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James Baldwin

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JAMES BALDWIN

DARYL DANCE

James Baldwin is one of America's best known and most controversial writers. If there is some figurative truth in his declarations "Nobody Knows My Name" and "No Name in the Street," on a realistic level practically everyone knows his name, from people on the street to scholars in the most prestigious universities—and they all respond to him. Those responses are as diverse and as antithetical as the respondents. Indeed, there is little unanimity in the criticism of James Baldwin: some view him as a prophet preaching love and salvation, others as a soothsayer forecasting death and destruction; some see him as a civil-rights advocate writing protest literature, others as an artist imaginatively portraying the plight of the black American or the alienated man. This essay considers many of these varied responses to James Baldwin, the man; James Baldwin, the spokesman for the black people; James Baldwin, the essayist; and James Baldwin, the novelist.

Bibliography

The most helpful and complete bibliographies of Baldwin have appeared in the *Bulletin of Bibliography*. Kathleen A. Kindt's "James Baldwin: A Checklist: 1947-1962" (*BB*, January-April 1965) and Russell G. Fischer's "James Baldwin: A Bibliography, 1947-1962" (*BB*, January-April 1965) cover the same years and should be used together inasmuch as the items not included in one are generally found in the other; together they represent a reasonably accurate and complete bibliography through 1962. Fred L. Standley's "James Baldwin: A Checklist 1963-1967" (*BB*, August 1968) is designed to supplement the two previously cited bibliographies. Standley's work, however, is not as thorough and accurate a compilation of Baldwin materials as the checklists by Kindt and Fischer. He omits numerous reviews and articles by and about Baldwin that appeared in such publications as *Phylon*, *Freedomways*, and *Negro Digest*; and his checklist has a few errors in dates and titles. All three of these bibliographies contain listings of novels, plays, short stories, articles, and essays by Baldwin as well as reviews, criticisms, and articles about Baldwin.

A much less accurate bibliography is Mary E. Jones's "James Bald-

win," which was prepared as a class project at Atlanta University. It was published by the Center for African and African-American Studies (CAAS) of Atlanta University as *CAAS Bibliography No. 5*. Some of the entries are incomplete; parts of titles and names of periodicals are sometimes omitted, and there are several errors in this work; but it may be worth consulting because it includes at least one item published prior to 1947 which is not included in the other bibliographies and because it also contains a listing of Baldwin manuscripts in the Trevor-Arnett Library at Atlanta University.

Shorter Baldwin bibliographies have appeared in other longer works. Darwin T. Turner includes a limited but helpful sixty-four-item listing of Baldwin biography and criticism in his *Afro-American Writers* (New York: Appleton, 1970). *Articles on American Literature, 1950-1967*, compiled by Lewis Leary (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1970), contains a helpful and reasonably complete listing of articles about Baldwin that appeared during the years covered. Stanley Macebuh includes a "Selected Bibliography" in his *James Baldwin: A Critical Study* (New York: Third Press-Joseph Okpaku, 1973), but the basis for his selections is not clear. He chooses, for example, the checklists mentioned above by Fischer and Kindt, but omits the more recent one by Standley. Further, although he omits *Nothing Personal*, as well as other items dealing directly with Baldwin, he includes several works which treat Baldwin only peripherally and some which do not deal with him at all. He frequently gives only the volume number of periodicals without indicating the date or pages, information that would be most helpful in locating articles. Finally, his bibliography is not always a model of accuracy. The first item, for example, contains two mistakes: the author's name is misspelled and the volume number of the periodical is incorrect. Other errors include the confusing of the years of publication of *Another Country* and *The Fire Next Time*. Keneth Kinnamon includes a very short but nonetheless helpful bibliography in *James Baldwin: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974). All forty-one items listed are directly relevant to Baldwin, and a few more recent publications are included that cannot be found in any of the other bibliographies. Some of the omissions are glaring, however, such as the exclusion of Robert Bone's significant study, "The Novels of James Baldwin," in *The Negro Novel in America*, rev. ed. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1965). Donald B. Gibson also includes a reasonably good Baldwin bibliography in his *Five Black Writers* (New York: New York University Press, 1970). Another satisfactory guide to Baldwin materials is *Blacks in America: Bibliographical Essays*, edited by James M. McPherson et al. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971), although it is certainly not convenient or handy, because entries for Baldwin appear in several different places.

Several anthologies of black American literature include brief Baldwin bibliographies. However, some of them are quite limited, such as the one in Ruth Miller's *Blackamerican Literature: 1760–Present* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Glencoe Press, 1971), which lists only three works about Baldwin. On the other hand, *Black Writers of America: A Comprehensive Anthology*, by Richard Barksdale and Kenneth Kinnamon (New York: Macmillan, 1972), contains an excellent Baldwin bibliography.

Editions

FULL-LENGTH WORKS

With the exception of *Nothing Personal* (1964, with Richard Avedon), all of Baldwin's full-length works are now in print; and all, except *The Amen Corner* (1968), *One Day When I Was Lost* (1973), and *The Devil Finds Work* (1976), are available in paperback. With the exception of *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), available in paperback from Bantam and Beacon; *A Dialogue* (1973), from Lippincott; and *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1974), from the New American Library, Baldwin's paperback works are published by Dell in New York, with *Go Tell It on the Mountain* also available in a Classroom Library Series in paperback, with teacher notes, from Noble.

All hardback editions of Baldwin's works now in print are from Dial, with the exception of *A Rap on Race* (with Margaret Mead, 1971) and *A Dialogue*, both of which are available from Lippincott. In addition, a large-type edition of *The Fire Next Time* is published by Franklin Watts.

SHORT STORIES

Most of Baldwin's short stories have been collected in *Going to Meet the Man* (New York: Dial, 1965), or have appeared as chapters in his novels. His "Death of the Prophet" (*Commentary*, March 1950) is a notable exception; nonetheless, it is a fictionalized account of Johnnie's visit to his father's deathbed, obviously based upon and closely paralleling the account of Baldwin's visit to his father's deathbed in "Notes of a Native Son" (*Notes of a Native Son* [New York: Beacon, 1955]). "Exodus" (*American Mercury*, August 1952) and "Roy's Wound" (*New World Writing*, November 1952) are incorporated into *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (New York: Dial, 1953). "Any Day Now" (*PR*, Spring 1960) and "Easy Rider" (*The Dial: An Annual of Fiction* [New York: Dial, 1962]) are incorporated into *Another Country* (New York: Dial, 1962). "The Amen Corner" (*Zero*, July 1954) appears as Act I of the complete work *The Amen Corner* (New York: Dial, 1968).

ESSAYS

Several of Baldwin's essays have been collected and appear in his four volumes of essays as well as in numerous other collections both in the United States and abroad. Many others have not appeared in his own collections, however, although they demand attention from the Baldwin scholar because they give additional information about his views on world events, his contemporaries, and art and the artist, and supply biographical data. A brief chronological scanning here will give an impression of the variety of subjects that have concerned him over the years.

Baldwin's frequently quoted review of Langston Hughes's *Selected Poems*, "Sermons and Blues" (*NYTBR*, March 29, 1959), for example, suggests a changing attitude toward protest literature. "A Word From Writer Directly to Reader" in *Fiction of the Fifties: A Decade of American Writing*, (edited by Herbert Gold [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959]) is a very slight piece, a mere two paragraphs, but Baldwin comments there about the difficulty of remaining in touch with the private life that is the key to his achievements as a writer. He comments again on the artist's dilemma in "Mass Culture and the Creative Artist: Some Personal Notes" (*Daedalus*, Spring 1960). "They Can't Turn Back" (*Mademoiselle*, August 1960) recounts his visit to Florida A&M University during the school integration crisis and includes some revealing accounts of his reaction to the South and the effects of segregation on American education. "The Dangerous Road Before Martin Luther King" (*Harper's Magazine*, February 1961) recalls his first meeting with and his reactions to King. "The New Lost Generation" (*Esquire*, July 1961) discusses the quest for identity of American expatriates in Europe. This essay contains one of Baldwin's early rejections of the possibilities of love; here he notes that during a discussion in which it was stated that there were few decent people in the world, a friend asked him what about love, and he replied, "Love! You'd better forget about that, my friend. That train has gone." (It may also be significant that this young friend of twenty-four committed suicide by jumping from the George Washington Bridge.)

In "As Much Truth as One Can Bear" (*NYTBR*, January 14, 1962), Baldwin discusses the importance of the novelist's being truthful. Again, in "The Artist's Struggle for Integrity" (*Liberation*, March 1963), he speaks of the difficulties of being an artist in the United States. "Color" (*Esquire*, December 1962) is a rather mundane article which may nonetheless be of interest for Baldwin's view of the meaning of *color* and *colored* and his comparison of the pursuit of happiness by blacks and whites. "At the Root of the Negro Problem" (*Time*, May 17, 1963) details Baldwin's views on race relations in the United States and

his thesis that the Negro problem stems from the myths created by whites. "Letters from a Journey" (*Harper's Magazine*, May 1963) records his despair as he tried to complete *Another Country* and "Down at the Cross." Here he also reveals his thoughts on the Israeli-Arab conflict, and this in turn evokes some of his views on religion and the suppression of man by man. Very important in a consideration of Baldwin the man is the idea expressed in this essay of homelessness and the quest for a home, motivated by his visit to Europe; although perhaps more relevant to him personally is the revelation of his many thoughts on his forthcoming visit to Africa and all that it signifies to him in terms of the quest for a home. In "We Can Change the Country" (*Liberation*, October 1963), Baldwin again attacks racism in the United States and urges revolution—not armed, but economic. "A Talk to Teachers" (*SatR*, December 21, 1963; reprinted in *Education and Social Crisis: Perspectives on Teaching Disadvantaged Youths*, edited by Robert Fulton and W. E. Gardner [New York: Wiley, 1967]) speaks of the lack of a true sense of identity among Americans, particularly blacks, and Baldwin challenges teachers to educate children to examine society and to try to change it, despite the risks involved. "What Price Freedom?" (*Freedomways*, Spring 1964) is a plea for freedom in the United States following the murders of President John F. Kennedy, Medgar Evers, and the Birmingham Sunday school girls. Here, as elsewhere, Baldwin emphasizes the need for whites to learn to regard blacks as human beings.

"Theatre: The Negro In and Out" (*ND*, April 1966) presents Baldwin's argument that the theater reflects the American confusion, which in turn results from the effort to avoid dealing with the Negro as a person. He comments extensively about the fact that black actors must play roles that are not true, and are thus forced to perpetuate the popular image of the Negro. Baldwin also talks at some length about Edward Albee's *The Death of Bessie Smith* and *The American Dream*, both of which he feels left something to be desired despite their great promise.

Several instances of police brutality in Harlem are cited by Baldwin in "To Whom It May Concern: A Report from Occupied Territory" (*The Nation*, July 11, 1966; reprinted in *Law and Resistance: American Attitudes Toward Authority*, edited by Laurence Veysey [New York: Harper & Row, 1970]); here he describes the anguish of helpless blacks at the mercy of cruel policemen and the resulting lack of respect for the law. He returns to the plight of the artist in "The Creative Dilemma" (*SatR*, February 8, 1967), where he details the role of the artist (obviously the role he has assumed), declaring that the artist has the responsibility to "never cease warring with [society] for its sake and for his own."

Baldwin comments on the controversial subject of Negro-Jewish relationships in "Negroes Are Anti-Semitic Because They're Anti-

White" (*New York Times Magazine*, April 9, 1967; reprinted in *Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism*, introduction by Nat Hentoff [New York: Richard W. Baron, 1969]). He explains that anti-Semitism among black people is really a result of their hatred of whites, noting that Jews have been a part (a visible part in the role of landlords, merchants, and the like) in the exploitation of blacks. He utterly rejects efforts to compare the Jews' plight or suffering with that of the black man in America.

"The War Crimes Tribunal" (*Freedomways*, Summer 1967) is an explanation of (and something of an apology for) his signing Lord Bertrand Russell's War Crimes Tribunal. He apologizes for its possible use by Europeans to condemn America and ignore their own guilt in the war in Vietnam and in South Africa or Rhodesia; but he explains that he had to register his reaction against a totally indefensible American participation in the Vietnamese war. In "From Dreams of Love to Dreams of Terror" (in *Natural Enemies? Youth and the Clash of Generations*, edited by Alexander Klein [Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1969]), Baldwin attempts to explain, using Stokely Carmichael as a point of reference, how young blacks dreamed of love during the civil rights movement, but how and why they moved toward a new militancy that terrified the country.

Baldwin returns to a favorite thesis—that history is present in all of us and in all we do—in "Unnameable Objects, Unspeakable Crimes" (in *Black on Black: Commentaries by Negro Americans*, edited by Arnold Adoff [New York: Macmillan, 1968]). He contends that the United States and the world are menaced because white Americans have been unable to accept their history and continue to defend themselves against it. He speaks also of his personal difficulty—by extension the difficulty of black Americans—in wrestling with his history and accepting it in order to find his identity. Elsewhere, Baldwin attacks Western Christianity as being racist and hypocritical and as failing to live up to its own principles, ("White Racism or World Community?" [*Ecumenical Review*, October 1968; reprinted in *Information Service*, February 22, 1969, and *Religious Education*, September–October 1969]). This essay is the text of an address delivered by Baldwin at the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Uppsala, Sweden, in the summer of 1968. Later, upon the occasion of Lorraine Hansberry's death, Baldwin reminisces rather sentimentally about his friendship with her in "Sweet Lorraine" (*Esquire*, November 1969) and briefly considers the effects of her works on black people.

Baldwin's own growing militancy is reflected in "An Open Letter to My Sister, Miss Angela Davis" (*Black Creation*, April 1972), as he pictures the same kind of adulation for militant blacks as he once registered for the Martin Luther Kings. The letter, addressed to the then-

imprisoned Angela Davis, treats her plight in terms of the general racial situation in America and glories in the generation of Angela, Huey Newton, and George Jackson, "a whole new generation of people [who] have assessed and absorbed their history, and, in that tremendous action, have freed themselves of it and will never be victims again." Although he admits being of another generation, he asserts that his destiny is inextricably interwoven with that of the Angela Davises; and he concludes with the memorable passage from which Angela Davis borrowed the title of her later book, *If They Come in the Morning*:

then we must fight for your life as though it were our own—which it is—and render impassable with our bodies the corridor to the gas chamber. For, if they take you in the morning, they will be coming for us that night.

INTERVIEWS AND DISCUSSIONS

Because Baldwin has become a figure of wide public popularity and even notoriety, he has appeared frequently on television and radio shows and has been interviewed by numerous popular magazines, where the interest was as much in his social and political views as in his literary works. In addition to *A Rap on Race*, a discussion with Margaret Mead (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1971), and *A Dialogue*, with Nikki Giovanni (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1973), numerous discussions and interviews have been published in various periodicals.

Baldwin participated in a symposium at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York, in May 1961 with Ben Shabra and Darius Milhaud, moderated by Malcolm Preston, which has been published as "The Image: Three Views" (*Opera News*, December 8, 1962). In this symposium, Baldwin talks about the disorder in the world, the individual's quest for identity, and the need for the individual to understand his history in order to know who he is.

"The Negro in American Culture" (*Cross Currents*, Summer 1961; reprinted in Mathew H. Ahmann, *The New Negro* [Notre Dame, Ind.: Fides, 1961]; *ND*, March 1962; and *The Black American Writer, Volume I: Fiction*, edited by C. W. E. Bigsby, [Deland, Fla.: Everett/Edwards, 1969]) records a discussion originally broadcast over Pacifica Radio (WBAI-FM) in 1961 among Baldwin, Alfred Kazin, Lorraine Hansberry, Emile Capouya, and Langston Hughes, moderated by Nat Hentoff. The participants discuss the conflict between the social and artistic responsibilities of black writers, prejudices facing black artists, and white portrayals of black characters (particularly those of William Faulkner), and comment generally about black-white relationships and the future of America.

In his interview with Baldwin ("James Baldwin Talks with Kenneth Clark," in *The Negro Protest* [Boston: Beacon, 1963]), Kenneth Clark

elicits some interesting information about the subject's youth, his family and its southern background, his education, the contemporary racial situation, and his views of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X.

Anyone interested in Baldwin the man will find the interview conducted by Eve Auchincloss and Nancy Lynch, "Disturber of the Peace: James Baldwin" (*Mademoiselle*, May 1963; reprinted in Bigsby, *The Black American Writer*, Vol. I), most helpful. Although the interview does not deal specifically with any of his books, it touches very directly on many ideas he treats and that are of great personal interest to him, and the author speaks of them very honestly and eloquently. He comments on white liberals, his travels through the South, school desegregation, the role of sex in white people's reactions to blacks, his view of himself, and homosexuality.

The racial situation in America is discussed in "Pour Libérer les Blancs" [To Liberate White People] (*Preuves*, October 1963). In a debate held at Cambridge University and published as "The American Dream and the American Negro" (*New York Times Magazine*, March 7, 1965), Baldwin and William F. Buckley, Jr., debate the thesis, "The American Dream is at the expense of the American Negro." In a discussion with James Mossman and Colin MacInnes, televised and recorded by the British Broadcasting Corporation (B.B.C.) and published as "Race, Hate, Sex, and Colour: A Conversation" (*Encounter*, July 1965), Baldwin speaks of religion and human relationships and interactions, particularly between blacks and whites in America. He also comments on his hatred of his father and his early hatred of whites (noting that such hatred is destructive) and rejects the teachings of Malcolm X. Later, Baldwin talks of his need to write, and the necessity of being away from America in order to write, in an interview first published in *CEP Dergisi* (Istanbul) and reprinted in *Atlas* (March 1967), "James Baldwin Breaks His Silence." He also comments on Black Power, the war in Vietnam, and Christianity, expressing views similar to those he has expressed elsewhere on these subjects.

In an interview published as "How Can We Get the Black People to Cool It?" (*Esquire*, July 1968), Baldwin enumerates the causes of the street riots that had recently occurred, and bitterly attacks policemen and politics in America, although he still expresses hope for the United States and advises young blacks not to hate white people. On March 18, 1968, he appeared with Betty Shabazz at a hearing held in New York City before the House of Representatives' Select Subcommittee On Labor on the subject of establishing a National Commission on Negro History and Culture. He supported the establishment of the commission, but cautioned that blacks cannot be taught their culture until American history is truthfully taught and until textbooks are changed, so that the view of American history will no longer destroy the morals

of black children by distorting their past. The transcript of this testimony is published as "The Nigger We Invent" (*Integrated Education*, March and April 1969).

In "Conversation: Ida Lewis and James Baldwin" (*Essence*, October 1970), Baldwin explains why he had to leave America. He claims that his role of spokesman, which he never wanted, is over now. In a later interview with David Frost, "Are We on the Edge of Civil War?" (in David Frost, *The Americans* [New York: Stein & Day, 1970]), Baldwin speaks bitterly about race relations in America and discusses the revolutionary impulse among black militants.

The interview with Herbert R. Lottman, "To Be James Baldwin" (*Intellectual Digest*, July 1972), records the growing bitterness Baldwin reflected in his then recently published *No Name in the Street* (New York: Dial, 1972). He notes that his attitude toward the world has changed: "I'm much sadder now," and contends that he sees a holocaust approaching; he says that *No Name in the Street* is about this holocaust. Although the book documents the civil rights movement up to the death of Martin Luther King, Baldwin declares "It's not a documentary. It's a personal book—my own testimony." In a bitter, premonitory tone he explains what he means by *holocaust*: "Americans who have managed to learn nothing are now about to learn a great deal."

A sometimes frustrating record of the fiery debate between Peregrine Worsthorne and James Baldwin may be found in *Encounter* ("Let Me Finish, Let Me Finish . . ." [September 1972]). This unedited transcript is often unclear and confusing because key words are frequently omitted. In this heated debate, chaired by Bryan Magee and broadcast as part of Thames Television's *Something to Say* series, Worsthorne contends that American blacks are largely responsible for their own fate because they have not taken advantage of opportunities the way other minorities have. As Baldwin vehemently rejects this assertion, there is a great deal of screaming but little communication between the two, because Worsthorne cannot understand Baldwin's historical perspective, which allows him to allude to all blacks, slaves, and those in similar conditions as "I," and to refer to all whites, slaveholders, and their like as "you."

A series of interviews with Joe Walker ("Exclusive Interview with James Baldwin" [*Muhammad Speaks*, September 8, 15, 22, 29, 1972]), found Baldwin speaking about the lack of representation of blacks in the government, the renaissance in black American literature, and black films. The next year, in an unpublished television interview on the Dick Cavett Show (September 5, 1973), Baldwin spoke about his forthcoming *If Beale Street Could Talk* (New York: Dial, 1974) and insisted that he had found himself: "Certain battles I've been fighting in myself are beginning to end." *The Black Scholar Interviews: James*

Baldwin" (*BlackSch*, December–January 1974) is an interesting discussion of many subjects on which Baldwin has commented elsewhere, including the present world political scene and Lorraine Hansberry. Baldwin also emphasizes here the importance of a strong and loving black family for survival.

A recent interview with inmates at Riker's Island prison in New York (*Essence*, June 1976) is notable for its calmness. Baldwin appeals to the women "to save our children," and speaks poignantly of his father, "without [whom] I might be dead." Though he still predicts the fall of Western civilization, his prophecies are couched in the mildest language.

Manuscripts and Letters

Locating Baldwin manuscripts and letters is a frustrating task, partly because Baldwin has little interest in retaining and preserving his manuscripts, according to two of his friends with whom I spoke (Sam Floyd, at Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia, in March 1972; and Alex Haley, at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia, on September 30, 1974) and according to some of his own comments. In a letter to Harold Jackman (1956) Baldwin gave his permission for the manuscript of *Giovanni's Room* to be given to Atlanta University, noting that he'd "just as soon never lay eyes on it again." Further, Fern Eckman has noted that the manuscript of an unpublished novel, *Ignorant Armies*, is "now reposing in a duffle bag in his mother's apartment" (*The Furious Passage of James Baldwin* [Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1966]).

Nothing is cited for Baldwin in Lorenzo Greene's "Negro Manuscript Collections in Libraries" (*NHB*, March 1967); in Philip M. Hamer's *A Guide to Archives and Manuscripts in the United States* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1961); or in *American Literary Manuscripts* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1960), compiled by the Modern Language Association of America, American Literature Group, Committee on Manuscript Holdings. The United States Library of Congress's *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections* mentions only the manuscripts at Atlanta University, which will be cited shortly.

Walter Schath's *Directory of Afro-American Resources* (New York: Bowker, 1970) is the only reference that lists several Baldwin manuscripts, but all of these cannot at this time be located. Schath indicates that the American Academy of Arts and Letters Library in New York City has about twenty items. A request for a description of these items was answered by Hortense Zera, the librarian (in a letter dated October 10, 1974), who indicated that they had two typed letters, one "concerning invitations he [Baldwin] wanted sent to family members for the ceremonial at which he was given his grant in 1956" and the other "to W. H. Auden, chairman of the committee, thanking him for the grant."

Schath also indicates that the Museum of African American History at 3806 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, holds taped speeches, interviews, and the like; but there is not now such a museum at that address, nor is a museum by that name listed in the Chicago telephone directory. Finally, Schath indicates that there are tapes Baldwin made for radio broadcast at SCLC Radio in New York City; that radio station is not now at the address listed by Schath, nor is it listed in the telephone directory.

Apparently, the only significant collection of Baldwin manuscripts is at the Trevor-Arnett Library at Atlanta University. These manuscripts were secured through the Harold Jackman Memorial Committee, of which Baldwin is a member. Because the manuscripts in the Countee Cullen Memorial Collections at the Trevor-Arnett Library constitute practically all of this discussion on manuscripts and because they are so fascinating to the Baldwin scholar, a detailed description of them seems appropriate. They include:

1. A holograph note explaining the purpose of *Giovanni's Room*—to show “the near impossibility of love in our time—between men, or between men and women”—and outlining the plan of the book, with additional notes on technique.
2. Several other pages of notes regarding *Giovanni's Room*, concerning matters such as the placement of the description of the room so as to achieve the greatest symbolic significance, and a consideration of the effects Baldwin wishes to achieve in particular scenes and episodes.
3. Several typed versions of *Giovanni's Room*.
4. Notes on the chronology of *Giovanni's Room*.
5. Letter to Harold Jackman from Paris, written in 1956, but undated.
6. Another undated letter to Jackman (previously cited) from Corsica, in 1956, giving Baldwin's permission for the manuscript of *Giovanni's Room* to be given to Atlanta University, with the notation that he would “just as soon never lay eyes on it [the manuscript] again.”
7. Letter to James A. Hulbert, librarian at Atlanta University.
8. Several versions of unfinished novels.
 - a. One novel with a notation “*earliest* version” and dated 1944 has never been published, but parts of it may have been used in *Another Country*.
 - b. A synopsis of a novel to be titled *So Long at the Fair*, portions of which apparently were used in *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone*. It includes suggestions of conflicts, themes, and problems that Baldwin was to treat in all his novels.

- c. "Tentative Plan for *Backwater*, a novel," which begins with a consideration of the problem of relating this tale in the first person. This work obviously was a genesis of *Giovanni's Room*.
- d. Holograph plan of a work to be titled *The Only Pretty Ring Time*.

There is a copy of the typewritten "Autobiographical Notes" Baldwin sent to Alfred A. Knopf in the Barrett Room of the University of Virginia; and Sam Floyd, a friend of Baldwin's, presently has the manuscript of *The Fire Next Time*.

Biography

The fullest and most interesting biographical material concerning Baldwin may be gained from reading his own work. Indeed, one would be hard pressed to find an author whose works are more highly autobiographical than Baldwin's. Even his fiction is largely autobiographical, and it would not be difficult to discuss his novels and short stories as a telling and retelling of the author's own troubled life. Fern Eckman has noted that "Baldwin broods over the notion that he is fated to live his novels before he can write them" (*The Furious Passage of James Baldwin*). Baldwin himself noted early, "One writes out of one thing only—one's own experience" ("Autobiographical Notes," in *Notes of a Native Son*), and later he asserted, "All art is a kind of confession. . . . All artists, if they are to survive, are forced, at last, to tell the whole story, to vomit the anguish up" ("The Precarious Vogue of Ingmar Bergman" [*Esquire*, April 1960]; collected in *Nobody Knows My Name* as "The Northern Protestant"). Thus it is that in his fictional and nonfictional works Baldwin returns again and again to his own life, particularly to certain events that undoubtedly have greatly affected him, notably his relationship with his father, his embarrassment as an adolescent boy by policemen who humiliated him and speculated about his sexual prowess, his religious conversion, his exile in Europe, and his trips to the South. And each time he returns to these events he gives some new perspective, some added insights, some additional details which suggest not only their effect on him as a man and as a writer at a particular period in his development, but also his wrestling with the confession until he tells "the whole story," until he "vomit[s] the anguish up" completely.

Several of Baldwin's nonfictional works provide biographical information. In "Letter from a Region in My Mind" (*NY*, November 17, 1962; reprinted as "Down at the Cross" in *The Fire Next Time*), Baldwin recounts in eloquent detail the adolescent crisis he faced during the summer when he was fourteen, his religious conversion, and his expe-

rience as a preacher, as well as his meeting with Elijah Muhammad. "Notes for a Hypothetical Novel" (delivered as an address at the third annual *Esquire* magazine symposium as "The Role of the Writer in America" at San Francisco State College, October 22, 1960, and published in *Nobody Knows My Name*) furnishes data on his childhood. The previously cited "Autobiographical Notes" covers his childhood, reading, early writing, fellowships, and influences. "Notes of a Native Son" includes an account of his father's death, reminiscences of his relationship with his father, and a description of his experiences living and working in New Jersey.

The "Notes" in *The Amen Corner* tell of his need to leave the United States, his exile in Paris, and his need to return. "Equal in Paris" gives an account of his arrest and imprisonment in Paris in December 1949 (*Commentary*, March 1955; reprinted in *Notes of a Native Son* and in *New Partisan Reader 1945-1953*, edited by William Phillips and Philip Rahv [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1953]). "The Discovery of What It Means to Be an American" again discusses his exile in Paris and his quest for himself (*NYTBR* January 25, 1959; reprinted in *Essays Today*, Vol. IV, edited by Richard Ludwig [New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1960]; and *Nobody Knows My Name*). "Stranger in the Village" relates some of his experiences during his visits to Switzerland (*Harper's Magazine*, October 1953; reprinted in *Notes of a Native Son*; *Preuves*, June 1956; Leslie Fiedler's *The Art of the Essay* [New York: T.Y. Crowell, 1958]; *What Country Have I? Political Writings by Black Americans*, edited by Herbert J. Storing [New York: St. Martin's, 1970]; and under the title "The Search for Identity, 1953" in *American Principles and Issues: The National Purpose*, edited by Oscar Handlin [New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961]).

"The Hard Kind of Courage" (*Harper's Magazine*, October 1958; reprinted as "A Fly in the Buttermilk" in *Nobody Knows My Name*); "Letter from the South: Nobody Knows My Name" (*PR*, Winter 1959; reprinted in *Nobody Knows My Name*); and "They Can't Turn Back" (*Mademoiselle*, August 1960) recount his trips to the South during the integration crisis. "Alas, Poor Richard" (in *Nobody Knows My Name*) covers his relationship with Richard Wright, and "Letters from a Journey" (*Harper's Magazine*, May 1963) covers his trip to Israel. "Take Me to the Water" (in *No Name in the Street*) is a lengthy and detailed autobiographical selection treating his family, his childhood, his exile in Paris, and his many attempts to return to America to live, as well as his travels through the South. "To Be Baptized" (in *No Name in the Street*) treats his sojourn with his brother and sister in London in 1968, his relationship with Malcolm X, his travels through the United States in 1968, his meetings with Martin Luther King, including the March on Washington, his arguments with Columbia in

the effort to film the life of Malcolm X, and his meeting and relationship with Huey Newton.

Although these are some of the most notable essays by Baldwin which are largely autobiographical, many others not only contain facts and details about his life, but also reveal a great deal about Baldwin the man. Even when he is writing about history, politics, or another individual—whatever his ostensible subject—we see Baldwin wrestling with his own personal problems, struggling with his ideas and evolving philosophy, emphatically fused into the event; and frequently the outcome is that he reveals more about himself than about his professed subject, as, to cite two glaring examples, in “The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy: Norman Mailer” (*Esquire*, May 1961; reprinted in *Nobody Knows My Name*) and “Gide as Husband and Homosexual” (*NL*, December 13, 1954; reprinted as “The Male Prison” in *Nobody Knows My Name*). In *The Furious Passage of James Baldwin*, Fern Eckman quotes Baldwin commenting on a sentence from the latter essay in which he faults Gide for writing about his own homosexuality, which Baldwin felt he should not have revealed to the public:

That was meant as a commentary on *myself*. I was accusing myself, perhaps not directly enough, of a certain fear and a certain hypocrisy. I do *think* that his *Protestantism*, you know, accounts for a certain *coldness* in him—in his *work*. But I wasn't trying—it really wasn't meant as a judgement on *Gide*. It was meant as a judgement on *me*.

Nothing approaching a definitive biography of James Baldwin has yet appeared. The one full-length biography, Fern Eckman's *The Furious Passage of James Baldwin*, is a slight endeavor based mainly on interviews with Baldwin and on his autobiographical writing. The lengthy quotations from these interviews are often reproduced in a fragmented and awkward way. Certain events from his life are taken so directly from Baldwin's essays that the reproductions sound more like Baldwin than Eckman. Overall, this book lacks a sense of coherence because it seems more a compilation of quotations from the interviews and paraphrases from the works than an amalgamation of these sources. Further, some of Baldwin's own analyses and observations about his work are repeated here as if they were Eckman's. Finally, Eckman's emphasis on trivial details and behind-the-scenes revelations of the gossip-column variety detract from the legitimacy of the work as a serious biography. Nevertheless, despite its shortcomings, *The Furious Passage of James Baldwin* cannot be ignored by the Baldwin scholar because it does contain some material not available elsewhere about his childhood, education, the production of *Blues for Mister Charlie*, his close friendships, and his meeting with Robert Kennedy. Eckman also goes into some detail to analyze and describe Baldwin's personality and character, minutely de-

lineating the manner in which he greets a friend, reacts to his audiences, moves about, and the like. She spends a great deal of time discussing his father and considering the effect of his relationship with his father on Baldwin. Her conclusions may sometimes be debatable, but they are worth considering. Eckman also includes in this book several samples of Baldwin's early writings.

Some of the articles that appeared in popular magazines, although they are not serious literary biographies, may be of interest to the scholar interested in Baldwin's life. Allan Morrison's "The Angriest Young Man" (*Ebony*, October 1961) attempts to introduce Baldwin to the general public, including a brief autobiographical sketch, a summary of the themes in his works, his ideas and beliefs, and a view of his activities at the time. Morrison includes a detailed account of the nature of a typical day in Baldwin's life, a view of his apartment in Greenwich Village, and a discussion of his method of writing. Notable in this article are the excellent pictures of Baldwin.

Jane Howard recorded Baldwin's speaking tour through the South in 1963, giving a picturesque view of his hectic life and his dedication to the civil rights movement in "Telling Talk from a Negro Writer" (*Life*, May 24, 1963). Her many quotations from Baldwin's speeches, some of them now well known, and the excellent candid photographs help to produce a vivid and moving portrait of Baldwin during this period. Included also are little details about the author which, while they may seem superfluous, nonetheless contribute to the full-dimensional portrait: his behavior and habits in a restaurant, the way he talks on the telephone, and the like. There is, in addition, a brief biographical sketch.

Gloria Steinem includes a rather full biographical sketch of Baldwin in "James Baldwin, An Original" (*Vogue*, July 1964), written as *Blues for Mister Charlie* was being prepared for production. Her interesting personality sketch of Baldwin also contains some very useful comments about the play by its author.

In the introduction to *James Baldwin: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974), Kenneth Kinnamon includes a short study of Baldwin's life, something of a psychological biography, that considers the influence of certain events on his life and development. Kinnamon also includes a chronology of important dates in this work; but like most of these kinds of listings, it sometimes oversimplifies to the point of misrepresentation. For example, Kinnamon lists "1948-57 Lives in Paris, Switzerland, and the south of France," without any indication of that significant effort to live in America again in 1952 and the months Baldwin spent in America during 1954 and 1955 when he was completing *Giovanni's Room* and *Notes of a Native Son*. Further, the chronology leaves the impression that Baldwin lived in the United States from 1957 to 1965, which again is misleading.

Brief biographical sketches of Baldwin by Ruth Ulman appear in the *Wilson Library Bulletin* (February 1959) and *Current Biography Yearbook* (Bronx, N.Y.: H. W. Wilson, 1959). Other short sketches can be found in *The Negro Almanac*, edited by Harry A. Ploski and Roscoe C. Brown (New York: Bellwether, 1966); *Contemporary Authors: A Bio-Bibliographical Guide to Current Authors and Their Works*, edited by James M. Ethridge and Barbara Kopala (Detroit: Gale Research, 1965); and *Living Black American Authors: A Biographical Directory*, edited by Ann Allen Shockley and Sue P. Chandler (New York: Bowker, 1973). Clarence Major's "James Baldwin: A Fire in the Mind," in Major's *The Dark and Feeling: Black American Writers and Their Work* (New York: Third Press-Joseph Okpaku, 1974), is a concise sketch of Baldwin's writing career through the publication of *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone*.

Criticism

STUDIES OF INDIVIDUAL WORKS

Go Tell It on the Mountain Baldwin's first novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), enjoyed the warmest reception by critics of any of his novels. Critics praised it as a novel of distinction by an author of exceptional promise. The reviewer for *Time* (May 18, 1953) considered the church scenes "as compelling as anything that has turned up in a U.S. novel this year." Harvey Curtis Webster (*SatR*, May 16, 1953) revealed a penchant for absolutes in his description of *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, asserting that it was written skillfully and that the flashbacks were handled masterfully. He went on to compare Baldwin favorably with William Faulkner for his moving penetration of the minds of his characters. Granville Hicks ("Go Tell It on the Mountain" [*NL*, June 1, 1953]; reprinted in Hick's *Literary Horizons: A Quarter Century of American Fiction* [New York: New York University Press, 1970]) hailed the novel as proof that Baldwin had not succumbed to the dangers Baldwin himself had warned against in protest literature. Hicks also praised Baldwin's technical skill.

A few dissenting voices were heard among the critics. Henry F. Winslow (*The Crisis*, December 1953) saw "no art and nothing new" in the book. He felt that Aunt Florence overshadowed John and that Gabriel served merely as her foil. The anonymous reviewer for *The New Yorker* (June 10, 1953) found "a Harlem without laughter . . . incredible," and went on to insist that this lack of humor in the novel made it "less penetrating." He or she therefore found it lacking compared to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, but felt with the favorable critics that the novel showed "exceptional promise," despite considering it wooden and without vitality.

One of the earliest critical studies, "The American Negro in Search of Identity: Three Novelists: Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin," by Steven Marcus (*Commentary*, November 1953), is full of both absurdities and insightful observations. In his discussion of *Invisible Man*, *The Outsider*, and *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, Marcus makes some highly questionable generalizations: in more than one instance he asserts that Africa is without culture or relevant history; on another occasion he avers, "Negroes themselves believe . . . in their own savagery." Despite these warped views, which would presumably preclude his understanding and interpretation of writings by black authors, Marcus does make some important observations about the theme of the quest for identity among these writers. His assessment of the conversion scene in *Go Tell It on the Mountain* is, however, the weakest part of his essay. He concludes that John's conversion means "his dreams and desires are never to be fulfilled," and he asserts that Baldwin's use of contrasting religious language and ironic voice in this scene suggests that the author is not sure of what he wants to say; obviously Baldwin is very much in command of what he wishes to say here, and these two voices forcefully suggest both the spiritual and the secular implications of this experience.

A similar theme is treated in another comparative study, Caroline Bloomfield's "Religion and Alienation in James Baldwin, Bernard Malamud, and James F. Powers" (*Religious Education*, March 1962). Bloomfield compares the heroes in their works in terms of their alienation and their embracing of life despite its hardships in such a way as to liberate themselves.

In "The Question of Moral Energy in James Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain*" (*CLAJ*, March 1964), Wallace Graves argues that a major flaw in the novel is the sentimentality with which Baldwin paints Elizabeth and Richard because Baldwin is unable to maintain an artistic distance between the narrator and Richard. Unfortunately, at times the critic goes to ridiculous extremes to support his perfectly valid thesis, such as, for example, his labeling as "mawkish and excessive" diction the very common usage of an old folk expression and Baldwin's humorous comment on it in this passage:

But her good aunt swore she would "move Heaven and earth" before she would let her sister's daughter grow up with such a man. Without, however, so much as looking at Heaven, and without troubling any more of the earth than that part of it which held the courthouse, she won the day.

Michel Fabre's "Fathers and Sons in James Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain*" (*EA*, January-March 1970; also collected by M. G. Cooke in *Modern Black Novelists: A Collection of Critical Essays* [Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971]) is a valuable study in which Fabre enumerates

ates and analyzes the numerous father-son combinations in the novel. He also draws interesting and detailed parallels between the life of the author and the events in the novel, discussing at some length Baldwin's projection of Wright into the image of spiritual father and his belief that Wright rejected him. Fabre concludes with the assertion that Baldwin remains an Ishmael in search of a father and this search continues to crop up in his work.

James R. Giles compares the novel with John Rechy's *City of Night* in "Religious Alienation and 'Homosexual Consciousness' in *City of Night* and *Go Tell It on the Mountain*" (*CE*, November 1974), observing that both are homosexual novels which "focus upon the role of a dehumanizing religion in the development of a gay consciousness." Giles observes that Baldwin exhibits a discomfort with his own sexuality in his work, while Rechy transcends any discomfort.

Other studies that deserve attention are John R. May's "Ellison, Baldwin and Wright: Vestiges of Christian Apocalypse" in May's *Toward a New Earth: Apocalypse in the American Novel* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972), in which the author considers the mood and images of apocalypse in *Go Tell It on the Mountain* and the works of Ellison and Wright; Wilfred Cartey's comparison of *Go Tell It on the Mountain* with three novels by black authors from South Africa, the British West Indies, and São Paulo, Brazil, in "The Realities of Four Negro Writers" (*Columbia University Forum*, Summer 1966); and the slight treatment in Albert Gerard's "Humanism and Negritude: Notes on the Contemporary Afro-American Novel" (*Diogenes*, Spring 1962).

Notes of a Native Son Baldwin's second full-length publication and his first collection of essays, *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), was generally well received, though not widely reviewed. Dachine Rainer (*Commonweal*, January 13, 1956) calls it a "superlatively written and phenomenally intelligent collection." She describes Baldwin's style of writing as "evocative and illuminating," and says that the virtues of the book are so great that its weaknesses (such as a lack of humor and his repudiation of blackness in "Many Thousands Gone") are negligible.

Although Langston Hughes's reaction (*NYTBR*, February 26, 1956) is less than glowing, he does suggest that Baldwin shows great promise as a writer, and he asserts that "Few American writers handle words more effectively in the essay form than James Baldwin." He suggests also that when Baldwin is able to find himself, to free the American and the Afro-American in him, he will be an exceptional commentator on the problems of the world. Robert W. Flint (*Commentary*, May 1956), however, does not consider the book an important contribution to social or political thought, although he does consider it important autobiography.

Anthony Wills's "The Use of Coincidence in 'Notes of a Native Son,'" (*NALF*, Fall 1974) analyzes the effect achieved by Baldwin's juxtaposition of coincidental events in "Notes of a Native Son." Wills illustrates the manner in which the use of coincidence contributes to the development of the theme of the essay—Baldwin's determination to keep his heart free of hatred. The author's insistence that the essayist cannot tamper with facts suggests that he is unaware that Baldwin made minor adjustments in dates to achieve the effect he desired.

Giovanni's Room Baldwin's second novel, *Giovanni's Room* (1956), did not receive the enthusiastic critical acclaim conferred upon his first; nor have literary scholars given it the individual attention accorded to *Go Tell It on the Mountain* and *The Amen Corner*. Most reviewers conceded that the author had a striking style, but found the subject matter of the book highly objectionable and the characters inadequately realized. J. F. Sullivan's characterization of David as "disgusting" (*Commonweal*, December 12, 1956) was generally representative of the reactions to this character. Anthony West (*NY*, November 10, 1956) satirically relates the plot and describes the story as a "riffle on the surface of life, that completely lacks the validity of actual experience." He expresses the hope that Baldwin "will soon return to the American subjects he dealt with so promisingly and with so much real understanding" in the earlier books. Charles J. Rolo (*AtM*, December 1956) praises Baldwin for his "narrative skill, poetic intensity of feeling, and . . . sensitive command of the language," but objects to the content of the plot.

Although William Esty (*NR*, December 17, 1956) finds several faults in the book (the ending is "lame"; the plot is a bit melodramatic; the descriptions are sometimes too sentimental; the hero is not fully realized), he praises Baldwin's avoidance of cliché literary attitudes as well as his not emphasizing the grotesque; Esty calls the book "the best American novel dealing with homosexuality I have read." A few other critics likewise praised Baldwin's handling of homosexuality. David Karp (*SatR*, December 1, 1956) notes that Baldwin treats the theme of homosexuality "with great artistry and restraint." Granville Hicks (*NYTBR*, October 14, 1956; collected in *Literary Horizons*) praises Baldwin's candor, dignity, and intensity in relating the tale.

Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son *Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son* (1961) sparked both high praise and bitter condemnation. While some critics raved about the eloquence of Baldwin's presentation of social problems and the lucidity of his arguments, others bitterly attacked him for his racism and his lack of logic, particularly those who reacted violently to Baldwin's attacks upon subjects about which they were personally highly sensitive—the white liberals, the white racists, the Faulkner lovers, southerners, and black teachers. A few critics were interested in elucidating the book, but most

reacted to isolated passages or essays in which Baldwin rubbed them the wrong way.

One of the more illuminating reviews is Stanley Edgar Hyman's "Blacks, Whites and Grays" (*NL*, July 31, 1961; reprinted in Hyman's *Standards: A Chronicle of Books for Our Time* [New York: Horizon, 1966]), in which Hyman comments perceptively on the impact of the blues on the title, content, and style of the book, and considers that the work reveals Baldwin's problems with identity. Hyman prefers the literary essays in the collection, although he admits that the racial essays are "often shrewd, tough-minded, and eloquent."

Nick Aaron Ford, in "Search for Identity: A Critical Survey of Significant Belles-Lettres By and About Negroes Published in 1961" (*Phylon*, Summer 1962), also comments on the theme of the search for identity which he sees as the thread unifying the thirteen essays. Although Ford's essay is replete with praise, he does take issue with Baldwin's "gullibility" about black teachers when he attacks them for not caring about what they teach and for having themselves reached a dead end. Although Charles J. Rolo (*AtM*, July 1961) alludes to weak spots (he never specifies them), his review is overwhelmingly complimentary, calling the work "informed by a deep seriousness and a major literary talent" that are so preponderant as to preclude any necessity for discussing weaknesses. Alfred Kazin, in "The Essays of James Baldwin" (*Reporter*, August 17, 1961; reprinted in Kazin's *Contemporaries* [Boston: Little, Brown, 1962]), praises Baldwin for giving "voice to all his insights and longings and despairs without losing control," and goes on to note that Baldwin "is radiantly intelligent as he seizes the endless implications in the oppression of man by man." James Finn (*Commonweal*, December 1961) criticizes the essays as "uneven" and "slight," but praises Baldwin's "passion, insight and intelligence" as well as his moral arguments.

Julian Mayfield (*NR*, August 7, 1961), who describes Baldwin as one of America's most perceptive and penetrating thinkers, comments on the essays individually. Of "East River, Downtown: Postscript to a Letter from Harlem," he says, "This is not the strident voice of a flaming radical. It is an eloquent plea. He objects to several essays: "A Fly in Buttermilk" and "Princes and Powers" are too pedestrian; "Alas, Poor Richard" and "The Black Boy Looks at the White Boy" are too personal. Granville Hicks ("Nobody Knows My Name," [*SatR*, July 1, 1961; reprinted in Hicks's *Literary Horizons*]) also finds a few of the essays too pedestrian, but he considers most of them well done, describing the essays on the American Negro as "eloquent, uncompromising, and . . . unanswerable."

Although J. Saunders Redding (*New York Herald Tribune*, June 25, 1961) praises the personal essays in part two, he asserts that "The

intellectual quality of [the essays in part one] does not begin to match the emotional quality of them," and wryly observes, "Most of the pieces in Part One can be dismissed, I think, with the observation that, after all, Baldwin had to make a book." Donald Malcolm (*NY*, November 25, 1961) begins his critique with a sarcastic discussion of the recent vogue of "the problem of identity," and goes on to write off those essays in which Baldwin treats the problem of identity as lacking a truly personal tone, intelligence, and selectivity. However, in the essays in which Baldwin comments on various events that shed light on the status of the black, Baldwin proves himself to be, Malcolm asserts, "an extremely valuable member of a small body of literary observers who write with vigor, sense and utter candor about things that matter greatly to this country."

Phillip Bonosky's "The Negro Writer and Commitment" (*Mainstream*, February 1962) is really more of a rebuttal than a review. He attacks as anathema for the black people's struggle for freedom what he sees as Baldwin's thesis: "The Negro tragedy is mankind's general tragedy or original sin, against which it is essentially hopeless to rage or to combat. Victory lies in defeat." In a very sarcastic tone, he ridicules Baldwin's attacks on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Native Son* as well as on W. E. B. Du Bois. Although Bonosky builds a strong case against some of Baldwin's assertions, he is guilty of treating only those ideas in *Nobody Knows My Name* with which he disagrees, and at times he interprets those much too simplistically, thereby failing to suggest the broader implications and interpretations of Baldwin's argument. In "James Baldwin: Voice of a Revolution" (*PR*, Summer 1963), Stephen Spender concedes that Baldwin is a powerful essayist, but attacks him as an overzealous spokesman, given to exaggeration and too often guided by emotions. Spender attacks many of Baldwin's arguments and conclusions, especially his criticism of white Americans and his sense of the superiority of American blacks.

Dan Jacobson ("James Baldwin as Spokesman" [*Commentary*, December 1961]), who obviously imagines he is writing a generous review, constantly praises Baldwin's talents and comments upon the evils of racism in the manner of the unconscious racist posing as liberal. He suggests, moreover, that the impact of the book is weakened by its numerous examples of "rhetoric, of exhortation, of uplift, of reproach," and he goes on to advance his own theories regarding race relations. He prefaces one of his remarks with the statement, "Mr. Baldwin would possibly regard this as no more than a further example of the liberal complacency and self-righteousness he so often inveighs against." It is doubtful that Baldwin would honor Jacobson with the title of liberal (even with all its negative implications) after reading this critic's responses to his arguments, such as "Now it is certain that condi-

tions in South Africa are thoroughly bad; . . . Yet it remains true, too, that the happiest people one sees in the streets of South Africa today are the black people."

Melvin E. Bradford, in "Faulkner, James Baldwin, and the South" (*Gar*, Winter 1965), eloquently defends the alleged assertion by Faulkner that he would move from the middle of the road, where he had been trying to help Negroes, and start shooting in the event of a racial revolution, an assertion which Baldwin attacked in "Faulkner and Desegregation." Bradford's criticism of Baldwin is not lacking in what Bradford would see as generosity: "In fairness," he writes, "we must admit that we had no reason to expect the Negro novelist to be particularly perceptive in his comments on the squire of Oxford." Bradford proceeds to expound the southern concept of community and the "definite order of status, function, and place" which were so important to Faulkner and the South, and which Baldwin (born in Harlem, which "is not community") cannot understand. The critic then enumerates inconsistencies in Baldwin "and the white liberals North and South who helped create him."

Another Country The publication of *Another Country* in 1962 produced howls of rebuke, indignation, and pity that so fine a talent as James Baldwin was producing such unrepresentative work. The negative reception, which all but overshadowed the critical acclaim, was so overwhelming that numerous later scholars have felt inclined to respond to the harsh attacks with lengthy explanations and defenses. Much fuller coverage of the initial reaction than is given here may be found in Mike Thelwell's "Another Country: Baldwin's New York Novel," in *The Black American Writer, Volume I: Fiction*, edited by C. W. E. Bigsby (Deland, Fla.: Everett/Edwards, 1969); and in Norman Podhoretz's "In Defense of James Baldwin," in *Doings and Undoings* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1964; reprinted in Donald B. Gibson's *Five Black Writers* [New York: New York University Press, 1970]).

Saul Maloff (*The Nation*, July 14, 1962) decides after reading *Another Country* that there are two Baldwins, one an essayist who writes with "poise and clarity and reverberant feeling," and the other the novelist who has no control of his work. Maloff concludes that the novel has no redeeming features. In "Wrong Pulpit" (*NY*, August 4, 1962), Whitney Balliett likewise attacks the novel as a "turgid melodrama" whose one redeeming feature is Baldwin's power with words. In similar manner, Paul Goodman (*NYTBR*, June 24, 1962) asserts that the characters exist in a vacuum and concludes, "It is mediocre. It is unworthy of its author's lovely abilities. Given his awareness (which he cannot escape), he must write something more poetic and surprising." Although Stanley Edgar Hyman (*NewL*, June 25, 1962) notes some moments of great power, he finds little to praise and much to attack: he insists that the

writing is frequently bad, the use of flashbacks confusing and slipshod, and the sex scenes poorly done. He quotes selected scenes at some length to illustrate their "disagreeable sentimental sensuality" (a phrase Hyman borrows from Yeats). James Finn (*Commonweal*, October 26, 1962) finds some remarkable passages in the novel and believes Baldwin has a great future as a writer; however, he expresses great disappointment in this endeavor, which he considers contrived; he notes that the author's imagination "flags and falters," the characters are often unreal, and the conversation is wooden.

William Barrett (*AtM*, July 1962) and Edgar Friedenberg (*NR*, August 27, 1962) continue to weigh the flaws and merits of the novel, but here the balance seems to be shifting slightly in favor of the book's redeeming virtues, even though the latter critic claims his review is not complimentary. The most positive review is Granville Hicks's "Outcast in a Caldron" (*SatR*, July 7, 1962; reprinted as "Another Country" in Hicks's *Literary Horizons: A Quarter Century of American Fiction* [New York: New York University Press, 1970]). Although admitting occasional weaknesses in the book, he nonetheless acclaims *Another Country* as "one of the most powerful novels of our time." He further maintains that although the plot seems to move haphazardly, "the novel is shaped with rigorous care."

The numerous studies in the years following have largely been in response to some of the criticism raised during the novel's initial reception. Norman Podhoretz assails the critics for their attack on the novel in "In Defense of James Baldwin" (cited above), accusing them of being shocked by the militancy and cruelty of the novel's view of life—by its violence—and contending that the author was attempting to show "that the only significant realities are individuals and love." Podhoretz offers no defense of the stylistic problems in the novel, but simply argues that despite its faults it is forceful, intense, and truthful enough to sustain itself as a worthwhile work.

Eugenia Collier's "The Phrase Unbearably Repeated" (*Phylon*, Fall 1964) remains one of the most perceptive and illuminating comments. She considers the tenderness and the "hurting compassion" that dwell beneath the violence and brutality of the novel and the individual's lonely and futile quest for love. There is a full, enlightening study of Baldwin's use of music to reveal the dimensions and tragedy of Lucas, whom she interprets as a tragic victim rather than a villain. Her essay is especially helpful for its lucid explication of the theme, the function of music, and the character of Lucas.

C. B. Cox and A. R. Jones, in "After the Tranquilized Fifties: Notes on Sylvia Plath and James Baldwin" (*Critical Quarterly*, Summer 1964), agree with earlier critics regarding the sex scenes, noting that "Baldwin's obsession with sex at times seems adolescent"; but they defend his

characterization and praise his understanding depiction of "the violent emotions by which his people are beset." Their main point in this study is to compare *Another Country* with the works of Sylvia Plath in terms of the extremely serious and personal emotional experiences.

Trevor Blount's discovery of "A Slight Error in Continuity in James Baldwin's *Another Country*" (*N&Q*, March 1966), in which Vivaldo removes his shoes, then ten pages later Baldwin forgets and has Eric remove Vivaldo's shoes, hardly seems to justify the introductory sentence—"The reputation of the American novelist, James Baldwin, has soared recently, and when reviewers and publicists are so ready to use the word 'genius' in connection with his work the rest of us ought perhaps to examine with care what he writes"—though it does indeed suggest Blount's meticulousness.

In "The Lesson of the Master" (*YR*, October 1966), Charles Newman, after making some generalizations about the Baldwin canon, presents a detailed and interesting study of *Another Country*, which he compares with the novels of Henry James, particularly *The American* and *The Portrait of a Lady*. Addison Gayle, Jr., in *The Black Situation* (New York: Horizon, 1970), uses the novel to illustrate his thesis that although Baldwin "has a clear insight into contemporary man's alienation, . . . he has failed to defend the plight of the urban Black man in America." The problem, Gayle insists, is that Baldwin "wavers between the philosophy of assimilation and that of nationalism." In "*Another Country: Baldwin's New York Novel*" (cited above), Mike Thelwell accuses the critics of being unable to accept a black person's analysis of American culture. His study is noteworthy for its lengthy and detailed overview of the critical responses to *Another Country* and for its thorough analysis of the characters in the novel.

Elliott M. Schrero's "*Another Country and the Sense of Self*" (*BARev*, Spring-Summer 1971) is a most engaging comparison of *Another Country* and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* in terms of the authors' concern with the sense of the past in the individual's quest for identity. He notes that the characters in both novels suffer from extremes: Faulkner's southerners are mired in a sense of the past that results in a destructive excess of formality; Baldwin's characters suffer a loneliness and despair that stem from a lack of form caused by the absence of any sense of past and tradition. Schrero's otherwise forceful development seems somewhat mitigated at the end, for after denying the possibility of discussing the dilemma in Baldwin's book in terms of race (because both his blacks and his whites face the same problems of identity), Schrero concludes with a quotation from *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* that definitely deals with race: Leo, discussing the derogatory history of blacks which whites have created, suggests the need to "read one's history and . . . step out of the book."

Another very helpful study is Fred L. Standley's "Another Country, Another Time" (*SNNTS*, Fall 1972), which contains a noteworthy explanation of the structure of the novel, divided by Standley into four principal narrative strands. This essay also includes a detailed discussion of the meaning and implications of the title.

The Fire Next Time Before publication of *The Fire Next Time* in 1963, the original essay in the book, "Down at the Cross," had already created a furor when it appeared as "Letter from a Region in My Mind" (*NY*, November 17, 1962). Harry Golden's "A Comment on James Baldwin's Letter" (*The Crisis*, March 1963) accuses Baldwin of the same kind of self-pity he evidenced in *Another Country*. He takes issue with Baldwin's thesis that love and forgiveness are the means by which racial problems can be ended, and argues that politics and law are the answer. R. J. Dwyer responds vehemently to Baldwin's "Letter" and Dwight Macdonald's "Our Invisible Poor" in his "I Know About the Negroes and the Poor" (*National Review*, December 17, 1963), insisting that having lived among blacks he knows as much about them and their emotional relationship to society as does Baldwin, whose experience he labels "conspicuously atypical." He contends that Baldwin errs in arguing that something must be *given* to blacks and the poor, insisting that "most poor people in America today are poor because they want to be. They make themselves the way they are by being lazy, uneducated, sick, undependable." After attacking welfare recipients and giving his own facts about poor blacks, Dwyer insists that Baldwin "twists the facts to fit his pessimism."

The critics who responded to *The Fire Next Time* (which in addition to "Down at the Cross" includes "My Dungeon Shook") spend more time attacking and expressing indignation at certain of Baldwin's views of life than in considering the overall work. James Finn (*Commonweal*, July 26, 1963) is greatly perturbed by what he sees as Baldwin's rejection of "our" Judeo-Christian heritage, which he defends vigorously, noting that "Western civilization and Christianity . . . are precisely those sources from which all Americans must draw sustenance in the fight for equal rights." Finn's attack drew a counterattack from John McCudden, "James Baldwin's Vision" (*Commonweal*, October 11, 1963), followed by a further defense of his position by Finn ("Reply" [*Commonweal*, October 11, 1963]). Dorothy Foote, in "James Baldwin's 'Holler Books'" (*CEA Critic*, May 1963), is greatly disturbed by what she labels Baldwin's "curiously reversed stereotyped beliefs." Among these are what she describes as Baldwin's "smug pride" in Negro sexual superiority, his assertion that only the Negro has soul, his accusation that whites feel superior, his depiction of whites as "emotionally inferior and immature," and his pride in the Negroes' musical superiority. She proceeds to refute several of these as misconceptions. For example,

she painstakingly substantiates the Negroes' "musical debt to the white man," which includes the use of the white man's discarded instruments.

The anonymous reviewer for *Christian Century* ("Baldwin: Gray Flannel Muslim?" [June 12, 1963]) criticizes Baldwin for incongruities in his arguments regarding America and racism, particularly his attacks on liberals, concluding, "Baldwin will pass his test when he can tell those of us who want to do something *not* that we should but *what* we should."

Stephen Spender, in "James Baldwin: Voice of a Revolution" (*PR*, Summer 1963), seems most disturbed that "Mr. Baldwin . . . makes . . . generalizations about the emasculation, joylessness, lack of sensuality, etc., of white Americans to prove their inferiority to the joyous, spiritual, good, warm Negroes." Garry Wills's "What Color Is God?" (*National Review*, May 21, 1963) gives more of an overview of the complete work, summarizing the main points and commenting on the sense of background music in all Baldwin's works. But Wills, too, is disturbed by Baldwin's attack on American whites and their institutions. After analyzing in some detail the aggressiveness of *Ida* in *Another Country*, this critic suggests that in *The Fire Next Time* Baldwin is "launched on the self-lacerating task that *Ida* set herself—deliberately provoking and yet daring anyone to attack." Conceding that Baldwin's charges are moving and beautifully stated, he contends that the main question is, are they true? He proceeds to attack Baldwin's implications that whites are depraved and inferior and his assertions that the suffering of blacks cannot be overstated and that Christianity has done nothing for black people. Wills then stresses the importance of Western civilization and of preserving its truths, particularly Christianity, which Baldwin seems intent on destroying.

After praising Baldwin's style in *Notes of a Native Son*, F. W. Dupee, in "James Baldwin and 'the Man'" (*NYRB*, February 1963; reprinted in Dupee's *"The King of the Cats," and Other Remarks on Writers and Writing* [New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965]), criticizes *The Fire Next Time* as an exchange of "prophecy for criticism, exhortation for analysis," which weakens Baldwin's style and his theme. Dupee believes the book will inflame racists and confuse Negroes. In a review in *Critic* (April–May 1963), Andrew M. Greeley observes Baldwin's ignorance about theology, history, and sociology and calls attention to his prejudice and his hatred of whites; yet he suggests that these flaws all result from the author's experience in white America. He asserts that it is good that whites are being forced to listen to Baldwin, and concludes with the hope that saner voices, preaching gradualism and love, will arise from the black community.

If white reviewers roasted *The Fire Next Time*, black reviewers did not pour any water on the flames. J. Saunders Redding (*NYHTBW*, April 7, 1963) added more fuel, accusing Baldwin of offending truth and logic

and sacrificing thought to catch-phrases, and concludes, "A brilliant display of stylistic virtuosity, 'The Fire Next Time' would have been better with less manner and more matter." Jean Carey Bond (*Freedomways*, Spring 1953) characterizes it as "almost without organization, occasionally incoherent and contradictory." Noting that the essay's biggest problem is superficiality, Bond observes that it is full of exciting but undeveloped ideas. She accuses Baldwin of being primarily concerned with winning the attention and praise of white American readers. Nick Aaron Ford was a bit more receptive in "The Fire Next Time? A Critical Survey of Belles Lettres By and About Negroes Published in 1963" (*Phylon*, Summer 1964), lauding the book as influential, significant, "artistically satisfying," and "profoundly philosophical." He contends, however, that it offers no new solution to the race problem, for the solution offered—love—is as old as the Ten Commandments. John Henrik Clarke's rambling essay "The Alienation of James Baldwin" (*Journal of Human Relations*, December 1963; reprinted in Clarke's *Harlem, U.S.A.* [New York: Macmillan, 1971]; and in *Black Expression: Essays By and About Black Americans in the Creative Arts*, edited by Addison Gayle, Jr. [New York: Weybright & Talley, 1969]), emphasizes *The Fire Next Time*, but it is mainly an attack on Baldwin as a spokesman, noting that the word *struggle* (which is "inseparable from the existence of the Negro people") rarely appears in Baldwin's works and that none of his characters attain stature in the struggle against their condition.

Nothing Personal *Nothing Personal* (1964), with photographs by Richard Avedon and commentary by James Baldwin, received almost unanimously scathing reviews upon its publication, and has been all but forgotten by Baldwin scholars, many of whom do not even bother to mention it or list it among his works. In his review (*NYRB*, December 17, 1964), Robert Brustein praises the direct and biting criticism of Baldwin's earlier works, but asserts, "*Nothing Personal* shows us an honorable tradition of revolt gone sour," and concludes, "Baldwin's participation in this 'charade' . . . signifies the further degeneration of a once courageous and beautiful dissent." The anonymous reviewer in *Time* (November 6, 1964) writes, "Baldwin's brief text is oddly irrelevant, obviously hasty, too often drawn by his sheer flow of language into shrill overstatement." While the anonymous reviewer of the *London Times Literary Supplement* (December 10, 1964) calls *Nothing Personal* a "terrifying and deeply moving book," he concludes that it is a dishonest work, portraying the United States as a vast wasteland with only a few radicals showing any integrity. *Newsweek* (October 26, 1964) makes very little comment on the book, but does reproduce photographs from it.

Blues for Mister Charlie Baldwin fared little better with the reviewers of his next work, his first published play, *Blues for Mister Charlie* (New York: Dial, 1964). Eric Moon (*LJ*, May 15, 1964) describes the

characterization as “paper thin” and the dialogue as “almost pedestrian,” and expresses the hope that the author will “quickly return to the essay and the novel.” Robert Brustein, in “Everybody’s Protest Play: *Blues for Mr. Charlie*” (*NR*, May 16, 1964; reprinted in Brustein’s *Seasons of Discontent: Dramatic Opinions, 1959–1965* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1965]), uses Baldwin’s own criticism of protest fiction to attack *Blues*, which he attempts to show embodies everything Baldwin earlier deplored. Brustein also criticizes the use of racial stereotypes and what he calls “Baldwin’s curious insistence on the superiority of Negro sexuality.” Richard Kluger (*NYHTBW*, May 31, 1964) proclaims that the play is not art, the tone is too shrill, the dialogue is stilted, and the characterization is particularly poor. T. G. Foote (“Thérapeutique de la Haine” [*Preuves*, January 1965]), in an article on the therapy of hatred, accuses Baldwin of no longer being able to write objectively of the black problem, which he had previously described with such sensibility and forcefulness. In “*Blues for Mister Charlie*,” Granville Hicks (*SatR*, May 2, 1964; reprinted in Hicks’s *Literary Horizons*) notes Baldwin’s movement from *Go Tell It on the Mountain* toward the protest tradition. He argues that *Blues for Mister Charlie*, which he does not consider a major literary work, is propaganda to the extent that Baldwin attempts to produce a specific effect on his audience, but is not propaganda in the sense of a distortion of truth. Although he noted certain shortcomings, Harold Clurman (“*Blues for Mister Charlie*, 1964,” in his *The Naked Image: Observations on the Modern Theatre* [New York: Macmillan, 1966]) found that these flaws were usually mitigated by other strengths, and enjoined readers to see the play, which he praised for the direction and acting.

Not very many scholars have treated the play individually. Lofton Mitchell includes a very brief mention of *Blues* in *Black Drama: The Story of the American Negro in the Theatre* (New York: Hawthorn, 1967), with a defense of Baldwin’s characterization. C. W. E. Bigsby, who treats it in chapter seven of his *Confrontation and Commitment: A Study of Contemporary American Drama 1959–1966* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1968), accuses Baldwin of writing the kind of protest fiction that he earlier rejected. He notes that the chief fault in the play is not Baldwin’s inability to draw valid pictures of whites, whom he dehumanizes, but of blacks, whom he sentimentalizes. Bigsby, who mistakenly calls Emmett Till “another Civil Rights worker,” compares *Blues for Mister Charlie* to Albert Camus’s *The Plague* in terms of its depiction of the necessity for revolt; he suggests that the dilemma in the drama is whether to be victim or hangman.

Going to Meet the Man The reviews of Baldwin’s collection of short stories, *Going to Meet the Man* (1965), ranged from glowing praise to harsh criticism. Augusta Strong (*Freedomways*, Winter 1966) declares that

"In all [the stories] the craftsmanship is superb." She calls "Going to Meet the Man" the best story in the collection and claims that Baldwin's best portrait of a woman is found in "Come Out of the Wilderness."

Although Joseph Featherstone (*NR*, November 27, 1965) praises "The Outing" and suggests that "Sonny's Blues" is "close to a success," he finds "Going to Meet the Man" comparable to *Blues for Mister Charlie* in its failure to enter the white mind adequately and in its attack on the sexual ability of whites. He concludes that "Baldwin is at his best as himself. His finest work is self-revelatory: the fictional selves who walk the troubled regions of his mind." Lamenting the fact—he calls it a tragedy—that Baldwin so frequently mixes racial and homosexual rebellions, Daniel Stern (*SatR*, November 6, 1965) is pleased to find that the collection is basically free of the sensationalism that marred earlier books. He praises the stories generally, particularly "Sonny's Blues" and "This Morning, This Evening, So Soon," but he considers "The Man Child" (which he characterizes as "unbelievable") and "Going to Meet the Man" (in which he accuses Baldwin of equating lust with hate) failures. He concludes that when Baldwin is free of racial and sexual pleading "he is a rare creature." Oscar Handlin (*AtM*, November 1965) found the collection disappointing, lacking in all of the superior qualities of *Go Tell It on the Mountain*.

There have been a few noteworthy studies of individual stories in this collection. John V. Hagopian's "James Baldwin: The Black and the Red-White-and-Blue" (*CLAJ*, September 1963) is the definitive study of "This Morning, This Evening, So Soon." In his detailed analysis of the structure of the story (which he describes as being "full of subtle and surprising complexities"), Hagopian suggests that the three sections of the narrative might well be subtitled "Family," "Friend," and "Strangers," because the story moves from the intimate center of the narrator's experiences outward into public life and society.

"Sonny's Blues" has been given more critical attention than any of the other stories. Despite a misleading introduction which suggests that his study is going to deal with the debate on whether Baldwin is an essayist or a novelist, John M. Reilly's "'Sonny's Blues': James Baldwin: Image of Black Community" (*NALF*, July 1970) turns out to be a very perceptive study of the development of the theme of the discovery of identity in "Sonny's Blues." After a rather detailed explication of the aesthetics of the blues, Reilly carefully traces the steps by which Sonny leads his brother, by way of the blues, "to a discovery of self in community." Treating much the same subject, E. R. Ognibene, in "Black Literature Revisited: Sonny's Blues" (*EJ*, January 1971), discusses the story as being mainly about the narrator and his need to reconcile himself to his racial heritage. Further, he points out that Sonny and his music are tools that help the narrator to accept his past and thereby find himself.

Like Reilly and Ognibene, in "James Baldwin's Blues" (*NConL*, September 1972) M. Thomas Inge places his emphasis on the narrator and his distance from his brother and his race. Inge, who makes some observations on the use of music as a controlling metaphor in this story, emphasizing the narrator's isolation from his race, his history, and his heritage, stresses the universal theme of brotherly love in "Sonny's Blues." Elsewhere, Suzy B. Goldman, in "James Baldwin's 'Sonny's Blues': A Message in Music" (*NALF*, Fall 1974), emphasizes the theme of communication and the use of music as an instrument in achieving communication. She concludes that Sonny's blues "belong to all of us for they symbolize the darkness which surrounds all those who fail to listen to and remain unheard by their fellow men."

Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone Baldwin received very little critical acclaim from the reviewers of *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* (1968). Granville Hicks's critique in *Saturday Review* (June 1, 1968; reprinted in Hicks's *Literary Horizons*) charges that the novel lacks the strength of Baldwin's earlier works, that the protagonist is not believable, and that the work is "simply flat and commonplace." Although Wilfred Sheed (in "Novel-time for Mr. Baldwin" [*Book World*, June 2, 1968]; reprinted as "James Baldwin: Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone," in Sheed's *The Morning After: Selected Essays and Reviews* [New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1971]), praises Baldwin for his convincing evocation of Harlem life, especially the scenes involving Leo and his family, he considers most of the novel "careless" and "mechanical." In similar manner, Saul Maloff (*Newsweek*, June 3, 1968) acknowledges a few passages which remind the reader that Baldwin is a talented writer, but considers the novel as a whole unsatisfactory. Maloff satirizes the plot and criticizes the characterization and the prose style. Robert E. Long (*The Nation*, June 10, 1968) could obviously find nothing redeeming in this novel to blunt his criticism, so he praises Baldwin's essays before assailing the weak characterization, the awkwardly handled flashbacks, the lusterless prose, the inconsistent diction, and the blurred insights in *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone*.

Although Mario Puzo (*NYTBR*, June 23, 1968) is able to soften his attack with praise for the portrayal of Leo's father and his brother Caleb and the descriptions of the family life in Harlem, he too goes back to praise the essays, before lampooning the plot covering Leo's move into the world of the theater and Greenwich Village and white associates. Puzo seems most dissatisfied with the character of Barbara, exclaiming, "We are asked to believe that the only man in the whole world she can love forever is a Negro homosexual actor." He summarizes the book as "a simpleminded, one-dimensional novel with mostly cardboard characters, a polemical rather than narrative tone, weak invention, and poor selection of incident."

One of the most intelligent and objective (with one exception) attacks on this novel is Irving Howe's "James Baldwin: At Ease in Apocalypse" (*Harper's Magazine*, September 1968). Howe discusses the difficulties of the Negro writer's efforts to escape the role of protest writer, and suggests that Baldwin's inability to find his own identity is reflected in the failure of *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* and in his character Leo Proudhammer. While Howe, too, has praise for the descriptions of Harlem, he attacks the sentimental descriptions of homosexual encounters, the falseness of the characterizations, Baldwin's language, and the logic of several statements made by the characters. While most of these criticisms are rather fully substantiated with supporting evidence from the work, giving credence and strength to his argument, Howe seems to lose his critical objectivity in dealing with Baldwin's growing militancy and his black militant character. For example, Howe attacks the logic of the militant's statement that the Christians were also outnumbered, citing a lengthy historical explanation to prove the character wrong. The historical accuracy of the statement, of course, is completely irrelevant; Baldwin has put into the character's mouth the rhetoric of the militant, and historical veracity has nothing to do with the realism of his speech.

The most glowing review (representing the opposite extreme in the reception of the book) is John Thompson's "Baldwin: The Prophet as Artist" (*Commentary*, June 1968), in which Thompson avers, "Like everything Baldwin writes, it is beautifully formed." He goes on to praise the clarity with which the plot is related, the beauty of Baldwin's language, the powerful protest, and the lack of melodrama. He concludes, "*Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* is a masterpiece by one of the best living writers in America."

The Amen Corner *The Amen Corner* (1968) is the most neglected of Baldwin's works. It was virtually ignored by the critics upon its publication and has received no individual attention from scholars. It is, however, frequently touched upon in the general studies of Baldwin's works.

A Rap on Race *A Rap on Race* (1971), a record of discussions between Margaret Mead and Baldwin, created no stir in the literary world, provoking only a few comments in scattered periodicals. Phoebe Adams (*AtM*, June 1971) notes that Mead's knowledge of unfamiliar societies all over the world contrasts with Baldwin's "impassioned preoccupation" with Negroes in America; she characterizes the conversations as "blunt, peppery, and spontaneous." Kenneth Zahorski (*CLAJ*, June 1971) observes that although the book is at times "repetitious and disjointed," it abounds in "illuminating insights and penetrating observations," and goes on to characterize it as "a truly remarkable and significant social document . . . a fascinating human drama." R. J. Meaddough, in "Ideas Whose Time Has Passed" (*Freedomways*, Third

Quarter 1971) condescendingly credits Mead and Baldwin with honestly attempting to analyze the racial situation in the United States, but he suggests rather satirically that they are too far removed from the realities of the present to comprehend the situation fully: “. . . it’s like watching Louis and Marciano fight to a draw in ’71: two old, proud, battered champions past their prime and, at the end, what has been proven? They deserve respect and honor for what they were and what they are, but Muhammad Ali is waiting.”

No Name in the Street The reception of the bitterest and most militant of Baldwin’s essays, *No Name in the Street* (1972), was surprisingly tempered. Only a few critics rejected it outright, as did Peter Prescott (*Newsweek*, May 29, 1972), who wrote it off as an “embarrassing” effort by Baldwin to prove himself a part of the militant young black generation by accepting their prose and rhetoric. Colin McGlashan (*New Statesman*, April 21, 1972) laments that Baldwin “has . . . lost touch with himself and his language,” but concludes that the book is worth reading, for it does include “skillful fragments of autobiography.” Mel Watkins (*NYTBR*, May 28, 1972) criticizes the ideological discourse as being too abstract and facile, but concludes that Baldwin seeks to dramatize, not to explicate, and that he does this well. He further notes that the prose is “often mesmerizing.”

R. Z. Sheppard (*Time*, May 29, 1972) summarizes the book much more than he appraises it. He does criticize Baldwin the artist for succumbing to Baldwin the propagandist and fantasist. Murray Kempton (*NYRB*, June 29, 1972) reviews *No Name in the Street* along with two other works discussing Afro-Americans and Jews. Asserting that there is some “nonsense” in Baldwin, he also notes his strengths, concluding that “The nonsense that is merely language passes soon enough in Baldwin’s book, thank heaven; and only the common sense of feeling endures.” Edward Weeks (*AtM*, June 1972) suggests that even though it may be intemperate and lack pity, the book should be read, for it “contains truths not to be denied.” He does, however, criticize Baldwin’s failure to perceive that there are “thoughtful white Americans intent that reconciliation shall work.” Jim Walker (*Black Creation*, Summer 1972) criticizes the loose, casual form, the lack of structure, and the repetition in the book, but praises the beauty of the prose and the ideas, which he says are encouraging and uplifting to a black man.

One Day When I Was Lost *One Day When I Was Lost* (1973), a scenario based on *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, was generally received as another Baldwin “mistake.” Bruce Cook (*Commonweal*, October 12, 1973) suggests that it “was probably unwise of Baldwin to publish it, for it adds nothing to Malcolm and can only detract from its author’s reputation.” He concludes that “it is not much worth reading at all, except for those who have a special interest in Baldwin’s career and its

curious downward spiral during the last years." Edward Mapp (*LJ*, February 1, 1973) also considers the work a failure, but he asserts that it "deserves recognition if for no other reason than its subject and author." The reviewer of the *London Times Literary Supplement* (November 17, 1972) found the first half of the work "sharp, funny and precise," but was surprised by the "flatness" of the second half.

A *Dialogue* *A Dialogue* (1973), an exchange between Baldwin and Nikki Giovanni taped in London in 1971, was generally well received in the few periodicals that noted its appearance. Cornelia Holbert (*Best Sellers*, September 1, 1973) suggests that Baldwin turns poet in this conversation, which she labels "a privilege to read." A. R. Shucard (*LJ*, June 1, 1973) terms this dialogue fascinating, and describes Baldwin as "delightfully articulate."

If *Beale Street Could Talk* The reception of *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1974) was a replay of the responses to every Baldwin novel since *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. The critics, who almost unanimously agree that Baldwin is a talented writer, anticipated that masterpiece they know he is capable of producing and were appalled that he had once again disappointed them. Although Baldwin was fifty years old at the time of the publication of this novel, they still tended to regard him as a remiss boy of promise who had yet to realize his potential.

Martha Duffy (*Time*, June 10, 1974) observes, "It is hard to speculate how a writer of Baldwin's quality succumbed to such timeless bathos." John W. Aldridge (*SatR/World*, June 15, 1974) laments, "It is extremely sad to see a writer of Baldwin's large gifts producing, in all seriousness, such junk." Walter Clemons (*Newsweek*, May 27, 1974) labels the novel "an almost total disaster," but bases his optimism that something better will be produced by Baldwin in the future on the few "scenes that give one hope." These reviewers generally criticize Baldwin's use of Tish as narrator and his sentimentality; they also consider the characters stereotypes who are too idealized—too noble, courageous, loving.

It is rather ironic that this latest novel received the same kind of general criticism that his earlier novels underwent, because here Baldwin seemed to be attempting a very different kind of work that would silence the attacks customarily made on his fiction. There is nowhere evident in *If Beale Street Could Talk* his usual "objectionable" subject matter of homosexual and interracial liaisons; Baldwin returns to Harlem, which is where critics have always agreed he should stay; and he portrays a strong, devoted family headed by a powerful and loving father figure.

If Baldwin wants to make one more effort to satisfy the critics (although he claims, "What other people write about me [is] irrelevant to me" [*Essence*, June 1976]), John Aldridge, in the review cited above, has been kind enough to describe in detail the "one great novel [that Baldwin] may have . . . left within him"—a novel of his own life. Alas,

has not poor Baldwin already bared enough of his soul? And if he does write the novel Aldridge suggests, I cannot but fear that Aldridge's prophecy that Baldwin is "destined to drown in the throbbing seas of sentimentality" might indeed be fulfilled.

There were, however, a limited number of critics who found a few redeeming features in the novel. Arthur Curley (*LJ*, April 1, 1974), who considers it "old fashioned" with "stereotypical" characters, nonetheless describes it as a "powerful social document" with a story that is "emotional dynamite." Sterling Plumpp (*BlackBB*, Fall 1975) insists that it "is a good book [though] not a great one."

If *Beale Street Could Talk* received nothing but praise from Joyce Carol Oates (*NYTBR*, May 19, 1974), who characterized it as a poetical and realistic account of human emotions, "a moving, painful story . . . so vividly human and so obviously based upon reality, that it strikes us as timeless." She notes that even Tish's "flights of poetic fancy . . . are convincing."

The Devil Finds Work Baldwin's latest work, *The Devil Finds Work* (1976), is an essay that analyzes the historical role of blacks in American films, beginning with *Birth of a Nation* and continuing through *Lady Sings the Blues* and *The Exorcist*. Baldwin's general thesis is that there has been very little change in the characterization of blacks in American motion pictures, which always have and continue to misrepresent the black experience.

GENERAL STUDIES

Books The only book-length critical study of Baldwin's work is Stanley Macebuh's *James Baldwin: A Critical Study* (New York: Third Press-Joseph Okpaku, 1973). Macebuh's emphasis is on the novels, in which he traces the author's development from an introspective, personal writer to a radical social writer. He begins with a discussion of the profound effect of the dread of hell, the terror of sin, on Baldwin's vision of life. He notes that Baldwin's need to "exorcise his private dread of hell" inherited from his early church experiences prolonged the discovery of a public voice, but it provided him the basis for his best-constructed works—*Go Tell It on the Mountain* and *Giovanni's Room*. In his early works, Macebuh contends, Baldwin did not connect the psychological problems of his characters with the social origins of the problems. Macebuh traces Baldwin's development as he moves toward an increasing radicalization in *Another Country* and *No Name in the Street*. He notes that Baldwin's growing radicalism affected his competence as an artistic craftsman in *Another Country*, which marked his emergence from isolation. *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* is, according to Macebuh, the first Baldwin work with a "positively activist mood."

The most disturbing shortcoming of Macebuh's study is his insistence

upon painting the broadest possible perspective from which to view his principal (Baldwin), which frequently results in a blurring—and at times even a loss—of his subject. For example, Macebuh views the whole range of criticism of black literature in America in his introduction, citing various writers in this very general discussion, so that any emphasis on Baldwin is lost to the reader. In chapter six, “The Agony of Blackness,” Macebuh gives a lengthy discussion of the black aesthetic, tracing what he calls “the development of Black literature in America”; again, this discussion is unduly long and only tenuously related to Baldwin. Admittedly, Macebuh makes a defensible effort to see Baldwin in a historical perspective, but the ultimate effect is to see the larger picture and to forget Baldwin, who obviously should be the focal point of the discussion. Later, in a similar vein, he discusses what he calls “the rhetoric of sexuality in Black fiction in America,” and although he does finally get around to Baldwin, the earlier emphasis on Norman Mailer and Eldridge Cleaver minimizes his subject. Considering Macebuh’s tendency to paint the broadest picture, his elaborate conclusions at the end of each chapter as well as the concluding chapter, which tie together and emphasize the main points of the study, are extremely helpful to the reader, who might otherwise lose sight of the major area of emphasis in what occasionally appear to be slightly rambling discussions.

Macebuh’s study is for the most part carefully researched and accurately presented, although a few minor errors are apparent. One slight misstatement, for example, is made more glaring when Macebuh makes a clear distinction between the “conception” and “birth” of John in *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, then in the following sentence mistakenly calls John’s “birth” “the one labour of mutual love in the novel.” At another point, Macebuh discusses the sin of bastardy and its impact on John in such a way that he confuses it with the act of masturbation and John’s resulting guilt feelings from that; he later clarifies this issue, but the clarification unfortunately follows the confusion. The book includes a bibliography, which was discussed earlier.

A very helpful collection of essays on Baldwin has been assembled by Kenneth Kinnamon in *James Baldwin: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974). In an excellent introduction, Kinnamon gives a brief overview of Baldwin’s life, discusses important themes in his works, and traces the development of his loss of faith in the redemptive possibilities of love. Kinnamon includes some noteworthy essays and reviews in this collection, but the basis for the selection is not always apparent. For example, he includes reviews of *Notes of a Native Son*, *The Fire Next Time*, and *No Name in the Street*; but it is not clear why he would present reviews of these works and not of *Another Country* and *Go Tell It on the Mountain*.

Therman B. O'Daniel has a book of essays on Baldwin scheduled for publication by Howard University Press, tentatively titled *James Baldwin: A Critical Evaluation*, which will include a bibliography as well.

James Baldwin is a subject of major consideration in Sherley Anne Williams's *Give Birth to Brightness: A Thematic Study in Neo-Black Literature* (New York: Dial, 1972). Her emphasis is on the role of the musician in Baldwin's works. She sees the musician as "the embodiment of alienation and estrangement, which the figure of the artist becomes in much of twentieth century literature." She uses "Sonny's Blues" and *Blues for Mister Charlie* to illustrate her thesis that "Music is the medium through which the musician achieves enough understanding and strength to deal with the past and present hurt." Williams also includes a lengthy defense of *Another Country*, which illustrates what she sees as the tendency of critics to deal more with Baldwin's statements as a spokesman and with his homosexuality than with his literature. Attacking Eldridge Cleaver for comparing the masculinity of Rufus to that of Bigger Thomas, and Richard Wright to Baldwin, she notes that this endeavor leads Cleaver away from the major theme of *Another Country*. One chapter of Williams's book, "The Black Musician: The Black Hero as Light Bearer," appears in Kinnamon's *James Baldwin: A Collection of Critical Essays*.

Howard M. Harper, Jr., in *Desperate Faith: A Study of Bellow, Salinger, Mailer, Baldwin and Updike* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), considers what he calls the two sides to Baldwin—the Negro spokesman and the artist—noting that as a public spokesman Baldwin urges rebellion, whereas as an artist he stresses acceptance. Harper gives a rather general but adequate coverage of the novels, considering the need of the characters in all of them for recognition and acceptance of their own inner nature and noting Baldwin's movement from artist to spokesman. He sees *Another Country* as the beginning of Baldwin's trend toward journalism and propaganda, which reaches its climax in *Blues for Mister Charlie*, which he describes as cheap sentimentality and melodrama and which he suggests indicates that Baldwin "the artist has succumbed to the spokesman." The one unique aspect of this study is an interesting discussion of the use of wind as symbolic of "fatal inevitability" in all the novels. (It should be noted, however, that Robert F. Sayre had previously considered the symbolic use of the wind in *Giovanni's Room* in "James Baldwin's Other Country" in *Contemporary American Novelists*, edited by Harry T. Moore [Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964]).

Numerous books on black American literature and the American novel include essays on James Baldwin. Foremost among these are *The Black American Writer, Volume I: Fiction* and *Volume II: Poetry and Drama*, edited by C. W. E. Bigsby (Deland, Fla.: Everett/Edwards, 1969); Don-

ald B. Gibson's *Five Black Writers* (New York: New York University Press, 1970); John Henrik Clarke's *Harlem, U.S.A.* (New York: Macmillan, 1971); and *Contemporary American Novelists*, edited by Harry T. Moore. Baldwin is treated in all the major surveys and thematic studies of black American literature, as well as in several general studies of American literature that have been published within the last ten years.

In the revised edition of *The Negro Novel in America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1965), Robert Bone includes a chapter on the novels of James Baldwin that has appeared in various other sources (*Tri-Quarterly*, Winter 1965; *Images of the Negro in American Literature*, edited by Seymour L. Gross and John Edward Hardy [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966]; and Robert Hemenway's *The Black Novelist* [Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1970]). Bone considers Baldwin's movement from a search for identity in his earlier works toward protest in the polemical works. He includes rather lengthy summaries and discussions of the three novels Baldwin had published at the time, praising *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, which he discusses as an autobiographical work, and considering in some detail the father-son conflict there; attacking *Giovanni's Room* as the weakest novel; and assailing *Another Country* as a "failure on the grand scale."

In *Black on White: A Critical Survey of Writing by American Negroes* (New York: Grossman, 1966), David Littlejohn includes a general survey of Baldwin's works through *Going to Meet the Man*. He emphasizes their autobiographical significance, noting that "Each of James Baldwin's three novels has been written out of some personal necessity." His overall assessment of the novels coincides with Bone's. It is perhaps worth noting that he praises highly four stories in *Going to Meet the Man*, including "The Man Child," which he calls "a highly charged, lyrical, pastoral tragedy," and "Going to Meet the Man," of which he writes, "I found his picture [of a southern bigot] to be credible, intense, and at times almost hypnotically convincing."

Edward Margolies presents an interesting chapter that offers some variety in its approach to Baldwin. In "The Negro Church: James Baldwin and the Christian Vision," in Margolies's *Native Sons: A Critical Study of Twentieth-Century Negro American Authors* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1968), he expounds the thesis that "the Messianic strain, the apocalyptic vision, the imagery and the fervor of the church . . . the spirit of evangelism" that permeate black life are reflected in the works of Baldwin. He discusses all of Baldwin's works through 1965 in terms of this thesis, which he expands to include the opposition of the purity of innocence to the evil of experience, and the salvation of the homosexual experience. Margolies sees *Another Country* as the point at which Baldwin divides the role of the Negro from that of the homosexual, with the homosexual persevering as a figure of compassion and the

Negro becoming more militant: "The Negro and the homosexual thus assume two attributes of the godhead—the Negro representing justice, the homosexual, mercy." Margolies's treatment of *Blues for Mister Charlie* is more positive than most. He argues that it is "a propaganda piece with 'real-life' characters," noting that Baldwin's white southern racists are more believable than his northern liberals. He suggests that the vehement reaction to Lyles by most critics may have been a result of Baldwin's implications that whites, whether racists or liberals, are varying versions of Lyles.

In *After Alienation: American Novels in Mid-Century* (New York: World, 1964), Marcus Klein discusses the works of James Baldwin in terms of the heroes' search for identity, manhood, maturity, and recognition (all of which he sees as synonymous). Tracing this quest through the essays and the fiction, Klein concludes that Baldwin "makes his longest reach toward an identifiable identity" with southern blacks and Africans.

Conor Cruise O'Brien includes a very general essay in his *Writers and Politics* (New York: Pantheon, 1965), treating the thesis that Baldwin is the first black American who has made his white countrymen "see him as a man and see how he sees them." Citing a few of Baldwin's essays and interviews (but with no reference to the fiction), the author concludes that Baldwin's truthful portrayal of the American situation has made the white man listen.

In *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: Morrow, 1967), Harold Cruse frequently attacks Baldwin, more often for Baldwin's role of spokesman than author. He comments at some length about Baldwin's failure to defend adequately and substantiate his attack on white liberals, suggesting in a footnote that Parnell James in *Blues for Mister Charlie* is "so sympathetically portrayed as to border on the maudlin, despite the author's professed view of white liberals," an accusation that arises from a faulty reading of the play, since Parnell represents the weakness, ineffectiveness, and unreliability of the liberal. In a lengthy, largely sociological, discussion concerning Baldwin and Jews, Cruse attacks "The Harlem Ghetto" as "a chic piece of magazine journalism" that does not deal with the real issues, and contends that Baldwin in reality loves and defends the Jews, or to use Cruse's term, he is an "apologist for the Jews."

Eldridge Cleaver's "Notes on a Native Son," in his *Soul on Ice* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), praises Baldwin's talents but bitterly attacks what Cleaver considers a self-defacing quirk in Baldwin's vision that is tied up with his homosexuality—Baldwin's "total hatred of . . . blacks" and of himself and his unnatural love of whites. Cleaver enthusiastically defends Richard Wright against the attack Baldwin makes on Wright in "Everybody's Protest Novel" (reprinted in *Notes of a Native Son*), noting that the relationship of Rufus to Bigger is analogous to

that of Baldwin to Wright—a weak lover of whites to a rebel and a man. All of this illustrates, Cleaver asserts, Baldwin’s “playing out the racial death-wish of Yacub”—his attempt, in other words, to destroy both black masculinity and blacks.

David W. Noble’s “The Present: Norman Mailer, James Baldwin, Saul Bellow,” in *The Eternal Adam and the New World Garden: The Central Myth in the American Novel Since 1830* (New York: Braziller, 1968), considers Baldwin’s efforts to find “new ways to restore the American Garden to beauty and the American Adam to vigor.” Richard H. Rupp in *Celebration in Postwar American Fiction, 1945–1967* (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1970), presents a novel approach to Baldwin, considering his continual quest for a secular celebration to replace the celebration he left behind in the church. There is a lengthy discussion of *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, which represents, according to Rupp, the one instance of celebration in Baldwin’s fiction, containing what Rupp calls “a community celebration.” In his later fiction, the author continues, Baldwin has been unable to discover “a social context that will give form and meaning to celebration.”

Theodore Gross treats Wright, Ellison, and Baldwin in a chapter of his *The Heroic Ideal in American Literature* (New York: Free Press, 1971). Gross’s major concern in his discussion of Baldwin seems to be Baldwin’s creation of new myths and stereotypes after the effective exposure of white myths about blacks in his earlier works. Gross accuses Baldwin of creating preternatural black heroes and distortions about the white man. He violently attacks Baldwin’s portrayal in *Another Country* of white middle-class values as abhorrent and of America as an empty, doomed country, characterizing Baldwin’s prophecies of tragedy and doom for America “sentimental nihilism.” He asserts that the novel fails because (among other reasons) it attempts to “deify blacks and castigate whites in morally simplistic terms” and because “Baldwin cannot describe white people with anything like complexity.” Gross praises Baldwin’s early essays as expressing the Negro point of view with intense honesty, and comments on the tension between love and power and the quest for love, which is the essence of all Baldwin’s works.

Of less importance in a study of Baldwin, but still meriting attention, are Catherine Juanita Starke’s *Black Portraiture in American Fiction: Stock Characters, Archetypes, and Individuals* (New York: Basic Books, 1971), which considers the major characters in Baldwin’s fiction; Houston A. Baker, Jr.’s *Long Back Song: Essays in Black American Literature and Culture* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1972), which does not treat Baldwin in depth, but makes several significant allusions to his themes and works; Alfred Kazin’s *Bright Book of Life: American Novelists from Hemingway to Mailer* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), which briefly

discusses Baldwin, suggesting that he “writes fiction in order to use up his private difficulties”; and Roger Whitlow’s weak and often misleading discussion of Baldwin in *Black American Literature: A Critical History* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1973), which contains a sketchy summary of Baldwin’s life and a listing of his works through *No Name in the Street* (which Whitlow erroneously lists under fiction in the bibliography).

Articles The debate about protest versus art which has hounded Baldwin since the publication of “Everybody’s Protest Novel” is the subject of Maurice Charney’s “James Baldwin’s Quarrel with Richard Wright” (*AQ*, Spring 1963; reprinted in Gibson’s *Five Black Writers*). Charney explains Baldwin’s attack on Wright in some detail, but notes that for Baldwin the South is remote and mythical whereas for Wright it was the living reality of his life. Charney observes other contrasts between the two authors, among them the fact that Baldwin refuses to accept Wright’s naturalistic philosophy and that Baldwin returned from France to search for his identity. He notes also that although Baldwin treats the bleakness of the human heart (the inability to love, the sense of emptiness and waste), “he ends, not in despair but in tragic paradox”—the possibility of love “makes war on the chaos of despair.”

Irving Howe also considers protest versus art in “Black Boys and Native Sons” (*Dissent*, Autumn 1963). Citing Baldwin’s early attacks on protest literature, Howe notes the contradictions in Baldwin’s later review of Langston Hughes’s poetry (“Sermons and Blues” [*NYTBR*, March 29, 1959]) in which he speaks of the Negro as finding the conflict between social and artistic responsibilities practically irreconcilable. Howe suggests that during the intervening years Baldwin had lived through the experiences that had created a Richard Wright. Noting that Baldwin has failed in his desire to portray the diversity and richness of the black world without writing protest, Howe suggests that the writer who has come closest to this achievement is Ralph Ellison in *Invisible Man*.

Again the subject of protest versus art is, if not revived, at least rehashed in Albert Murray’s “James Baldwin, Protest Fiction, and the Blues Tradition” (in *The Omni-Americans: New Perspectives on Black Experience and American Culture* [New York: Outerbridge & Dienstfrey, 1970]; presented as a paper at the University of California [Berkeley] seminar on “The Negro Writer in the United States” [Summer 1964]; and reprinted in *Anger and Beyond*, edited by Herbert Hill [New York: Harper & Row, 1966], as “Something Different, Something More”). Murray elaborates Baldwin’s attack on protest fiction in some detail and assails his assumptions as false or confused. He proceeds to prove that Baldwin is guilty of all the limitations of which he accused Harriet Beecher Stowe and Richard Wright. The major thesis of this article is that Baldwin did not capitalize on “the rich possibilities available . . . in

the blues tradition." Murray goes on to state, "But he never really accounts for the tradition which supports Harlem's hardheaded faith in democracy, its muscular Christianity, its cultural flexibility, nor does he account for its universally celebrated commitment to elegance in motion, to colorful speech idioms, to high style." Although the assumption that an author must "account" for these traditions is in itself highly tenuous, a careful reading of Baldwin certainly suggests that not only has he made much use of these traditions and portrayed these aspects of black life (at least insofar as they *are* aspects of black life), but there are times when he has also very definitely "accounted" for them.

B. K. Mitra's "The Wright-Baldwin Controversy" (*IJAS*, July 1969) is another attempt to assess the dispute between Wright and Baldwin, but this consideration is weakened because all of Mitra's judgments of Wright's point of view come from Baldwin's accounts. She considers the differences in the circumstances and influences that produced the two writers a possible explanation of their different views.

Fred L. Standley, in "James Baldwin: The Artist as Incurable Disturber of the Peace" (*SHR*, Winter 1970), defends Baldwin against the accusations that his literature is protest fiction of the type he attacked. He argues that Baldwin sees himself as a literary man with concomitant communal responsibilities and that his art, although it involves protest, is not the type of protest literature he attacked in Wright and Stowe. Standley discusses the fiction as works which "deal with the impact on the individual of the conditions of urban life and society," whose protagonist is a "rebel-victim" in quest of his identity.

Morris Dickstein, in "Wright, Baldwin, Cleaver," in *Richard Wright: Impressions and Perspectives*, edited by David Ray and Robert M. Farnsworth (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973), returns to Baldwin's attack on Wright and discusses the irony of the fact that while Baldwin has attempted to keep abreast of the new mood among younger writers, they tend to reject and attack him in a manner reminiscent of his own attack on Wright, and they tend to feel akin to the militant spirit of Wright. Kichung Kim, in "Wright, the Protest Novel, and Baldwin's Faith" (*CLAJ*, March 1974), also observes the more recent tendency to defend Wright in this controversy and to see Bigger as a realistic character. Kim argues that Baldwin's attack in "Everybody's Protest Novel" was motivated by a faith in the humanity of each man, a faith that Baldwin has since lost.

Although most critics suggest that Baldwin's essays are superior to his fiction, only two notable studies deal exclusively with the essays. David Levin, in "Baldwin's Autobiographical Essays: The Problem of Negro Identity" (*MR*, Winter 1964), considers the essays a quest for identity in which the narrator poses the question to the presumably white American audience: "Who am I?" or "How can I be myself?"

Levin notes that Baldwin considers his mission as a writer synonymous with his obligations as a preacher—to give the reader a sense of an experience (being Negro) that, “like Grace, can only be known at first hand”; the writer, who is the center of identity, is the most important means of opening communication between two worlds. In the other study, “Thematic Patterns in Baldwin’s Essays” (*BlackW*, June 1972), Eugenia Collier attempts to determine a basic assumption or theme running throughout and unifying the essays. She suggests that Baldwin attempts in his essays to explain the personal and political chaos that is our lives and to offer solutions to it. The answer he purports is that we must accept with love ourselves and each other.

Several noteworthy essays deal exclusively with Baldwin’s novels. Robert F. Sayre’s study “James Baldwin’s Other Country,” in *Contemporary American Novelists*, edited by Harry T. Moore (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964), contemplates the importance of self-knowledge in Baldwin’s novels and the fact that this self-knowledge is always a compound of the present and the past. Sayre considers *Another Country* Baldwin’s most valuable book in its projection of Baldwin’s vision. Therman B. O’Daniel considers the novels in “James Baldwin: An Interpretative Study” (*CLAJ*, September 1963) in terms of their treatment of two unpopular subjects, homosexuality and the problems of blacks. The emphasis in this article is on *Another Country*, which O’Daniel argues is carefully structured, corresponding to Greek tragedy and to the Elizabethan tragedy of revenge, with which he compares it in some detail. John S. Lash, in “Baldwin Beside Himself: A Study in Modern Phallicism” (*CLAJ*, December 1964), notes that Baldwin has a conscious need for a value system to replace Christianity, which he denounced, and that he thinks he has found it in “a modern cult of phallicism, the fear and admiration and worship of the male sex organ.” Lash proceeds to discuss *Giovanni’s Room* and *Another Country* in terms of this thesis, noting that in these works heterosexual activity is animalistic and the male characters seek spiritual gratification in homosexual acts.

George E. Kent’s “Baldwin and the Problem of Being” (*CLAJ*, March 1964; reprinted in Gibson’s *Five Black Writers* and in Kent’s *Blackness and the Adventure of Western Culture* [Chicago: Third World Press, 1972]) is a superb study of the search for identity in the novels. In addition to outlining the quest for identity, Kent makes illuminating observations on characterization and technical matters of style, plot development, and the like.

In “The ‘Stink’ of Reality: Mothers and Whores in James Baldwin’s Fiction” (*Literature and Psychology*, 22, 1 [1968]; reprinted in Kenneth Kinamon’s *James Baldwin: A Collection of Critical Essays* [Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974]), Charlotte Alexander offers a fresh psycho-

logical interpretation of love and sex (specifically homosexuality) in Baldwin's works. She points out that both the fascination and the revulsion that most of Baldwin's characters experience for women are based on their childhood experiences with their mothers or surrogate mothers. This results in their maintaining their "virginity" or prostituting themselves, since they fear the "stink" of the reality of love. Alexander's thesis is persuasively developed with extensive supporting evidence. Brian Lee, in "James Baldwin: Caliban to Prospero," in *The Black American Writer, Volume I: Fiction*, edited by C. W. E. Bigsby (Deland, Fla.: Everett/Edwards, 1969), suggests that Baldwin's own feelings about the ironies of a life lived on two levels—that of a black and that of a man—are expressed in the paradoxes confronting his haunted protagonists. Considering the novels, Lee notes that Baldwin treats best the inner experiences of his characters, though occasionally he powerfully evokes the wider society. In his discussion of *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, Lee compares that novel with D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*.

David E. Foster's essay "'Cause My House Fell Down': The Theme of the Fall in Baldwin's Novels" (*Crit*, Winter 1970–1971) attempts to explain how Baldwin uses the theme of man's fall from innocence in his first three novels and why he abandons this theme in *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone*. He suggests that *Go Tell It on the Mountain* is a forceful illustration of John's finding redemption, but that *Giovanni's Room* and *Another Country* fail because Baldwin, having become disillusioned with the Christian theme of redemption, tried to invest the theme of the fall with secular meaning; thus, Baldwin had to abandon this theme altogether. In "Black Women, Black Men" (*Harvard Journal of Afro-American Affairs*, 2, No. 2 [1971]), Felicia George treats the "dynamics of the Black female's relationship with the Black male" in the works of four black writers, including Baldwin. George E. Bell's "The Dilemma of Love in *Go Tell It on the Mountain* and *Giovanni's Room*" (*CLAJ*, March 1974) is an attack on Stanley Macebuh's assertion in *James Baldwin: A Critical Study* (New York: Third Press–Joseph Okpaku, 1973) that both novels fail to provide any answers to the dilemma of love. Bell argues that "Love is an attainable goal," if man overcomes his "puritanical sense of evil and guilt." He goes on to cite the possibilities in both works: Gabriel and Esther, Richard and Elizabeth, and Elisha and John in *Go Tell It on the Mountain*; and Giovanni in *Giovanni's Room*. Donald B. Gibson, in "Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin," an essay in *The Politics of Twentieth-Century Novelists*, edited by George A. Panichas (New York: Hawthorn, 1971), develops the thesis that Ellison and Baldwin are intentionally nonpolitical writers. Although many may disagree with his description of Baldwin as consciously nonpolitical, Gibson develops his argument forcefully and interestingly, discussing mainly *Go Tell It on the Mountain* and *Another Country*.

Although Walter Meserve's study "James Baldwin's 'Agony Way'" (in *The Black American Writer, Volume II: Poetry and Drama*, edited by Bigsby) mentions certain attitudes and ideas (betrayal of the son by the father, the quest for identity, the need for love) that appear in all Baldwin's works, his major emphasis is on the plays. He presents an interesting and lengthy discussion of Baldwin's efforts in the theater. Meserve considers *The Amen Corner* the most successful of Baldwin's plays, but he cites several flaws in both it and *Blues for Mister Charlie*. A good overview of the plays can be found in Darwin T. Turner's article on Baldwin in *Contemporary Dramatists*, edited by James Vinson (New York: St. Martin's, 1971; second edition 1977).

Several essays treat Baldwin's works generally, touching upon his productions in various genres. Kay Boyle's introduction of Baldwin, given when he spoke at Wesleyan College in 1962 ("Introducing James Baldwin," in *Contemporary American Novelists*, edited by Harry T. Moore), includes a brief but eloquent comment on his major concerns and achievements. Augusta Strong, in "Notes on James Baldwin" (*Freedomways*, Spring 1962), assesses the writer's talent, touches upon his themes, and quotes from several of his works in an essay that is so general as to have little usefulness to the Baldwin scholar.

A more satisfactory general treatment of Baldwin's works is Colin MacInnes's "Dark Angel: The Writings of James Baldwin" (*Encounter*, August 1963; reprinted in Donald B. Gibson's *Five Black Writers* [New York: New York University Press, 1970]). Suggesting that James Baldwin is "a premonitory prophet, a fallible sage, a soothsayer," MacInnes notes that Baldwin addresses himself to white America, appealing to it to solve the racial problem. Rather extensive and intensive discussions of Baldwin's works follow. The one flaw in this fine general study is the author's tendency to pause for lengthy explanations that do little to advance the discussion, such as her explanation of her choice of a topic, the lengthy detailing of various views of homosexuality that precedes her discussion of *Giovanni's Room*, and the defense of zealous militancy.

Harvey Breit's "James Baldwin and Two Footnotes," in *The Creative Present: Notes on Contemporary American Fiction*, edited by Nona Balakian and Charles Simmons (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963), suggests that Baldwin's role as race leader and spokesman for his people has a detrimental effect on his creativity. In his conclusion, Breit expresses concern about Baldwin's future as a creative writer. Theodore Gross voices a similar concern in "The World of James Baldwin" (*Crit*, Winter 1964-1965), lamenting that Baldwin has relinquished his role as observer for that of preacher, and that with his growing popularity he is removing himself from the source of his material as well as the honesty which is so necessary for a good writer: Baldwin is allowing the commercial media to dissipate his energies and is sacrificing his artistic

distance and control to play a social role. Beau Fly Jones's "James Baldwin: The Struggle for Identity" (*British Journal of Sociology*, June 1966) abstracts and synthesizes Baldwin's views and extrapolates their relevance to sociology. The essay is painfully sociological in its approach, with such subtitles as "The Problem," "Negro Opportunity-Structures," and "Evaluation."

In "Blood of the Lamb" (in *Amistad I*, edited by John A. Williams and Charles F. Harris [New York: Vintage, 1970]; first published in *White Papers for White Americans*, edited by Herndon [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966]), Calvin C. Herndon considers Baldwin's "syndromes." The first "syndrome" he discusses is Baldwin's involvement with the father figure. The second—Baldwin's homosexuality—Herndon sees as being resolved in *Giovanni's Room*. The third problem—coming to terms with his blackness—Baldwin attempted to resolve through his return to America. Herndon calls the result a "romance," noting that white Americans love Baldwin as they have loved no other black writer, "because of his lack of 'masculine aggressiveness.' In the psyches of most white people," Herndon asserts, "Baldwin does not symbolize the historic fear of the great, black phallus which lurks to rape and pillage." Although Baldwin is a good writer and an honest man, he still must revolve this third "syndrome," Herndon avers, for he is still crying for love. Herndon concludes this essay, which was written in 1964, with a prediction that is uncanny for its accuracy:

Baldwin will change. He will be forced to. He will massage the white man's conscience less, and become more militant. His exotic style, his perfumed words, will undergo a metamorphosis, or should I say a turbulent baptism! When this happens, James Baldwin will not be less eloquent but more crude and brute.

In a later essay, "A Fiery Baptism" (also in *Amistad I*), Herndon suggests that *Blues for Mister Charlie* indicates the accuracy of this prediction. (*No Name In the Street* is, of course, the ultimate realization of the prediction.) Herndon characterizes *Blues for Mister Charlie* as "brute, crude, violent, and bold" and describes Baldwin as "masculine" and "aggressive." For Herndon the play indicates Baldwin's becoming a spokesman for his people, and he notes that it killed the romance between Baldwin and white America, which could not accept a presentation of its sexual feelings about blacks.

Naim Kattan's "Deux Écrivains Américains" (*Écrits du Canada Français*, 17 [1964]) discusses Baldwin's life and treats the general themes in his works. Robert F. Sayre's "James Baldwin's Another Country," cited previously, discusses the early essays, noting that Baldwin's novels are his "other country," through which he has developed his talents, while his nonfiction has broadcast his prophecy and his reports. Raymond

Schroth's "James Baldwin's Search" (*CathW*, December and February 1964) attempts to summarize Baldwin's life and to state the central thesis in his works. Schroth achieves very little in this essay—perhaps because he attempts to achieve so much. Although he praises Baldwin's "intellectual powers" and his ability to make his experiences live for others, there is a slightly derogatory undertone in much of the essay, such as the wry comment, "The fact that he is illogical does not bother him" and the crude summary of *Blues for Mister Charlie* as "a play about a Negro dope addict who comes home to the South from New York to die."

J. Saunders Redding, in "The Problems of the Negro Writer" (*MR*, Autumn–Winter 1964–1965), accuses Baldwin of probing the minds of his white characters while examining the Negro characters only perfunctorily in *Another Country*. He suggests that Baldwin the essayist perceptively articulates the thoughts and feelings of Negroes, but Baldwin the novelist does not lead his audience to understanding. John Rees Moore's criticism of Baldwin in "An Embarrassment of Riches: Baldwin's *Going to Meet the Man*" (*HC*, December 1965) for trying to cram everything into one novel might well be applied to Moore in his efforts to analyze and comment on the stories individually and then to summarize and assess the novels in this one essay. He attempts to tie all this discussion together with the theme of authenticity in Baldwin, noting that Baldwin's authenticity, which is his most valuable quality as a writer, may be found in the autobiographical stories. Edward A. Watson's "The Novels of James Baldwin: Case-Book of a 'Lover's War' with the United States" (*QQ*, Summer 1965; also in *MR*, Summer 1965; and *Marche Romane*, 6 [1965]) studies the works in an effort to illustrate Baldwin's artistry and to prove that Baldwin must be accepted as an artist and not as a civil rights spokesman. Lawrence Langer, in "To Make Freedom Real: James Baldwin and the Conscience of America" (*Americana–Austriaca*, 1966), presents a general overview of Baldwin's writing, noting that his prominence has lain in his ability to speak with both a public and a private voice, and praising his ability to transcend bitterness and reliably report the American scene, until *Blues for Mister Charlie*.

Two other essays published in 1966 give general reviews of Baldwin's works: Mario Matterassi's "James Baldwin, un profeta del nostro tempo (con un brève inedito)" [James Baldwin, a Prophet of Our Times] (*Il Ponte*, March 31, 1966) and Fred L. Standley's "James Baldwin: The Crucial Situation" (*SAQ*, Summer 1966).

Fred Peterson's "James Baldwin and Eduardo Mallea: Two Essayists' Search for Identity" (*Discourse*, Winter 1967) discusses Baldwin's works as spiritual autobiography, the theme of which is the search for himself—both his personal self and his social being within American soci-

ety—and compares Baldwin as a writer of spiritual autobiography in search of his identity with the Argentinian author Eduardo Mallea. Nathan A. Scott, in his general discussion of black literature, “Judgment Marked by a Cellar: The American Negro Writer and the Dialectic of Despair” (in *The Shapeless God: Essays on Modern Fiction*, edited by Harry J. Mooney, Jr., and Thomas F. Staley [Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1968]), devotes considerable attention to a discussion of Baldwin in terms of the theme of the whole essay, the myth of the wounded Adam. Gregory Mowe and W. Scott Nobles, in “James Baldwin’s Message for White America” (*QJS*, April 1972), list Baldwin’s rhetorical themes and the various roles he assumes (artist, outraged black, preacher) in his efforts to identify those themes favorably with his white audience. In “‘You Can’t Go Home Again’: James Baldwin and the South” (*CLAJ*, September 1974), Daryl Dance studies Baldwin’s attitude toward the South, considering the role of “the old country” in his quest for a home and an identity.

A final item that may be of assistance is the collection of passages from reviews and studies of Baldwin’s books in *A Library of Literary Criticism*, Vol. I, edited by Dorothy N. Curley, Maurice Kramer, and Elaine Kramer (New York: Ungar, 1969).

PERSONAL CRITICISM OF BALDWIN

Harold R. Isaacs’s interesting study of the attitudes of leading black American writers toward Africa, in “Five Writers and Their African Ancestors” (*Phylon*, Winter 1960), includes a comprehensive coverage of Baldwin’s views of Africa prior to 1960. It is, of course, seriously dated, inasmuch as Baldwin has had a great deal more to say on the subject since then. Robert Cole’s “Baldwin’s Burden” (*PR*, Summer 1964) is a trite and insignificant comment on Baldwin in which Cole attacks Baldwin for hating whites, predicting the doom of the white man and America, and describing the black children who integrated New Orleans schools as aristocrats. Cole appears to delight in citing quotations from Baldwin out of context to substantiate his attack, and offers in rebuttal highly selective evidence such as a quotation from a black woman who said that white children suffered more attacks than black children during the integration of schools in 1960 and 1961.

Another attack on Baldwin that likewise makes use of isolated quotations (thereby misrepresenting their broader implications) is Sylvester Leaks’s “James Baldwin: I Know His Name” (*Freedomways*, Winter 1963), in which Leaks asserts that Baldwin, like Wright, neither loves, admires, nor understands blacks. Leaks is in turn attacked in Calvin C. Herndon’s previously cited essay in *Amistad 1* and in Julian Mayfield’s “And Then Came Baldwin” (*Freedomways*, Spring 1963; reprinted in

John Henrik Clarke's *Harlem, U.S.A.* [New York: Macmillan, 1971]). Mayfield suggests that such attacks as Leaks mounts are motivated by Baldwin's critical and commercial success and by his homosexuality. He praises Baldwin's talent and comments that unlike most blacks, Baldwin is still trying to continue dialogue with the white world. Robert A. Lee's "James Baldwin and Matthew Arnold: Thoughts on 'Relevance'" (*CLAJ*, May 1971) considers Baldwin's dilemma as contemporary black artist, with the many varied demands made of him by radical blacks and others who call for a new black aesthetic (one which is anti-Western) and who demand that he be among other things, appropriate, unique, and original.

FUTURE NEEDS IN BALDWIN CRITICISM

Although many illuminating and penetrating studies (as well as some vague and confused ones) have been written on Baldwin the man and Baldwin the artist, the definitive study of James Baldwin has not yet appeared. A full assessment of his later works—*No Name in the Street*, *One Day When I Was Lost*, *If Beale Street Could Talk*—will obviously demand a reconsideration and a reevaluation of his talents, his philosophy, and even his literary style and techniques. The one thing now certain is that Baldwin, both the man and the artist, is still in the process of development.

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