Quo Vadis, Yan?—How is it going?"⁵¹ The review featured a photo of "Yan's bust of the Negro writer Jimmy Baldwin." With the adjacent Baldwin bust staring intently, the critic, Ole Vinding, proceeded to link Nielsen's exhibition with his life struggles at the time, a long and lonely artist's struggle with his form. The critic suggested that despite the struggle, Nielsen's bust of Baldwin demonstrated that he had inherited a gift from his sculptor father, the gift "to see people."

The gift was both a blessing and a curse. The good of the gift is likely what drew Baldwin and Nielsen together in Paris. The curse similarly linked Nielsen to Baldwin, as the former was in great conflict over the struggle to establish his own artistic identity in the shadow of his famous sculptor father whose name was known all over Denmark. Indeed, Nielsen's effort to differentiate the artistic reputation of "Yan Kai Nielsen" from that of "Kai Nielsen" succeeded no more than his



Figure 1 A sculpture (1950) of James Baldwin by the Danish artist Yan Kai Nielsen (1919–2001) (photo by the author, 2020).

sister Nina Kai Nielsen's efforts to break free from the prominence of their artist father. In a 1946 article, Nina Kai Nielsen expressed her and her brother's desire to make names for themselves even as they carried the familiar name of their father. "We will have the right to our *own* adult chance in life," she wrote.⁵² It is likely that the young Baldwin, having fled the United States while also experiencing challenges in his relationship with his stepfather, bonded over this struggle with Nielsen, who faced challenges regarding his family, artistry, and postwar conditions. As artists, sons, brothers, new Parisians, and creators gifted with the vision to "see people," Baldwin and Nielsen joined together in the glaring sandstone bust depicting young Baldwin with his masterful gaze.



Figure 2 Critics called Yan Kai Nielsen's sculpture of Baldwin an example of Nielsen's ability "to see people" (photo by the author, 2020).

A Danish translation of Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* (*Giovanni's Værelse*) appeared in Denmark in 1957, priced at 14.50 Danish crowns. It was published by Steen Hasselbalchs Forlag, a Copenhagen publisher that also produced the first Danish edition of *The Fire Next Time* (*Næste Gang*) in 1963 and a translation of *Go Tell it on the Mountain* (*Råb det fra Bjergene*) in 1965. Interestingly and conversely, the publisher had earlier produced the first edition of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* in Danish. It sold out its first edition in under two weeks. The publisher, known for his aggressive marketing, reflected the nation's varying relationship to the idea of America: on the one hand, readers were taken with the fascination of

Gone with the Wind; on the other, they were also riveted by Baldwin's searing syntax and prose.

The Danish translation of *Giovanni's Room* appeared shortly after a scandal in Denmark, during a time when the "antihomosexual climate of the 1950s made it virtually impossible for the Forbundet af 1948," one of the country's first LGBTQ+ organizations, "to pursue actively a homosexual political agenda."⁵³ The decade was marked by "harassment by the police, legal discrimination, and societal oppression of homosexuals."⁵⁴ In 1955,

Axel Lundahl-Madsen, and his partner Eigil Eskilden [founders of Forbundet af 1948], with whom he had lived since 1950, were convicted on pornography charges and sentenced to short prison terms for running a gay modeling agency that sold pictures of naked men. While in prison, they melded their first names into the shared surname Axgil as a public show of defiance.⁵⁵

After this scandal, the Danish press reported that as many as seventy Danes committed suicide out of fear of being outed by the authorities. Accordingly, the afterword to the 1957 Danish translation of *Giovanni's Room* was written by a police commissioner (*politivadvoikat*) with the Copenhagen police force. Commissioner Aage Maurizio Lotinga, who wrote a 1948 book entitled *The Sexual Deviant and Society* (*De sexuelt afsporede og Samfundet*), spent part of his career advocating that society should not look at homosexuality as a moral issue, but as a matter of concomitant crime, like the theft and public indecency associated with male prostitution. According to historian Peter Edelberg, "The moral discourse achieved hegemony, or, if you will, consensus in the press in the second half of the 1950s."⁵⁶

In the afterword to *Giovanni's Room*, Lotinga acknowledges Baldwin's art for seeing people, and his writing a novel that expressed not only the physical drive of homosexuality, but also what Lotinga refers to as the "soulful and complicated drives in which homosexuality has its origination." Lotinga writes that he recognizes the tragedy unfolding in the novel from his many years working with sex crimes. For him, "Giovanni is drawn with a rare artistic accuracy and a delicate, yes almost tender understanding. Here we face the unrelenting human tragedy, a shaky drama of fate."⁵⁷ It is interesting to note that Lotinga sympathizes with Giovanni while at the same time he condemns homosexuality as a public nuisance which he mostly associates with male prostitution. Male prostitution is far worse than female prostitution, Lotinga suggests, because it is almost always accompanied by theft and violence. *Giovanni's Room* is primarily a crime novel for Lotinga, but Baldwin's triumph is that he managed to make the police official acknowledge the moral questions that emerge in the work. While Baldwin and Nielsen were sharing their ways of seeing people in the bohemian Paris of 1949–50, Lotinga was in Denmark constructing the criminalization of homosexuality that would breathe fear into Danish gay life for the length of the decade.

Lotinga's criminal reading of *Giovanni's Room* crept into the translation of the novel not only in the character of Giovanni, but also in the meeting of David and

Joey. After David's encounter with Joey, he confesses, "I was ashamed. The very bed, in its sweet disorder, testified to vileness."⁵⁸ The 1957 translation renders the moment as "Jeg skammede mig. Selv sengen med dens søde uorden vidnede om lastefuldhed."⁵⁹ The key term here is *lastefuldhed* for "vileness." *Lastefuld*, a form of carelessness, echoes the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, and links "vileness" to criminality. Lotinga, after all, urged the public to remove the issue from any discussion of morality. In one of many instances of restoring the Danish text to match Baldwin's moral cosmos, Pjal Juul, translator of the 2019 Danish edition of *Giovanni's Room*, changed the word for "vileness" from *lastefuld* to *unmoralsk*, or "immoral." The new translation eschews criminality in favor of Baldwin's moral difficulty, a form of social upheaval and reckoning that transfers from the decision to live in Henry James's *The Ambassadors* to the choice of love in *Giovanni's Room*. As the critic and astute Baldwin reader Hilton Als points out, "For Baldwin, the first principle of love was love withheld; it was all he had ever known."⁶⁰

James Baldwin and Yan Kai Nielsen met in the environment of the artists' colonies in Paris in 1949 or 1950, shortly after Baldwin arrived from the United States to escape American racism and pursue his career as a writer and poet, and after Nielsen arrived from Denmark to hone his craft as a sculptor and to establish a name for himself separate from his famous father. A remarkable sandstone bust of Baldwin commemorates their union. If racism marred Baldwin's imagined democracy- and liberty-loving homeland, Nielsen's homeland was deep in homosexual panic, arresting homosexuals for modeling for fear that homoeroticism would lead to prostitution and widespread crime.

The Danish publication of *Giovanni's Room* changed state attitudes toward homosexuality, leading the primary author of the "gay sex as crime spree" narrative to admit the humanity of Giovanni's predicament. Perhaps Nielsen, married three times and enduring the artist's struggle, witnessed the arrival of the novel in Denmark and the rise of Baldwin's international career. Baldwin did make a trip to Copenhagen in the mid-1960s at the same time that he visited Sweden for his well-known exchange with Ingmar Bergman, but it is unclear if he reunited with Nielsen. While, as we know, Nielsen sculpted Baldwin, is it possible that Baldwin sculpted Nielsen? The first-person portrayal of David that appears at the start of *Giovanni's Room*—was it inspired by Yan Kai Nielsen? Does the figure of Nielsen appear in Baldwin's fiction? Is he related to the artist Fonny in *If Beale Street Could Talk*? Did Baldwin have Denmark in mind when he began chapter 5 of *Giovanni's Room* with "It was a terrific scandal."⁶¹ Was Yan Kai-Nielsen the inspiration for the "Danish-looking" hipsters standing near the jukebox talking about Frank Sinatra in *Another Country*? Is he related to the Minnesotan Hella in *Giovanni's Room*? Or to David's Seattle-born mother? Both cities experienced migration from Scandinavia that required the conquering of already inhabited spaces, much as the introduction to the first-person narrative of *Giovanni's Room* begins. There is a particular scene where Danishness arises via Americanness in Paris:

The trees grew green those mornings, the river dropped, and the brown winter smoke dropped downward out of it, and fishermen appeared. Giovanni was right about the fishermen, they certainly never seemed to catch anything, but it gave them something to do. *Along the quais the bookstalls seemed to become almost festive, awaiting the weather which would allow the passerby to leaf idly through the dog-eared books, and which would inform the tourist with a passionate desire to carry off to the United States, or Denmark, more colored prints than he could afford, or, when he got home, know what to do with.* Also, the girls appeared on their bicycles, along with boys similarly equipped, and we sometimes saw them along the river as the light began to fade, their bicycles put away until the morrow. This was after Giovanni had lost his job and we walked around in the evenings. (emphasis mine)⁶²

Already in the novel, Baldwin's narrator David has described the tour buses "from Holland, from Denmark, from Germany" that "stood in the square before the cathedral." The Parisian experience represents the cultural ("tourist"), intellectual ("dog-eared books"), and sexual ("passionate desire") capital that Danes and Americans wish to carry in excessive amounts ("more colored prints than he could afford") back to their respective homelands, spaces complicated with possibilities and problems, vision and violence, social welfare and capital gain. If Nielsen started the artistic relationship with Baldwin via his commanding sculpture of the writer, Baldwin returned the favor with a Parisian portrait of the human being facing state power in societies as varied as Denmark and the United States. To the list of ways in which we must describe *Giovanni's Room*, we must add that is also a Danish novel, responsible for a turn in the politics of homosexuality in the nation, and a symbol of the ways of seeing people in artistic life.

I close with a final thought on Baldwin's interventions and the cost of denying them. Danish publisher Gyldendal acknowledged Baldwin's artistic humanism with cover art for the 2019 Danish translation that embraces men and women of all backgrounds.⁶³ The multi-color image of blues, reds, oranges, pinks, whites, and grays forms a medley of sculptures that depend on one another to reveal the presence of a human profile. The art represents not just Giovanni or David in the novel, but all of the characters, minor, major, silent, speaking. *Giovanni's Room* is Hella's novel just as much as it is David's or Giovanni's or Joey's. The colorful cover contrasts with the dark gray of the earlier edition, representative of its taboo subject matter and the need to be hidden in the 1950s. Baldwin's legacy in Denmark, vis-à-vis *Giovanni's Room*, is tied up with the nation's progress in advancing the rights of all human beings and the change in attitudes toward homosexual life. Conversely, in Germany, publisher Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag opted to set aside the potentialities of allegorical hybridity and transcendence for the cover of its 2020 German translation.⁶⁴ The cover art represents Giovanni as a chiseled and handsome European man in a provocative white tank top, reminiscent of earlier representations of the novel and claims about Baldwin that scholars have carefully problematized.⁶⁵ The publisher presents a singular narrative in opposition to Baldwin's multiple worlds, a stark contrast to the colorful, ambiguous yet recognizable human on the Danish *Giovanni's Room*.

On its own, the German cover might be understood as a missed opportunity, but its relationship to the erasure evident in other German publishing decisions related to Baldwin and Blackness suggests a troubling trend. In 2019 the German publisher Männerschwarm Verlag produced a translation of the novel *Since I Laid My Burden Down* by the African-American writer and Baldwin protégé Brontez Purnell.⁶⁶ The semi-autobiographical novel draws on the life of Purnell, a brown-skinned man who grew up in the American South. Männerschwarm Verlag opted to entitle the German edition of the novel *Alabama*.⁶⁷ This is understandable, as the literal translation of *Since I Laid My Burden Down* into German might lose or alter its meaning. The problem concerns the cover, which features the image of a man whose skin is much lighter than that of the protagonist in the novel. Brontez Purnell expressed excitement at the prospect of a German translation of his novel, but he was disappointed by the message conveyed by the image on the cover. To be sure, the image is not wrong—rather, it raises the question, “Why did the publisher make the change from dark skin to light?” Why do German publishers of Baldwin’s classic novel and the novels it inspired fear Blackness or indeterminacy?

A review of the new German translation appeared in a February 2020 edition of the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, one of the most widely read newspapers in the country. Literary critic Gustav Siebt noted the novel’s classic status alongside Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice* and argued that *Giovanni’s Room*, both its metaphysical meaning and its physical materiality as a book, represented a defense of minorities, a safeguard against their appropriation.⁶⁸ Baldwin’s object, the book *Giovanni’s Room*, sculpted human beings.

Nigel Hatton

Notes

- 1 https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/10427.James_Baldwin; https://scalar.usc.edu/works/under-the-watchful-fbeye/media/baldwin4_p44; <https://shop.thenation.com/products/james-baldwin-t-shirt> (all accessed 15 June 2020).
- 2 <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1962/11/17/letter-from-a-region-in-my-mind> (accessed 15 June 2020).
- 3 Published in 1999: <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/28698/soul-on-ice-by-eldridge-cleaver/> (accessed 15 June 2020).
- 4 Quentin Miller used this term in his presentation at “In the Speculative Light: The Arts of James Baldwin and Beauford Delaney” symposium at the University of Tennessee, 20–21 February 2019, https://calendar.utk.edu/event/in_a_speculative_light_the_arts_of_james_baldwin_and_beauford_delaney (accessed 15 June 2020).
- 5 For instance, in his book *The Queer Renaissance: Contemporary American Literature and the Reinvention of Gay and Lesbian Identity* (New York, NYU Press, 1997), Robert McRuer identifies Leavitt as a “mainstream gay writer” in contrast to other authors who “share a commitment to interrogating sexual and social identities that are made marginal by contemporary society” (p. 29). As regards the author’s Jewish identity, Susanne Klingstein suggests that “[t]he fiction of the most prominent Jewish writer of gay fiction, David Leavitt, has no Jewish content.” See “Jewish American Fiction, Act III: Eccentric Sources of Inspiration,” *Studies in American Jewish Literature*, 18 (1999), p. 84.

- 6 The issues are too complex to be handled fully in a conference presentation. For sociologically inflected arguments, see Siobhan B. Somerville (ed.), *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2000); Mason Stokes, *The Color of Sex: Whiteness, Heterosexuality, and the Fictions of White Supremacy* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2001); and Roderick A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis, MN, University of Minnesota Press, 2004). For a theoretical deconstruction of the ways queer theorists have conceived homosexuality as being “raceless,” see Marlon B. Ross, “Beyond the Closet as Raceless Paradigm,” in E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson (eds.), *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 161–89.
- 7 The question of why Baldwin uses a white gay protagonist in *Giovanni's Room* has been considered carefully by a number of critics. In particular, Marlon B. Ross, “White Fantasies of Desire: Baldwin and the Racial Identities of Sexuality,” in Dwight A. McBride (ed.), *James Baldwin Now* (New York, NYU Press, 1999), makes a comment that allows me to define my own argument more carefully. He writes that “[i]f the characters [in *Giovanni's Room*] had been black, the novel would have been read as being ‘about’ blackness, whatever else it happened actually to be about. The whiteness of the characters seems to make invisible the question of how race or color has, in fact, shaped the characters—at least as far as most readers have dealt with the novel” (p. 25). My argument is slightly different in suggesting that neither Baldwin's nor Leavitt's novel makes whiteness invisible as race if we read it within the long history of racialized sexuality in America. In a wide-ranging essay on the place of Baldwin's homosexuality within Black Studies, Dwight A. McBride makes what I take to be a valid point when he writes that *Giovanni's Room* “may be among the possible progenitors of the area of whiteness studies.” See “On Straight Black Studies: African American Studies, James Baldwin, and Black Queer Studies,” in E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson (eds.), *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 78–9. And to be sure, in making my argument, I hope to contribute to, in bell hooks's words, “a discourse on race that interrogates whiteness.” See “Critical Interrogation: Talking Race, Resisting Racism,” in *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston, MA, South End Press, 1990), p. 54. But again, my point is that whiteness reveals itself as a racial construction even outside the consciousness of the individual author. My emphasis, I hope, points to the ways in which racialized sexuality in America distorts both Black and white gay narratives—albeit never equally.
- 8 Magdalena J. Zaborowska, “Mapping American Masculinities: James Baldwin's Innocents Abroad, or *Giovanni's Room* Revisited,” in Magdalena J. Zaborowska (ed.), *Other Americans, Other Americas: The Politics and Poetics of Multiculturalism* (Aarhus, Aarhus University Press, 1998), p. 122.
- 9 James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room* (New York: Dell, 1956), p. 14.
- 10 My reading is suggestive rather than definitive, appealing as it does to physical markers not specific to any race.
- 11 Zaborowska, “Mapping,” p. 128.
- 12 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, p. 11.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- 14 Again, this dynamic is noted by Zaborowska, “Mapping,” p. 125.
- 15 Race is not, of course, ethnicity, and in a longer version of this essay I draw out the kinds of displacements through which Baldwin himself substitutes ethnic difference for racial difference in his evocation of white homosexuality.
- 16 Richard Dyer, *White* (New York, Routledge, 1997), p. 19.

- 17 Place, as Doreen Massey argues, is not essential but rather a construction at the intersection of social and historical forces, one that subjects, who are themselves constructed within such interstices, help, in turn, to construct, so that “the identity of place is a double articulation.” See Doreen Massey, “Double Articulation: A Place in the World,” in Angelika Bammer (ed.), *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question* (Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 118.
- 18 Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*, p. 121.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 Although I try to avoid the problematic term *other* in this essay, I use it in quotation marks when it seems necessary to signal a construction of the problematic racial dynamic that is my subject.
- 21 See Les Brookes, *Gay Male Fiction Since Stonewall: Ideology, Conflict, and Aesthetics* (New York, Routledge, 2009), esp. p. 13.
- 22 David Leavitt, *The Indian Clerk* (London, Bloomsbury, 2007), p. 299.
- 23 Quotation from G. H. Hardy, *A Mathematician’s Apology* (1940), quoted in Leavitt, *The Indian Clerk*, p. 5.
- 24 Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (1990), trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor, MI, University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 190.
- 25 Like one of Shakespeare’s historical plays, *The Indian Clerk* represents not simply the past but the present of its writing. Leavitt spoke to this precise concern in his appearance at the John Adams Institute in Amsterdam, 16 June 2009. In response to moderator Tim Overdiek’s questions about point of view, Leavitt said, “I didn’t want to write a period piece ... I didn’t want to create the illusion that the novel had been written at the time that it takes place ... The novel I want to read as a novel written in the 21st century, but a novel about the 20th century. That was a very conscious decision.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5188OVTfoA&t=3055s>. (accessed 24 February 2020).
- 26 It is immensely troubling that Ramanujan is the object of multiple desires (white and other) whose own sexual agency remains uncharacterized, so that his body seems, in some ways, to replicate those captive bodies of African-American slaves that Hortense Spillers describes as being “sever[ed] ... from [their] motive will.” See “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” *diacritics*, 17 (1987), p. 67. Spillers argues that this condition represents part of the diasporic plight of Africans transported to the New World, and it helps ground my assertion that gay, African-American men are also severed not only from their bodies but from representation itself in their disappearance from the European fiction of an American novelist such as Leavitt.
- 27 Marlon Riggs, *Tongues Untied* (California Newsreel, 1991); Riggs tropes Joseph Beam’s prefacing quotation, “Black men loving black men is a call to action, an acknowledgement of responsibility,” in Essex Hemphill (ed.), *Brother to Brother: New Writings by Black Gay Men* (Washington, D.C., Redbone Press, 1991), p. v.
- 28 Karen Thorsen (dir.), *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket* (Maysles Films & PBS/American Masters, 1990).
- 29 David Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), p. x.
- 30 By salvific figure, I am drawing from my theory of salvific manhood, where those agents defined as salvific are “entities or institutions endowed with the power to offer salvation” (*Salvific Manhood: James Baldwin’s Novelization of Male Intimacy* [Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska Press, 2019], p. 3) and where intimacy becomes both a necessity and means for achieving such possibility. Here, then, I am alluding to the ways in which Delaney’s intimate mentorship and friendship served as a sanctum for Baldwin.

- 31 Leeming, *James Baldwin*, p. x.
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 James Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (New York, Dell, 1985), p. 23.
- 34 Leeming, *James Baldwin*, p. 31.
- 35 *Ibid.*
- 36 *Ibid.*, pp. 33–4.
- 37 The portrait can be viewed via artnet.com, <http://www.artnet.com/magazine/news/ntm5/ntm8-1-1.asp> (accessed 15 June 2020).
- 38 Portrait available for viewing through National Portrait Gallery, https://npg.si.edu/object/npg_NPG.98.25?destination=edan-search/default_search%3Fedan_q%3D-James%2520baldwin%26edan_fq%255B0%255D%3Donline_visual_material%253Atrue (accessed 15 June 2020).
- 39 The description accompanying this portrait of James Baldwin in the National Portrait Gallery mentions Delaney’s “inner anxieties” and his stays in psychiatric hospitals in order to make a claim for the “heated and confrontational” color application. I am pushing against such a reading, in favor of a warmer reading of Baldwin.
- 40 Here, I mean to introduce Black polyfocality as a method or process of seeing that goes beyond its use within the realms of science, technology, and medicine. Indeed, polyfocality, as a theory, allows us to better understand the myriad ways in which African-American writers and artists petitioned for or ushered in new ways of seeing. I am thinking of Ralph Ellison’s coupling of the visual and auditory when he speaks of seeing and hearing “around corners” as a method of navigating Blackness in America.
- 41 James Baldwin, “On the Painter Beauford Delaney,” *Transition*, 75/76, (1997), p. 88.
- 42 *Ibid.*
- 43 Portrait is viewable through the Wells International Foundation, <https://wellsinternationalfoundation.org/dark-rapture-1941/> (accessed 15 June 2020).
- 44 Baldwin, “On the Painter Beauford Delaney,” p. 89.
- 45 In his *Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward A Politics of Radical Engagement*, Stephen Eric Bronner argues that Baldwin “gave a profound insight into the existential moment of cosmopolitanism” that was a part of Enlightenment thinking. Stephen Eric Bronner, *Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 148. See Wole Soyinka, “Foreword: James Baldwin at the Welcome Table,” in Quincy Troupe (ed.), *James Baldwin: The Legacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), p. 11.
- 46 John Hall and James Baldwin, “James Baldwin, A Transition Interview,” *Transition*, 41 (1972), p. 23.
- 47 James Baldwin, “Fifth Avenue, Uptown: A Letter from Harlem,” in *Nobody Knows My Name*, in *Collected Essays*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York, Library of America, 1998), p. 177.
- 48 Toni Morrison, “Life in His Language,” in Troupe (ed.), *James Baldwin: The Legacy*, p. 76. Morrison made the remarks as part of her eulogy for Baldwin.
- 49 As Arnold Rampersad points out, “Time takes its toll on the appeal of every literary text. Only the concerted efforts of educators—teachers, critics, and scholars, with their syllabuses and lectures and articles and new editions—keep alive our respect for even the finest writers, including Shakespeare. But no amount of scholarly glossing or canonical reverence can save a book or a text if does not contain the burning core of transcendent appeal that makes a text survive from generation to generation,” See Arnold Rampersad, “Introduction,” in W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007), p. xxvi.

- 50 See, for example, Kerry Greaves, *The Danish Avant-Garde and Word War II: The Helhesten Collective* (New York, Routledge, 2019), and Tyler Stovall, *Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light* (Boston, MA, Houghton Mifflin, 1996).
- 51 Ib Paulsen, *Fynske kunstnerportrætter X. Robert Lund-Jensen Yan* (Odense, Denmark, Andelsbogtrykkeriet, 1959) p. 47.
- 52 *Ibid.*, p.49.
- 53 Bonnie Zimmerman, *Encyclopedia of Lesbian and Gay Histories and Cultures* (New York, Garland, 2000), p. 394.
- 54 *Ibid.*, p. 395.
- 55 Associated Press, “Axel Axlil, 96, Danish Advocate for Gay Rights,” *The New York Times*, 31 October 2011, Section B, p. 8.
- 56 Peter Edelberg, “Den grimme lovs genealogi. Et kapitel af homoseksualitetens historie i Danmark,” *Historisk Tidsskrift*, 110:1 (2013), p. 69, <https://tidsskrift.dk/historisktidsskrift/article/view/56454> (accessed 9 June 2020).
- 57 James Baldwin, *Giovannis værelse* (Copenhagen, Hasselbalchs Forlag, 1957).
- 58 James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room* (1956) (New York, Vintage, 2013), p. 9.
- 59 Baldwin, *Giovannis værelse*, p. 16.
- 60 Hilton Als, “The Enemy Within: The Making and Unmaking of James Baldwin,” *New Yorker*, 16 February 1998, pp. 72–80, www.newyorker.com/magazine/1998/02/16/the-enemy-within-hilton-als (accessed 15 June 2020).
- 61 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, p. 149.
- 62 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, pp. 76–7.
- 63 The cover image can be found on the publisher's website, www.gyldendal.dk/produkter/james-baldwin/giovannis-v%C3%A6relse-47105/indbundet-9788702256499 (accessed 15 June 2020).
- 64 The cover image can be found on the publisher's website, www.dtv.de/special-james-baldwin/giovannis-zimmer/c-2070 (accessed 15 June 2020).
- 65 See, for example, Dwight McBride's reading of *Giovanni's Room* in *Why I Hate Abercrombie & Fitch: Essays on Race and Sexuality in America* (New York, NYU Press, 2005), pp. 40–8.
- 66 Brontez Purnell, *Since I Laid My Burden Down* (New York, Feminist Press, 2017). The cover image can be found on the publisher's website, www.feministpress.org/books-n-z/since-i-laid-my-burden-down (accessed 15 June 2020).
- 67 Brontez Purnell, *Alabama* (Berlin, Albino, 2019). The cover image can be found on the publisher's website, www.maennerschwarm.de/index.php/12-titel/746-alabama (accessed 15 June 2020).
- 68 Gustav Seibt, “James Baldwins ‘Giovannis Zimmer’: Vom seelischen Erfrieren,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 27 February 2020, www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/roman-james-baldwin-giovannis-1.4823880 (accessed 15 June 2020).

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