

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

The Evidence of Things Translated: Circulating Baldwin in Contemporary Europe

Remo Verdickt KU Leuven

Abstract

For several years now, James Baldwin's life, portrait, and work have enjoyed a central place in the public eye. Although social and audiovisual media have made significant contributions to Baldwin's return to the cultural and political limelight, the circulation of his published writings remains a vital part of the author's ubiquity. Moreover, since Baldwin's omnipresence in bookstores transcends an American or even Anglophone context, this international and multilingual circulation contributes to Baldwin's *world* literary standing, as befits the self-described "transatlantic commuter." This article moves beyond the customary approach to Baldwin's published success by tracing presently circulating European translations of his work. The article examines the historical developments in Baldwin's European circulation-through-translation from the time of his death (1987) up until the present, including brief discussions of the French, Italian, and West German translations from the 1960s onward. Of special interest are the pioneering and dominant roles that French and Italian publishers have played since the late 1990s, and the acceleration in circulation that took place across the continent in the wake of the films *I Am Not Your Negro* and *If Beale Street Could Talk*. The article concludes with a few remarks on the translation strategies of several key publishers in France, Italy, Germany, and Romania.

Keywords: James Baldwin, African American literature, translation studies, cultural studies, *I Am Not Your Negro*, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, world literature

Beyond a “Narrow Provincial Approach”

In 2016 Eddie S. Glaude Jr. proclaimed that “James Baldwin is everywhere.”¹ Baldwin’s ubiquity has ostensibly only expanded since then: his portrait graces symposium posters and street murals alike, and he is as casually namedropped in think-pieces of various political persuasions as in hip-hop songs.² The man who once titled an essay collection *Nobody Knows My Name* (1961) will soon have a Parisian media library named in his honor, and the former boy preacher has been turned into a “secular saint” whenever a candle carrying his likeness is lit.³

Some of these manifestations of Baldwin mania are undoubtedly, at least to some degree, informed by opportunism and market logic. Glaude was quick to recognize the strength of the Baldwin brand as an “avatar of supposed seriousness,” to which Bill V. Mullen adds that Baldwin’s “face and words seemed to acquire a second or third afterlife in the mediasphere that he had helped to predict and create.”⁴ Baldwin’s manifestations in the mediasphere—be it as an activist orator in short video clips, as an instantly recognizable celebrity headshot, or as the proper name/hashtag that usually follows those few carefully crafted and widely shared (mis)quotations on social media—might even be so widespread and multifaceted that they can obscure the complexity and foundations of his message.⁵ This article restricts itself to following part of the trajectory of Baldwin’s fame, his writings, rather than the proliferation of images, inspirational quotations, and paraphernalia—in keeping with Baldwin’s own prioritization of his ambition to be “an honest man and a good writer.”⁶

As the example of Twitter in the previous paragraph attests, Baldwin’s words continue to play a vital part in his present-day circulation. His writings remain in print, and book sales have seen a marked increase in recent years.⁷ This article, however, moves beyond the customary approach to Baldwin’s published success by tracing European translations of his work. The fact is, if Baldwin indeed is *everywhere*, we cannot limit discussions of the availability of his oeuvre to the circulation of his work exclusively in English.

In 1997 Rosa Bobia, herself harking back to an argument made by Richard Long, expressed her intent to counter fellow scholars’ tendency “to confine the study of African-American literature to its American context” with an impressive monograph on Baldwin’s reception in France.⁸ A quarter of a century has passed, and, in the aftermath of Paul Gilroy’s and Brent Hayes Edwards’s groundbreaking work, several scholars—Magdalena J. Zaborowska, Douglas Field, Mullen, and Glaude come to mind—have examined Baldwin’s internationalist and transnational forays and implications, both relating to past and present contexts.⁹ However, if we want to discuss the contribution of Baldwin’s published writings to his present-day international circulation, we must acknowledge that a substantial number of Baldwin’s readers can only access his words through translation. Therefore, this article wants to move beyond what Richard Long dubs “the narrow provincial approach” and provide at least a preliminary overview of how and to what extent Baldwin’s works have been made available to new audiences across Europe.¹⁰

In solely applying a framework of translations within the European Union, this approach is of course only slightly less “provincial” than its Anglocentric counterparts. However, given my geographical proximity to and basic linguistic familiarity with several of these markets, and my lack of knowledge of other languages, this limited variety of languages will have to suffice as a starting point for further research on Baldwin’s worldwide literary value and availability. Naturally, any claims and conclusions on the following pages only apply to the European context of Baldwin’s present circulation. A truly global study of Baldwin’s circulation-through-translation might paint a very different, and certainly larger, picture. That will, however, have to be a collective undertaking—for which this foray can count as an invitation.

State of the Field: Baldwin in European Translation, 2022

In tracing presently circulating European translations I have mainly relied on the online library catalog WorldCat. Although this catalog is by no means exhaustive, it proved a vital starting point for further research. To establish which of the translations listed by WorldCat are still in print, while also remaining on the lookout for any recent translations that might not have made it into the database yet, I also consulted the websites of relatively large bookstore chains in each respective language market. Thus WorldCat lists a variety of Finnish translations all dating back to the 1960s and 1970s, but since none of these are supplied by Suomalainen Kirjakauppa, the largest chain in Finland, I have not counted them as presently circulating. In contrast, I found several recent translations in modern Greek that are *not* listed on WorldCat, thanks to online bookstores Evripidis Bookstores and ShopBay. As I intended to focus exclusively on European circulation, I have left out, for instance, the recent Chilean translation of *Giovanni’s Room* (1956), which is presently not available in Spain, and the Brazilian Portuguese editions of the publisher Companhia das Letras, which are excluded from the Portuguese market.

Whenever I invoke Baldwin’s “European” circulation, I am mainly referring to the availability of his work in the twenty-four official languages of the European Union, minus English. Translations of his work in other European languages, especially Russian, warrant further research. However, since my browsing sessions on several Spanish and Scandinavian bookstore chain websites also uncovered translations into Catalan—an official language in parts of Spain, but not of the EU—and Norwegian, I have included these as well. Drawing upon Zaborowska’s pioneering work on Turkish translations up until 2008, I will also briefly compare the Turkish developments to their European Union counterparts.¹¹ During my research I reached out to several Italian, Dutch, Romanian, and French translators and publishers, who were all kind enough to answer my questions and guide my research further. The interviews that I conducted with these translators will be referred to below.

I have limited my framework to the circulation of Baldwin’s main corpus of published texts, by which I mean his six published novels, and the six collections of essays

that were published in his lifetime, plus the short story collection *Going to Meet the Man* (1965).¹² Translations of Baldwin's poetry, plays, screenplays, or the published screenplay of Raoul Peck's *I Am Not Your Negro*, which exist only in French, fell outside of the scope of this research, while the present-day circulation of the too often overlooked collaboration *Nothing Personal* warrants an essay of its own.¹³

Having explained my methodology, let us finally look at the raw data. I have not found any presently circulating Finnish, Slovenian, Slovakian, Bulgarian, Irish, Czech, Croatian, Latvian, Lithuanian, or Maltese translations.¹⁴ For all of the other official languages of the European Union I have found at least one Baldwin book that is currently in print. In quantitative terms, French and Italian translations lead the pack by a considerable margin. Of the thirteen books by Baldwin that I have included, the only one that is presently not circulating in French is *Nobody Knows My Name*. Curiously, this second collection of essays, the one that first affirmed Baldwin's bestseller status in the US, is not available in *any* of the European markets I have studied.¹⁵ Italian audiences have an only slightly less complete offer of Baldwin's novels and collections, with nine titles presently circulating. Apart from *Nobody Knows My Name*, all the titles that are unavailable in Italian belong to Baldwin's later period: *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone*, *Just Above My Head*, and *The Evidence of Things Not Seen*. When we look at the books that are available in the other languages, we can clearly see a trend: none of these later titles is available in any language but French, with the exception of the recent Greek translation of *Just Above My Head*.

The availability of Baldwin's work is far less extensive in any of the other languages I have selected. There are six works available in German, while the new Romanian translation of *Notes of a Native Son* that is presently in the works would bring the total of Romanian translations to four.¹⁶ Three works are still available to Dutch, Portuguese, and Greek audiences—with no indication that a new translation in any of these languages will soon follow—whereas all of the other languages offer exactly one translation each—most often of *If Beale Street Could Talk*.

“Just One Among a Large Number of Exciting Black American Writers”: From Baldwin's International Fame to the Early 2000s

Several scholars have indicated that Baldwin's international reputation decisively took off with the publication of *The Fire Next Time* in 1963.¹⁷ His work had been translated into some European languages in the years before, but for the first time many of the translations were published almost simultaneously with the book's original English-language release.¹⁸ I will mainly focus on France and Germany here, since the most extensive studies of Baldwin's reception focus on these territories. The developments in Baldwin's circulation in both countries, along with Italy, confirm the scholarly received opinion of his declining importance in the 1980s and 1990s.

Bobia notes how Baldwin's reputation in France, despite it being his adopted home country, ambled “in slow motion,” in part due to *Go Tell It on the Mountain*

not being translated until 1957.¹⁹ By the end of Baldwin's life the tables had turned: in 1985 *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* was first published in French translation, before the original English text was published.²⁰ *Just Above My Head*, on the other hand, was not published in French until 1987, but it received broad and highly favorable critical attention.²¹ Intriguingly, Bobia notes how "some critics suggested that all of Baldwin's books should be available in a paperback collection and in bookstores throughout France."²² It appears that by 1987 most of Baldwin's work was no longer in print, or at least not available in an affordable format to the broader public.

At first glance, the discrepancy in the time that it took translations of *Evidence* and *Just Above* to appear, the first even preceding the publication in English, the second trailing the original publication by eight years, seems puzzling. Both books were published by Stock, a publisher that specializes in foreign literature and non-fiction, and that had already translated *Beale Street* back in 1975. The fact that Stock was able to secure the rights to *Beale Street* might be informative in itself: this was only possible because Gallimard, France's most prestigious publishing house, which had been publishing translations of all of Baldwin's books until *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone*, seemed to have lost interest in acquiring the rights to later work. The surprising eight-year gap between the publication of *Just Above*'s original version and the French translation might, in part, be explained by the length of the novel: at almost 600 pages, it is by far the lengthiest of Baldwin's output. Could it be that Stock did not want to risk such a lengthy and costly effort of translation without some assurance that Baldwin could still spark critical interest and self-generating publicity? It seems reasonable that they would first try their hand at *Evidence*, a short text that demands far less effort of translation, before commissioning the bulky endeavor that *Just Above* entails.

A strikingly similar situation pertained in the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), where by the late 1980s none of Baldwin's essays except for *Evidence* were still in print, although his novels and the short story collection *Going to Meet the Man* were.²³ During the 1960s Baldwin had achieved exceptional success in the country, with several of his books becoming bestsellers, and by the late 1980s Peter Freese assessed that he was still the best-known African American author in Germany, "although Alice Walker and Toni Morrison are close runner-ups," while several of his works were being used as standard texts in West German EFL classrooms.²⁴

Despite Bobia's and Freese's accounts of Baldwin's early critical and commercial success in France and West Germany, in the years immediately following Baldwin's death the general public in both countries would enjoy less and less access to his works in translation. As Freese puts it:

In the Federal Republic of 1988, then, the severely limited availability of Baldwin's oeuvre on our book market, the absence of his plays from the repertoire of our theatres, and the almost total neglect of his work by our scholars during the last decade document that one year after his death Baldwin is no longer an outstanding public figure but just one among a large number of exciting Black American writers.²⁵

Table 1 Translations of Baldwin's Novels

English	<i>Go Tell It on the Mountain</i>	<i>Giovanni's Room</i>	<i>Another Country</i>	<i>Tell Me How Long the Trains Been Gone</i>	<i>If Beale Street Could Talk</i>	<i>Just Above My Head</i>
French	<i>La conversion</i> , trans. Michèle Albaret-Maatsch, first published in 1999 by Payot et Rivages, reissued in 2017	<i>La chambre de Giovanni</i> , trans. Elisabeth Guinsbourg, first published in 1997 by Payot et Rivages, reissued in 2015	<i>Un autre pays</i> , trans. Jean Autret, first published in 1964, reissued by Gallimard-Folio in 2019	<i>L'homme qui meurt</i> , trans. Jean Autret, first published in 1970, reissued by Gallimard-Folio in 2019	<i>Si Beale Street pouvait parler</i> , trans. Magali Berger, first published in 1975, reissued by Stock in 2017	<i>Harlem Quartet</i> , trans. Christiane Besse, first published in 1987, reissued by Stock in 2017
Italian	<i>Gridalo forte</i> , trans. Silvia Mondino, first published in 2013 by Amos Edizioni	<i>La stanza di Giovanni</i> , trans. Alessandro Clericuzio, first published in 2001 by Le Lettere, reissued in 2017 by both Le Lettere and Fandango Libri	<i>Un altro mondo</i> , trans. Attilio Veraldi, first published in 1963 by Feltrinelli, reissued in 2004 by Le Lettere and again in 2019 by Fandango Libri	/	<i>Se la strada potesse parlare</i> , trans. Marina Valente, first published in 1979 by Rizzoli, reissued by Fandango Libri in 2018	/
German	<i>Von dieser Welt</i> , trans. Miriam Mandelkow, first published in 2018 by dtv Literatur	<i>Giovanni's Zimmer</i> , trans. Miriam Mandelkow, first published in 2020 by dtv Literatur	<i>Ein anderes Land</i> , trans. Miriam Mandelkow, first published in 2021 by dtv Literatur	/	<i>Beale Street Blues</i> , trans. Miriam Mandelkow, first published in 2018 by dtv Literatur	/
Dutch	<i>Kom, Roep het van de Berge</i> , trans. Jan Pieter Van der Sterre and Reintje Ghoos, first published in 2019 by De Geus	/	/	/	<i>Als Beale Street Kon Praten</i> , trans. Harm Damsma, first published in 2018 by De Geus	/

Table 1 Translations of Baldwin's Novels (*continued*)

English	<i>Go Tell It on the Mountain</i>	Giovanni's Room	Another Country	<i>Tell Me How Long the Trains' Been Gone</i>	<i>If Beale Street Could Talk</i>	<i>Just Above My Head</i>
Romanian	/	<i>Camera lui Giovanni</i> , trans. Elena Marcu, first published in 2018 by Black Button Books	<i>Altă țară</i> , trans. Ștefan Iancu, first published in 2017 by Paralela 45	/	<i>Dacă Strada Beale ar putea vorbi</i> , trans. Elena Marcu, first published in 2019 by Black Button Books	/
Norwegian	<i>Rop det fra Berget</i> , trans. Magli Elster, first published in 1968 but reissued in 2018 by Pax	<i>Giovannis Rom</i> , trans. Magli Elster, first published in 1968 but reissued in 2004 by Pax (currently unavailable)	/	/	/	/
Danish	/	<i>Giovannis værelse</i> , trans. Pia Juul, first published by Gyldendal in 2019	/	/	/	/
Catalan	/	/	/	/	<i>El blues de Beale Street</i> , trans. Oriol Ampuero I González, first published by Edicions de 1984 in 2019	/

(*continued*)

Table 1 Translations of Baldwin's Novels (*continued*)

English	<i>Go Tell It on the Mountain</i>	Giovanni's Room	Another Country	Tell Me How Long the Trains Been Gone	<i>If Beale Street Could Talk</i>	<i>Just Above My Head</i>
Spanish	/	<i>La habitación de Giovanni</i> , trans. Ana Alcaina, first published by Egales in 2005 (currently unavailable)	/	/	<i>El blues de Beale Street</i> , trans. Enrique Pezzoni, first published by Literatura Random House in 2019	/
Swedish	Although some Swedish book catalogs refer to a 2019 translation, <i>Ropa det från bergen</i> , by Trut Publishing, the company's own website does not list any Baldwin translation. Since I could not find any trace of circulation, I believe Trut simply scrapped the planned publication.	<i>Giovannis Rum</i> , trans. Martin Rogberg, first published in 1957 but reissued in 2011 by Ruin (currently unavailable)	/	/	/	/

Table 1 Translations of Baldwin's Novels (*continued*)

English	<i>Go Tell It on the Mountain</i>	Giovanni's Room	Another Country	<i>Tell Me How Long the Trains' Been Gone</i>	<i>If Beale Street Could Talk</i>	<i>Just Above My Head</i>
Greek	Φώναξέ το στα βουνά, trans. Maria Kondili, first published by Ekdoseis Metaixmio in 2006 (currently unavailable)	<i>To δωμάτιο του Τζοβάνι</i> , trans. Tereza Vekiarelli, first published by Ekdoseis Metaixmio in 2018	<i>Μια άλλη χώρα</i> , trans. Kostis Arvanitis, first published by Ekdoseis Patakis in 2003 (currently unavailable)	/	<i>Αν η Beale Street μπορούσε να μιλήσει</i> , trans. Alkistis Trimperis, first published by Polis in 2020	<i>Το κουαρτέτο του Χάρλεμ</i> , trans. Christos Ikonomou, first published by Polis in 2019
Hungarian	/	/	/	/	<i>Ha a Beale utca mesélni tudna</i> , trans. Mónika Mesterházi, first published by Magvető Kiadó in 2018	/
Polish	/	<i>Mój Giovanni</i> , trans. Andrzej Selerowicz, first published by Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy in 1991 (currently unavailable)	/	/	<i>Gdyby ulica Beale umiała mówić</i> , trans. Maria Zborowska, first published by Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znaki in 2019	/
Portuguese	<i>Se o disseres na montanha</i> , trans. Isabel Lucas, first published by Alfaguara Portugal in 2019	<i>O quarto de Giovanni</i> , trans. Valério Romão, first published by Alfaguara Portugal in 2020	/	/	<i>Se esta rua falasse</i> , trans. José Mario Silva, first published by Alfaguara Portugal in 2018	/

Table 2 Translations of Baldwin's Essays

English	Notes of a Native Son	Nobody Knows My Name	The Fire Next Time	Going to Meet The Man	No Name in the Street	The Devil Finds Work	The Evidence of Things Not Seen
French	<i>Chroniques d'un enfant du pays</i> , trans. Marie Darrieucesq, first published by Gallimard–Collection Du Monde Entier in 2019	/	<i>La prochaine fois, le feu</i> , trans. Michel Sciamia, first published in 1963, reissued by Gallimard–Folio in 2018	<i>Face à l'homme blanc</i> , trans. Jean-René Major, first published in 1968, reissued by Gallimard–Folio in 1996	<i>Chassés de la lumière</i> , trans. Magali Berger, first published in full in 2015 by Ypsilon Editeur	<i>Le diable trouve à faire</i> , trans. Pauline Soulat, first published in 2018 by Capricci	<i>Meurtres à Atlanta</i> , trans. James Bryant, but new edition revised by Florence Noblet, first published in 1985, reissued in 2020 by Stock
Italian	<i>Appunti Americani</i> , trans. Anna Hilbe, first published by Le Lettere in 2007/ <i>Questo mondo non è più bianco</i> , trans. Vincenzo Mantovani, published by Bompiani in 2018	/	<i>La prossima volta il fuoco</i> , trans. Attilio Veraldi, first published by Feltrinelli in 1964, reissued by Fandango Libri in 2020	<i>Stamattina stasera troppo presto</i> , trans. Luigi Ballerini, first published in 1967 by Rizzoli, reissued by Racconti in 2016	<i>Una strada senza nome</i> , trans. Michele Zurlo, first published by Fandango Libri in 2021	<i>Congo Square</i> , trans. Sara Antonelli, first published by Fandango Playground in 2017	/
Swedish	<i>En svart mans anteckningar</i> , trans. Martin Rogberg, first published in 2021 by Modernista	/	<i>Nästa gång elden</i> , trans. Olof Starkenberg, first published in 2019 by Norstedts	/	/	/	/

Table 2 Translations of Baldwin's Essays (*continued*)

<i>English</i>	<i>Notes of a Native Son</i>	<i>Nobody Knows My Name</i>	<i>The Fire Next Time</i>	<i>Going to Meet The Man</i>	<i>No Name in the Street</i>	<i>The Devil Finds Work</i>	<i>The Evidence of Things Not Seen</i>
Dutch	/	/	<i>Niet Door Water, Maar Door Vuur</i> , trans. Harm Damsma, first published in 2018 by De Geus	/	/	/	/
German	/	/	<i>Nach der Flut, das Feuer</i> , trans. Mirriam Mandelkowitz, first published in 2019 by dtv Literatur	/	/	/	/
Romanian	/	/	<i>Va Veni Focul</i> , trans. Elena Marcu, first published by Black Button Books in 2020	/	/	/	/

The French-language market was the first to express, to use Dwight A. McBride's phrase, "a Baldwin revival of sorts."²⁶ While Gallimard would continue to sporadically reissue its old translations, in the late 1990s it was the publishing house Payot et Rivages that showed a renewed, if modest, interest in Baldwin's work.²⁷ The publisher released brand-new translations of *Giovanni's Room* (translated as *La chambre de Giovanni* by Elisabeth Guinsbourg in 1997) and *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (retitled *La conversion* by Michèle Albaret-Maatsch in 1999).²⁸

Payot et Rivages's move predates even the "critical renaissance" that Baldwin's oeuvre would receive from the publication of the scholarly collections *James Baldwin Now* (1999) and *Re-Viewing James Baldwin: Things Not Seen* (2000) onward.²⁹ It is doubtful that the French publisher would have intentionally anticipated the two separate volumes of Baldwin's early fiction and selected essays that were edited by Toni Morrison and published by Library of America in 1998. Instead, Payot et Rivages's motivation can be likely attributed to several other factors. First, the mid-1990s saw increased international attention to African American authors, exemplified by Morrison being the first Black woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature and Maya Angelou's widely televised recital at Bill Clinton's first inauguration, both in 1993. Baldwin not only had historical ties to both authors, but his strong geographical and cultural connections to France made him a fitting candidate to be "rediscovered" by local publishers. The fact that *Giovanni's Room* is almost exclusively set in Paris plays into its marketability as at once exotic and familiar, while its explicit thematization, and problematization, of same-sex love aligns with the influence that queer studies started to exert on international popular culture around the same time.³⁰ Although *Go Tell It on the Mountain* addresses homosexuality in a far more subtle and sidelong fashion, its American canonization by the mid-1990s was well underway, and its inclusion in the Modern Library's "100 Best Novels" list in 1998 is especially of note.³¹ Still, this first renewed interest in Baldwin's output must not be exaggerated. Although *La chambre de Giovanni* would see reprints in 1998 and *La conversion* in 2004, the French publishing world saw no other reissues or new translations for over a decade.

In Italy, similar trends can be discerned, albeit with a slight delay. The first Italian translations, excluding 1962's *La camera di Giovanni*, would not appear until after *The Fire Next Time* brought Baldwin international fame, but between 1963 and 1979 most of his oeuvre was published in translation, either by the prestigious Feltrinelli or by then publishing powerhouse Rizzoli.³² However, when it comes to Baldwin's nonfiction writings, these did not get translated into Italian from *No Name in the Street* onward. Confirming the declining availability observed in France and Germany, in the 1980s and 1990s Baldwin began to circulate less and less in Italian bookstores, with only Feltrinelli reprinting its translation of *The Fire Next Time* in 1995.

Baldwin's first Italian "revival" took place in the early to mid-2000s and was solely enabled by the independent leftist Florentine publisher Le Lettere. Starting with a brand new translation of *Giovanni's Room* in 2001, Le Lettere subsequently reprinted Feltrinelli's translation of *Another Country* in 2004 and commissioned a

new translation of *Notes of a Native Son* (*Appunti Americani*: “American Notes”) in 2007.³³ All these translations were overseen by Le Lettere’s co-editor, Prof. M. Giulia Fabi. In an interview, Fabi recalled how the independent publisher in part acted out of a sense of responsibility. Due to the poor translations of the past, Le Lettere wanted to provide students of American literature with better alternatives.

As with Payot et Rivages’s efforts in France, however, Le Lettere’s translations did not immediately herald a new era of Baldwin’s Italian circulation-through-translation. Meanwhile, still in the mid-2000s, in other European markets Baldwin’s first three novels were sporadically retranslated: *Giovanni’s Room* received a Spanish translation in 2005, while *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (2006) and *Another Country* (2003) were published by two different Greek firms.³⁴ However, as in France and the rest of Europe, none of these markets saw a substantial increase in their Baldwin output until well into the 2010s.

While developments in Germany, France, and Italy indicated a fairly hesitant resurgence of interest in Baldwin in the 2000s, at the borders of the European Union, Turkey showed a markedly different trajectory in Baldwin’s circulation-through-translation. Between 2005 and 2007, publisher Yapı Kredi Yayınları (Istanbul) released new translations of *Another Country*, *The Fire Next Time*, *Giovanni’s Room*, *Tell Me How Long the Train’s Been Gone*, and *If Beale Street Could Talk*—while also publishing Baldwin’s correspondence with Engin Cezzar in Turkish translation.³⁵ Except for *Giovanni’s Room*, the preference here was for works that were (partially) written in Istanbul, and the Turkish market has continued to diverge from the tendencies observed in European markets. This serves as another reminder that my European account is not the full story of Baldwin’s world literary circulation. In 2021, Yayınları added a new translation of *Notes of a Native Son* to its portfolio.³⁶

The Pre-Peck Years: Independent Publishers and their Premature Consecration of the Political Baldwin

Much has been written already on the pivotal role that Raoul Peck’s documentary *I Am Not Your Negro* played in revitalizing public interest in Baldwin’s work.³⁷ There was an unmistakable connection between the film’s release and the first “true” wave of new as well as reprinted translations, but that argument must be nuanced and be put into context. Peck’s film, after making the rounds on the international film festival circuit, was not released theatrically in any European market until March 2017. By that time, we can already observe a marked increase in Baldwin’s availability in the French-language market. Gallimard reprinted *The Fire Next Time* in 2011, Payot et Rivages *Giovanni’s Room* in 2015.

Meanwhile, several specialized publishers, all of them explicitly forwarding non-commercial motives, tried their hand at less canonical texts.³⁸ Editions Syllepse published Baldwin’s screenplay *One Day When I Was Lost* in 2013, Ypsilon éditeur prided itself on publishing *No Name in the Street* for the first time in its entirety in 2015, and Christian Bourgois éditeur opted for a unique collection of

fourteen translated essays from Baldwin's post-*Fire* years with *Retour dans l'oeil du cyclone* in 2015.³⁹ Remarkably, all of these texts are both highly political and hail from Baldwin's later, more polemical period, as a writer and activist. This revitalized attention on the later works corresponded to new scholarly interventions, as there was a continuing trend for appreciation and study of Baldwin's post-civil rights era writings.⁴⁰ More pragmatic and economic motivations might have also factored in these new publishers' preference for the later works: established distributors of Baldwin's prose such as Gallimard, Stock, and Payot et Rivages had neglected these works, and it's highly plausible that their foreign rights were considerably less expensive than those to earlier, more canonized, and already exhaustively translated works.

Concurrently, for the first time since Le Lettere's *Appunti Americani* in 2007, Baldwin translations began to circulate widely in Italy. In 2013 the then-independent publisher Amos Edizioni published a new translation of *Go Tell It*, while in 2016 the brand new Racconti Edizioni, which specializes in short stories, reissued the old translation of *Going to Meet the Man*, previously owned by Rizzoli.⁴¹ Although *Congo Square*, the Italian translation of the first part of *The Devil Finds Work*—in fact, the first Italian translation of the work at all—was not published until November 2017, eight months after *I Am Not Your Negro*'s nationwide theatrical release, its commission and conception predate the documentary's Italian success by several years.

Sara Antonelli, Professor in American Literature at the Università Roma Tre and the translator of *Congo Square*, situates her first efforts to spark interest in Baldwin's work among Italian publishers in the late 2000s. One of the publishers she contacted was Playground. As she did not want to sabotage the simultaneous efforts of her friend and colleague M. Giulia Fabi at Le Lettere, she proposed to Playground a translation of the idiosyncratic and lesser known *The Devil Finds Work*. Playground would go back and forth on the offer for years, until it finally commissioned Antonelli to translate the first part of the book in 2014, when—following the fatal shooting of Michael Brown by police officer Darren Wilson—the Black Lives Matter movement started to receive wide coverage in Italian media and public debates. However, Antonelli attributes Playground's willingness to commission (this part of) the book mainly to its eclectic content and its readiness to be "assimilated" into what was at that time the publisher's main interest: queer literature.⁴² Also in 2014, Antonelli proposed to Feltrinelli, for whom she had already worked as a translator, to do a new translation of *The Fire Next Time*.⁴³ Feltrinelli expressed no interest in the project, but Antonelli persisted, suggesting that the publisher should buy the Italian rights to Baldwin's entire catalog. Feltrinelli dismissed the idea, according to Antonelli, on the grounds that the economic viability of "Black" literature in Italy at the time was simply too precarious.

These first new publications in the French and Italian markets in the years directly leading up to *I Am Not Your Negro* articulate several developments in Baldwin's European reconsecration. The efforts of specialized, politically and aesthetically motivated publishers like Editions Syllepse, Ypsilon éditeur, and

Christian Bourgois éditeur prove that Raoul Peck was not the only Francophone non-academic looking to introduce the political Baldwin to a new French audience. The Italian scholars of African American literature Fabi and Antonelli, meanwhile, did not engage academically with the scholarly interventions of their Anglophone peers, but first set out to make Baldwin available again to Italian audiences. Nonetheless, the independent publishers' congruence with academic developments—toward both Baldwin's political and queer sensibilities—is remarkable. In neither country was Baldwin's repopularization anticipated by the bigger publishers, who would only join this revival once the success of Peck's film proved Baldwin's commercial viability.⁴⁴

Sea Change: *I Am Not Your Negro*

If the first twenty-first-century Baldwin translations made only a few ripples in the French and Italian book markets, Raoul Peck's film announced what would soon become a tidal wave that swept these two language territories, and from there seeped into other European markets. *I Am Not Your Negro* was released in France on May 10, 2017, to instant acclaim. By the end of the year, Payot et Rivages had reprinted *Go Tell It* (the first edition since 2004) while Stock "commemorated" the thirtieth year of Baldwin's death by republishing *Beale Street* and *Just Above*. Tellingly, Stock's press release described Baldwin as "l'auteur américain récemment redécouvert à travers le film de Raoul Peck, *I am not your negro*" ("the American author recently rediscovered thanks to Raoul Peck's film, *I Am Not Your Negro*").⁴⁵

In 2018 Rivages reprinted *Giovanni's Room*, even though the previous printing was only three years old; Gallimard did the same with *The Fire Next Time*—this time with a notable preface from Christiane Taubira, a progressive Black politician who is France's former Minister of Justice; the independent publisher Capricci, which specializes in books about cinema, published a new translation of *The Devil Finds Work*.⁴⁶ Baldwin's name, even though seldom associated with film criticism, now again carried enough weight and recognizability for Capricci to mention him on its website along with Werner Herzog and Slavoj Žižek.⁴⁷ The next year Gallimard added reprints of its old translations of *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* and *Another Country*, while Stock reissued its 1985 translation of *The Evidence* in 2020, although it has now been revised by Florence Noblet.⁴⁸ Still in 2019, Gallimard also offered what is undoubtedly the most high-profile of its recent Baldwin publications: a brand new translation of *Notes of a Native Son* by Marie Darrieussecq, herself a celebrated novelist in France and beyond. Darrieussecq had previously translated James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Ovid, and Margaux Fragoso for Gallimard, and approaches every offer with prudence. When I interviewed her in early 2022, she described her eagerness to do this translation. Darrieussecq views Baldwin as one of the major twentieth-century writers, but she was only introduced to his work quite recently ... by way of Peck's film.

In Italy, Fandango Libri took the lead.⁴⁹ In October 2017, seven months after the Italian release of Peck's film, it reprinted the translation of *Giovanni's Room* that

was originally published by Le Lettere. The next year, Fandango added a reissue of Rizzoli's *Beale Street*, and the year after that it bought the rights to the existing translation of *Another Country*, again from Le Lettere, although this translation was first published in 1963 by Feltrinelli. In 2020, the publisher reissued Feltrinelli's old translation of *The Fire Next Time*, and in 2021 it published a new translation of *No Name in the Street*.⁵⁰ As Fandango Libri gradually began to monopolize Baldwin translations in the Italian market, Bompiani issued a new translation, only eleven years after Le Lettere's *Appunti Americani*, of *Notes of a Native Son*, titled *Questo mondo non è più bianco* ("This World Is White No Longer").⁵¹ The new title, with its clear emphasis on race, is exemplary of the changed attitude toward African American literature in the Italian publishing landscape. Until recently, Antonelli could not convince major publishers to focus on Black literature, while Le Lettere translated *Notes* with the vague and neutral title "American Notes"; the original's reference to Wright's *Native Son* would be lost on most Italian readers anyway, since Wright's novel is continually titled *Paura*, "Fear." In 2018, however, Bompiani opted for a title that accentuates the book's multi-ethnic framework, explicitly opposing homogeneous white dominance. In summary, during these years both markets were characterized by a definite acceleration of circulation, with a new emphasis on race.

If *Beale Street* Could Sell ...

In the wake of *I Am Not Your Negro*, Baldwin's work began to recirculate in other European markets, albeit less instantly and markedly than in the Italian and Francophone territories. First there was the Romanian publisher Editura Paralela 45, which released an original translation of *Another Country* in November 2017.⁵² Considering the fact that this was a brand new translation of one of Baldwin's lengthier works—the Romanian text consists of 416 pages—we can assume it was commissioned before the international success of Peck's film. No other European translations appeared until 2018.

From 2018 onward we see how in several markets one publisher released multiple translations in relatively quick succession. More often than not these were the only publishers engaging with Baldwin in their respective languages. Thus all of Baldwin's work that is presently available in German is produced by an independent publisher, dtv Verlag. To date, the publisher has released six new translations, all of them by Miriam Mandelkow. Dutch publisher De Geus—which prides itself on gender parity among its authors and on representing literature that "is characterized by depth and social engagement" and "giving those people a voice that is not heard elsewhere"—released new translations of *The Fire Next Time* and *Beale Street* in 2018, followed by *Go Tell It on the Mountain* in 2019.⁵³ After Paralel 45's edition of *Another Country* in Romania, the independent publishing house Black Button Books—which was founded and is run exclusively by women, and has a mission statement similar to De Geus—released three new translations, with a fourth one on the way, all translated by Elena Marcu, who is also one of those who

run the publishing house.⁵⁴ In Portugal, Alfaguara Portugal—which is a subsidiary of Penguin Random House—released *Beale Street*, *Go Tell It*, and *Giovanni's Room* over three consecutive years.⁵⁵ In Greece, publisher Metaixmio released *Giovanni's Room* in 2018, and Polis published *Just Above* and *Beale Street* in the two following years.⁵⁶

In Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, Polish, Spanish, Catalan, and Hungarian, only one or two works are presently circulating. Strikingly, when the Scandinavian languages are excluded, *Beale Street* is the common denominator in *all* European markets that are currently circulating Baldwin translations. Barry Jenkins's film adaptation was not released theatrically in European markets until early 2019, which coincided with or even trailed some of these translations. However, the film's production was already announced in July 2017.⁵⁷ At that time, Jenkins himself was enjoying considerable international coverage following his Oscar wins with *Moonlight* earlier that year, while Raoul Peck's film was (re-)acquainting European audiences and critics with Baldwin. As publishers across Europe were figuring out how to turn Baldwin's newly accumulated, albeit as yet bibliographically undefined, artistic prestige into book sales, the promise of a high-profile Oscar contender, adapted from a single Baldwin source, awaited on the horizon. *Beale Street*, then, no longer seems such an odd choice to lead the vanguard of new Baldwin translations, even if the book was never considered to be essential Baldwin in the previous decades and is still understudied in Baldwin scholarship. "If *Beale Street* can sell, we'll wing it from there," seems to have been the continental publishers' adage.

However, the strategies of several European publishers were informed by more than just the free publicity and heightened recognizability that came with *Beale Street's* film adaptation. Even without *Beale Street's* privileged status, Baldwin's early novels are far more available and widely circulated in translation than his collections of essays. *Go Tell It on the Mountain* is available in six of the fourteen languages, *Giovanni's Room* in eight, and *Another Country* in four. Granted, both *The Fire Next Time* and, if we count the upcoming Romanian translation, *Notes of a Native Son* are available in six languages each, but, as mentioned before, *Nobody Knows My Name* has no present translation, while none of the other collections of essays are circulating in any European language other than French and Italian. With the exception of the Swedish market, which offers no translated novels yet features both *Notes* and *Fire Next Time*, the essays only circulate in markets that offer as least as many, and often more, of Baldwin's novels.

When it comes to *which* books by Baldwin should be (re-)circulated, European publishers thus clearly favor *Beale Street* and the first two novels. These publishers mainly help promote the international standing and availability of Baldwin as a novelist, a marked difference from the tendencies in the "pre-Peck" years. Only a few markets, although they include the key languages French, Italian, and German, see publishers branch out into Baldwin's essays. As for the circulation of Baldwin's essays, the emphasis lies on his early writings until *The Fire Next Time*, with the suspicious exclusion of *Nobody Knows My Name*. A clear example of this

European rebranding of Baldwin as mainly a novelist can be found in Fandango Libri's recent translation of *No Name in the Street*. Underneath the title, the book's cover states "romanzo" ("novel").

Beyond Physical Availability: Old Versus New Translations

In this article I have focused on the *physical* availability of translations of Baldwin's work, without elaborating on the actual content and translation strategies of the works themselves beyond occasional comments on the choice of titles. This matter would require an article all of its own, especially in the French and Italian contexts. I have tried to trace and list whenever a translation was a reprint, a revised edition, or an original work. Works that are currently circulating in Dutch, German, Romanian, and Portuguese are all brand new translations. Some of these newly commissioned translations were indeed the first translation in their language, but more often than not the preference for a new translation over an existing alternative was a conscious decision by the publishers. These decisions were informed by increased awareness of the paternalistic undertones, dated use of language and blatant errors that characterized many of the European translations of the 1960s and 1970s. Freese lists some of the German mistranslations and linguistic shortcomings, while both Miriam Mandelkew and Marie Darrieussecq have elaborated on their translation strategies, and how these differ from previous endeavors in their respective languages.⁵⁸ On the imprint page of the new Dutch translation of *The Fire Next Time*, De Geus mentions that it has used inclusivity as a point of departure for its translation strategies, while in Sweden a revised edition of Martin Rodberg's translation of *Notes* changed the original, offensive title, *Att Vara Neger*, into the more neutral *En Svarts Man Anteckningar*, and Pia Juul's recent Danish translation corrected the homophobic tendencies of the first translation of 1957.⁵⁹

These sensibilities seem much less an issue in the Italian and especially Franco-phone markets. While in Italy a fair number of the presently circulating translations are brand new—with Le Lettere's 2001 translation of *Giovanni's Room* being the oldest, and *Notes* receiving two different translations in less than a decade—the canonical text *The Fire Next Time*, along with *Another Country* and *Beale Street*, still only circulates in the original translation from 1964. Fabi and Antonelli point out dated elements in this text, which will potentially hamper Baldwin's outreach among new Italian readers. Although, generally speaking, younger European readers might be more inclined to read the English originals—a suggestion that certainly applies to the Dutch and Scandinavian markets—this shouldn't be overestimated in the Italian context. Both professors mentioned that even (first-year) undergraduate students of English are not always sufficiently proficient in English to process the original texts.⁶⁰

In France, Gallimard and Stock continue to rely heavily on their original translations. Payot et Rivages's treatments of *Go Tell It* and *Giovanni's Room* are more recent, but the only truly recent translations are Capricci's *The Devil Finds Work*, which was previously unpublished in French, and Darrieussecq's new take on

Notes for Gallimard. Darrieussecq told me she had no knowledge of any plans for future instalments at Gallimard, while it is striking that the publisher still includes its 1963 translation of *Nobody Knows My Name* on its website, albeit listed as “unavailable.”⁶¹ Here it is worth mentioning the efforts of the Collectif James Baldwin, an organization formed in 1993 that strives to promote Baldwin’s writings and legacy in France. Samuel Légitimus, the Collectif’s president, recalls how as a young man he felt himself obliged to master English in order to properly understand and experience Baldwin’s words, as none of the French translations seemed adequate and they often bordered on offensiveness. From the early 1990s onward, the Collectif has lobbied publishers for new translations of Baldwin’s oeuvre, to little avail. Like other translators and promoters of Baldwin’s legacy, Légitimus fears that the absence of decent translations might seriously damage Baldwin’s potential outreach. Already in 1991, Freese warned that “the availability of literary works is only one side of the coin, and it must be ascertained in how far the German renderings do justice to the originals.”⁶² Dtv Verlag and Miriam Mandelkow lead the vanguard of new European translations that aim to correct the linguistic and cultural errors of the past. The French market, on the other hand, despite its unparalleled circulation of Baldwin’s translated work, shows an overreliance on old translations that many of its readers label dated and problematic.

Conclusion: Baldwin Unbound?

Michael Raeburn recently remarked that “Jimmy’s work has been vigorously revived: in trains, planes, cafés—in Paris, London, Berlin, Southern Africa—I see people reading *Giovanni’s Room*. Even in his lifetime Jimmy was not so universally read as he is today.”⁶³ Although Raeburn’s observation may very well hold true, European audiences who don’t read in English have far less access to works other than *Giovanni’s Room* and *Beale Street*. As dtv Verlag and Black Button Books continue their translation and publication projects, over time German and Romanian readers may have an extensive window onto Baldwin’s oeuvre. For now, most markets have to make do with incomplete catalogs that heavily focus on Baldwin’s fictional work—and, of course, with the English originals, which it is safe to surmise are more easily accessible to younger generations of readers.

A vast amount of scholarly output, in *JBR* and elsewhere, has made important contributions to the debate on Baldwin’s continuing and reinvigorated relevance for our times.⁶⁴ For over a decade, several scholars have also investigated Baldwin’s global imaginaries.⁶⁵ Meanwhile, Baldwin’s image looms, often quite literally, over transnational pop culture. Based on the evidence of things translated, however, there remains a notable discrepancy between the narrative of Baldwin’s omnipresence in post-national Western culture at large, and the much more manageable—or should that be *marketable*?—conservative selections of his oeuvre that European publishers offer their readership. If throw pillows and prayer candles attest to the commodification that capitalist dynamics have made out of Baldwin’s public and physical image, the unavailability of texts like *Nobody Knows My Name* or *Just*

Above My Head in European translations offers a sobering account of his literary presence beyond the English language. In the European book market, Baldwin remains first of all a *literary* commodity rather than a political agent. By focusing on translation, scholars can correct all too celebratory transnational accounts of Baldwin's renaissance, and gain insights into the interplay and tensions that exist between his broader, multifaceted and multidirectional consecration and the—at times rather rigid—dynamics of the publishing world.

Douglas Field has noted how Baldwin's essays about Paris explore "how transnational exchange is fraught with difficulties that arise from cultural and linguistic differences, a feature of Baldwin's essays that has arguably obscured his significance as a transatlantic writer."⁶⁶ Now that the Black Lives Matter movement has gained transnational traction and Peck's and Jenkins's films have introduced or reacquainted audiences all over Europe with Baldwin, he is increasingly recognized as a transatlantic writer. However, Field's observation on Baldwin's views of transnational exchange ring as true as ever when it comes to his written words *reaching* his present-day transnational audiences. Cultural and linguistic differences hamper the exchange between Baldwin and his non-English readers, while the strategies that European publishers adopt give only limited, and often distorted, access to his oeuvre.

Notes

- * I would like to thank Doug Field for bringing the innovative and instructive work of Rosa Bobia and Peter Freese to my attention. The interviews with Sara Antonelli, M. Giulia Fabi, Elena Marcu, Marie Darrieussecq, and Samuel Légitimus were not only of vital importance to my research, but each and every one of these conversations proved to be an absolute delight. Last but certainly not least, a big thanks to Professor Pieter Vermeulen for his many suggestions and enduring patience during the writing of this article.
- 1 Eddie S. Glaude Jr., "James Baldwin and the Trap of Our History," *Time*, August 18, 2016, <https://time.com/4457112/james-baldwin-eddie-glaude/> (accessed February 10, 2022).
 - 2 Thus in "Growing Up (Sloane's Song)," rapper Macklemore advises his daughter to study Baldwin (www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mhtJduoCZ0&ab_channel=MacklemoreLLC); Ric Wilson confesses he wants to "pull a James Baldwin" (and leave Trump's America) in the eponymous song (www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-sTQL2Ipl8&ab_channel=RicWilson-Topic); Earl Sweatshirt opens his 2019 album *Some Rap Songs* with an extremely short sample from Baldwin's speech "The Artist's Struggle for Integrity" (www.youtube.com/watch?v=twT1zz5GMfU&ab_channel=EarlSweatshirtVEVO).
 - 3 Raphaël Gariépy, "Paris: une médiathèque portera le nom de James Baldwin," *Actualité*, January 21, 2022, <https://actualite.com/article/98474/politique-publique/paris-une-mediathèque-portera-le-nom-de-james-baldwin> (accessed February 13, 2022); "James Baldwin Secular Saint Candle," *The Unemployed Philosophers Guild*, <https://philosophersguild.com/products/james-baldwin-candle> (accessed February 13, 2022).
 - 4 Glaude, "James Baldwin and the Trap of Our History"; William J. Maxwell and Bill V. Mullen, "James Baldwin in The Fire This Time: A Conversation with Bill V. Mullen, the Author of *James Baldwin: Living in Fire*," *James Baldwin Review*, 7 (2021), 164.

- 5 Melanie Walsh, "The Mythology of James Baldwin on Twitter," November 13, 2016, <https://melaniewalsh.org/the-mythology-of-james-baldwin-on-twitter/> (accessed February 10, 2022); Ernest L. Gibson III, Nigel Hatton, Nicholas F. Radel, and Magdalena J. Zaborowska, "Rebranding James Baldwin and his Queer Others: A Session at the 2019 American Studies Association Conference," *James Baldwin Review*, 6 (2020), 220.
- 6 James Baldwin, "Autobiographical Notes" (1955), in *Collected Essays*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York, Library of America, 1998), p. 9.
- 7 Dwight A. McBride, "Celebrating Our Current 'Baldwin Moment,'" *James Baldwin Review*, 5 (2019), 1–2; Joseph Vogel, "Trends in Baldwin Criticism, 2016–2017," *James Baldwin Review*, 6 (2020), 157.
- 8 Rosa Bobia, *The Critical Reception of James Baldwin in France* (Lausanne, Peter Lang, 1998), p. 1.
- 9 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1993); Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2003); Magdalena J. Zaborowska, *James Baldwin's Turkish Decade: Erotics of Exile* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2009); Douglas Field, *All Those Strangers: The Art and Lives of James Baldwin* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2015); Magdalena J. Zaborowska, *Me and My House: James Baldwin's Last Decade in France* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2018); Bill V. Mullen, *James Baldwin: Living in Fire* (London, Pluto Press, 2019); Eddie S. Glaude Jr., *Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own* (New York, Crown, 2020).
- 10 Bobia, *Critical Reception of James Baldwin in France*, p. 1.
- 11 Zaborowska, *James Baldwin's Turkish Decade*, pp. 7, 22, 356–7.
- 12 The six collections of essays I refer to are *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), *Nobody Knows My Name* (1961), *The Fire Next Time* (1963), *No Name in the Street* (1972), *The Devil Finds Work* (1976), and *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* (1985). Baldwin's collaboration with Yorán Cazac, *Little Man, Little Man: A Story of Childhood*, has only recently been republished thanks to Nicholas Boggs's efforts. Due to the book's idiosyncratic status, and the fact that as of yet no translation has been produced, I have not included it in my corpus.
- 13 Baldwin's contribution to *Nothing Personal* was published in English as a stand-alone text for the first time in 2021 by Beacon Press. A reprint of Atheneum's original 1964 edition came out in March 2022 with Taschen. Taschen first released the Spanish, German, and French translations of this reprint in 2017. The screenplay of *I Am Not Your Negro* was translated into Spanish by publisher Oriente y Mediterraneo in 2021.
- 14 *Giovanni's Room*, however, was translated into Estonian in 1993 by Ursula Põks. This translation was converted in 2013 to an e-reader format, which can still be purchased online. See <https://rahvaraamat.ee/p/e-raamat-giovanni-tuba/100810/en?isbn=9789949480432>.
- 15 Fern Marja Eckman, *The Furious Passage of James Baldwin* (New York, M. Evans, 1966), p. 154; David Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography* (New York, Penguin, 1995), p. 186; Randall Kenan, "James Baldwin, 1924–1987: A Brief Biography," in Douglas Field (ed.), *A Historical Guide to James Baldwin* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 42.
- 16 Interview with translator and co-publisher at Black Button Books Elena Marcu, conducted November 7, 2021.
- 17 Leeming, *James Baldwin*, pp. 214–15; Bobia, *Critical Reception of James Baldwin in France*, p. 25; Zaborowska, *James Baldwin's Turkish Decade*, p. 8; Douglas Field, *James*

- Baldwin (Tavistock, Northcote House/British Council, 2011), p. 16; Nicholas Buccola, "The Great Debate: James Baldwin, William F. Buckley, Jr., and the Civil Rights Revolution," *James Baldwin Review*, 6 (2020), 21.
- 18 Thus Gallimard and the Danish publisher Steen Hasselbalch Forlag released *La prochaine fois, le feu* and *Naeste Gang Elden* in late 1963, while the Italian Feltrinelli and German Reinbek Rowohlt followed in early 1964 with *La prossima volta, il fuoco* and *Hundert Jahre Freiheit ohne Gleichberechtigung* (which is the original German translation of *Notes*, and translates as "One Hundred Years of Freedom without Equality". Whenever a translation's title differs significantly from the English original, I will indicate this in parentheses.)
- 19 Bobia, *Critical Reception of James Baldwin in France*, p. 13.
- 20 *Meurtres à Atlanta* ("Murders in Atlanta"), translated by James Bryant.
- 21 *Harlem Quartet*, translated by Christiane Besse.
- 22 Bobia, *Critical Reception of James Baldwin in France*, p. 64.
- 23 Peter Freese, "Some Remarks on the Reception of James Baldwin's Work in the Federal Republic of Germany," in Jakob Köllhofer (ed.), *James Baldwin: His Place in American Literary History and his Reception in Europe* (Hamburg, Peter Lang, 1991), p. 25.
- 24 *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 21.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- 26 Dwight A. McBride, "Introduction: 'How Much Time Do You Want for Your Progress?' New Approaches to James Baldwin," in Dwight A. McBride (ed.), *James Baldwin Now* (New York, New York University Press, 1999), p. 8. In the early 1990s, however, new translations were sporadically published in the newly democratized post-Iron Curtain countries in Eastern Europe. Thus I found an Estonian translation of *Giovanni's Room* dating from 1993, while the same book was translated as *Mój Giovanni* into Polish in 1991 by Andrzej Selerowicz for the publishing firm Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy (Warsaw). More Eastern European translations from the early 1990s might certainly exist, but by my—and Elena Marcu's—estimation they mainly exemplify the transition these countries underwent at the time from communist economies to neoliberal markets, as well as renewed, no longer censored interest in twentieth-century American literature in general.
- 27 In the mid-1990s, Gallimard's reissues of the translated *Nobody Knows My Name* (1993), *The Fire Next Time* (1996), and *Going to Meet the Man* (1996) circulated, while Stock had reprinted its translation of *Beale Street* as late as 1990.
- 28 The first translation *Go Tell It*, by Henri Hell and Maud Vidal in 1957, was called *Les élus du Seigneur* ("The Lord's Chosen Ones").
- 29 Douglas Field, "Introduction," in Douglas Field (ed.), *A Historical Guide to James Baldwin* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 5; Cora Kaplan and Bill Schwarz, "Introduction: America and Beyond," in Cora Kaplan and Bill Schwarz (eds.), *James Baldwin: America and Beyond* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2011), p. 2; Leah Mirakhor, "The Critical Renaissance: 1999–Present," in D. Quentin Miller (ed.), *James Baldwin in Context* (Cambridge, MA, Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 90; McBride, "Celebrating Our Current 'Baldwin Moment,'" p. 1.
- 30 Field, *James Baldwin*, p. 44; Matt Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), pp. 19, 23; Conseau Francis, *The Critical Reception of James Baldwin: 1963–2010* (London, Camden House, 2016), pp. 65, 69. In France, the popularization of queer studies would truly come to fruition two years later, in 1999, with the publication of sociologist and philosopher Didier Eribon's *Réflexions*

- sur la question gay* (Paris, Fayard, 1999). Baldwin and *Giovanni's Room* are not included in the book's vast corpus of queer authors and works, but Eribon would engage extensively with "Notes of a Native Son" in his equally successful memoir, *Retour à Reims* (Paris, Fayard, 2009).
- 31 "100 Best Novels," *Modern Library*, www.modernlibrary.com/top-100/100-best-novels/ (accessed February 13, 2022).
 - 32 *The Fire Next Time* was translated as *La prossima volta, il fuoco* by Paolo C. Gajani and published by Arnoldo Mondadori editore (Milan) in 1962.
 - 33 *La stanza di Giovanni* (2001), translated by Alessandro Clericuzio; *Un altro mondo* (Le Lettere 2004), translated by Attilio Veraldi, first published by Feltrinelli in 1963 with reprints in 1964, 1966, and 1980; *Appunti Americani* ("American Notes," 2007), translated by Anna Hilbe.
 - 34 *La habitacion de Giovanni* (2005), translated by Anna Alcaina and published by Egales (Barcelona), currently unavailable; *Φώναξε το στα βουνά* ("Shout It from the Mountains," 2006), translated by Maria Kondili and first published by Ekdoseis Metaixmio (Athens), currently unavailable; *Μια άλλη χώρα* (2003), translated by Kostis Arvanitis and first published by Ekdoseis Patakis (Athens), currently unavailable.
 - 35 Zaborowska, *James Baldwin's Turkish Decade*, pp. 7, 22, 356–7.
 - 36 *Bir Vatan Evladının Notları*, translated by Suat Ertüzün.
 - 37 Robert J. Corber, "Queering *I Am Not Your Negro*: Or Why We Need James Baldwin More Than Ever," *James Baldwin Review*, 3 (2017), 160–72; McBride, "Celebrating Our Current 'Baldwin Moment,'" pp. 1–2; Vogel, "Trends in Baldwin Criticism," pp. 155–7.
 - 38 Thus Editions Syllepse defines itself as "alter-éditeur, engagé et non partisan!" ("alternative editor, committed and non-partisan"), Ypsilon éditeur specializes in foreign literature and works on typography, while Christian Bourgois is "en parfait accord avec le grand éditeur allemand Fischer qui affirmait que l'excellence de notre métier est justement de publier des livres que le public n'attend pas, qu'il ne veut pas" ("concurrs with the great German editor Fischer who affirmed that the excellence of [their] profession is precisely to publish books that the audience does not expect, that they do not want"). See www.syllepse.net/qui-sommes-nous--_r_8.html, <https://ypsilonediteur.com/a-propos>, <https://bourgoisediteur.fr/a-propos/>. My translations.
 - 39 Although not exclusively focusing on Baldwin, in 2008 La Découverte published *Nous, les Nègres*, a translated collection of interviews between Kenneth B. Clark and Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Baldwin.
 - 40 Lynn Orilla Scott, "Trends in James Baldwin Criticism 2001–2010," *James Baldwin Review*, 2 (2016), 170–5; D. Quentin Miller, "Trends in James Baldwin Criticism 2010–2013," *James Baldwin Review*, 3 (2017), 187; Jenny M. James, "Trends in James Baldwin Criticism, 2015–2016," *James Baldwin Review*, 5 (2019), 150–1; Mirakhor, "The Critical Renaissance," p. 93.
 - 41 *Gridalo forte* ("Shout It Out Loud," 2013), translated by Silvia Mondino and published by Amos Edizioni; *Stamattina stasera troppo presto* ("This Morning, This Evening, Too Soon," Racconti Edizioni 2016), translated by Luigi Ballerini, first published by Rizzoli in 1967.
 - 42 Tellingly, the French writer and admirer of Baldwin Edouard Louis, whose queerness features extensively in his own work, wrote the preface to Playground's edition.
 - 43 Antonelli agrees with her friend and colleague M. Giulia Fabi that these original translations from the 1960s do not suffice to introduce contemporary Italian readers to Baldwin.

- 44 Aside from the earlier reprints of *The Fire* and *Giovanni*, that is.
- 45 Noémie Sudre, “James Baldwin: deux rééditions chez Stock pour les trente ans de sa mort,” *Hachette.fr*, September 29, 2017, <https://www.hachette.fr/actualites/james-baldwin-deux-reeditions-chez-stock-pour-les-trente-ans-de-sa-mort> (accessed February 14, 2022).
- 46 *Le diable trouve à faire*, translated by Pauline Soulat and first published by Capricci in 2018.
- 47 See www.capricci-international.com/.
- 48 *L'homme qui meurt* (“The Man Who Dies,” 2019), translated by Jean Autret and first published by Gallimard in 1970; *Un autre pays* (2019), translated by Jean Autret and first published by Gallimard in 1964; *Meurtres à Atlanta* (2020), translated by James Bryant and first published by Stock in 1985 but revised in 2020 by Florence Noblet.
- 49 The previously independent publisher Playground is now also a subsidiary of Fandango Libri, called Playground Libri.
- 50 *Una strada senza nome* (“A Street Without a Name”), translated by Michele Zurlo.
- 51 The title is lifted from the final lines of the book’s last essay, “Stranger in the Village”: “This world is white no longer, and it will never be white again.” See James Baldwin, “Stranger in the Village” (1953), in Morrison (ed.), *Collected Essays*, p. 129.
- 52 *Altă țară*, translated by Ștefan Iancu.
- 53 See www.singeluitgeverijen.nl/over-singel-uitgeverijen/. My translation; *Niet Door Water, Maar Door Vuur* (“Not by Water, but by Fire”) and *Als Beale Street Kon Praten*, both translated by Harm Damsma; *Kom, Roep Het van de Bergen*, translated by Reintje Ghoos and Jan Pieter van der Sterre.
- 54 See <https://blackbutton.ro/pages/despre-noi>; *Camera lui Giovanni* (2018), *Dacă Strada Beale ar putea vorbi* (2019) and *Va Veni Focul* (“The Fire Will Come,” 2020).
- 55 *Se esta rua falasse* (“If This Street Could Talk,” 2018), translated by José Mario Silva, *Se o disseres na montanha* (2019), translated by Isabel Lucas and *O quarto de Giovanni* (2020), translated by Valério Romão.
- 56 *Το δωμάτιο του Τζοβάνι* (2018), translated by Tereza Vekiarelli and published by Metaixmio; *Το κουαρτέτο του Χάρλεμ* (“The Harlem Quartet,” 2019), translated by Christos Ikononou and published by Polis; *Αν η Beale Street μπορούσε να μιλήσει* (2020), translated by Alkistis Trimperi and published by Polis. It is of note that the translation of *Just Above* carries the same title as its French counterpart, *Harlem Quartet*.
- 57 Justin Kröll, “‘Moonlight’ Director Barry Jenkins Sets Next Movie,” *Variety*, July 10, 2017, <https://variety.com/2017/film/news/moonlight-director-barry-jenkins-new-movie-if-beale-street-could-talk-1202490903/> (accessed February 14, 2022).
- 58 Freese, “Remarks on the Reception of James Baldwin’s Work,” pp. 13–19; Elizabeth Grenier, “N-word and Gender Politics: How German Translators Deal with Them,” *DW*, September 30, 2019, www.dw.com/en/n-word-and-gender-politics-how-german-translators-deal-with-them/a-50636705 (accessed February 14, 2022); Miriam Mandelkow and Gesa Ufer, “Romane im Rhythmus des Blues,” *Deutschlandfunk Kultur*, May 7, 2020, www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/baldwin-uebersetzerin-miriam-mandelkow-romane-im-rhythmus-100.html (accessed February 14, 2022). For Darrieussecq’s comments I refer to our interview, conducted on January 25, 2022.
- 59 Zaborowska, Radel, Hatton, and Gibson, “Rebranding James Baldwin,” pp. 219–20.
- 60 Antonelli also referred to the necessity of having a translation of *The Devil Finds Work* for students from the Film Studies Department, as these students are not required to be proficient in English, regardless of their degree.

- 61 See www.gallimard.fr/Catalogue/GALLIMARD/Du-monde-entier/Personne-ne-sait-mon-nom.
- 62 Freese, "Remarks on the Reception of James Baldwin's Work," p. 13.
- 63 Michael Raeburn, "'We Can Love One Another in Other Ways': Collaborating with James Baldwin on a Screenplay of *Giovanni's Room*," *James Baldwin Review*, 5 (2019), 139–40.
- 64 See, for instance, Justin A. Joyce, Douglas Field, and Dwight A. McBride, "Baltimore Is Still Burning: The Rising Relevance of James Baldwin," *James Baldwin Review*, 1 (2015), 1–9; Michele Elam, "Review of New York City's 'The Year of Baldwin,'" *James Baldwin Review*, 1 (2015), 204; E. Patrick Johnson, "Baldwin's Theatre," in Michele Elam (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to James Baldwin* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 85; Glaude, "James Baldwin and the Trap of Our History"; Walsh, "The Mythology of James Baldwin on Twitter"; Justin A. Joyce, Douglas Field, and Dwight A. McBride, "Lorem Ipsum Paris," *James Baldwin Review*, 2 (2016), 1; Bill Schwarz, "A Star-Cross'd Nation: If Beale Street Could Talk, 2019," *James Baldwin Review*, 5 (2019), 195–6; Brian Norman, "The Protest Essay Tradition," in Miller (ed.), *James Baldwin in Context*, p. 208; Nicholas Binford, "The Warrior and the Poet: On James Baldwin and the Many Roles in Revolution," *James Baldwin Review*, 6 (2020), 106–7.
- 65 Ernest L. Gibson III, "Trends in James Baldwin Criticism 2013–2015," *James Baldwin Review*, 4 (2018), 134.
- 66 Field, *All Those Strangers*, p. 118.

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Contributor's Biography

Remo Verdickt is a doctoral researcher at KU Leuven, Belgium. His PhD project is called "Harlem, Capital of World Literature? James Baldwin's 21st Century Career and the Dynamics of World Literature" and is supervised by Professor Pieter Vermeulen (KU Leuven). The project approaches Baldwin's world literary value from several angles, including translation, audiovisual media, geography, Baldwin's political commitment, and the dynamics between the vernacular and cosmopolitan in his oeuvre.