This Companion offers fresh insight into the art and politics of James Baldwin, one of the most important writers and provocative cultural critics of the twentieth century. Black, gay, and gifted, he was hailed as a “spokesman for the race,” although he, at times controversially, eschewed titles and classifications of all kinds. Thirteen original essays examine his classic novels and nonfiction as well as his work across lesser-examined domains: poetry, music, theatre, sermon, photo-text, children’s literature, public media, comedy, and artistic collaboration. In doing so, The Cambridge Companion to James Baldwin captures the power and influence of his work during the civil rights era as well as his relevance in the “post-race” transnational twenty-first century, when his prescient questioning of the boundaries of race, sex, love, leadership, and country assumes new urgency.

Michele Elam is Professor of English, Olivier Nomellini Family University Bass Fellow in Undergraduate Education, and former Director of African and American Studies at Stanford University. She is the author of Race, Work, and Desire in American Literature, 1860–1930 (2003) and The Souls of Mixed Folk: Race, Politics, and Aesthetics in the New Millennium (2011).

A complete list of books in the series is at the back of this book.
For

Harry Justin Elam, Jr.
## List of Illustrations

List of Illustrations: page xi

## Notes on Contributors

Notes on Contributors: xiii

## Acknowledgments

Acknowledgments: xvii

## Chronology

Chronology: xix

### Introduction: Baldwin’s Art

Introduction: Baldwin’s Art: 1

MICHELE ELAM

### PART I GENRES AND MÉLANGES

#### 1 “Closer to Something Unnameable”: Baldwin’s Novel Form

“Closer to Something Unnameable”: Baldwin’s Novel Form: 25

JACQUELINE GOLDSBY

#### 2 Baldwin’s Poetics

Baldwin’s Poetics: 41

META DUEWA JONES

#### 3 Go Tell It on the Mountain: Baldwin’s Sermonic

Go Tell It on the Mountain: Baldwin’s Sermonic: 56

SOYICA DIGGS COLBERT

#### 4 Paying Dues and Playing the Blues: Baldwin’s Existential Jazz

Paying Dues and Playing the Blues: Baldwin’s Existential Jazz: 70

RADICLANI CLYTUS

#### 5 Baldwin’s Theatre

Baldwin’s Theatre: 85

E. PATRICK JOHNSON

#### 6 Baldwin’s Humor

Baldwin’s Humor: 100

DANIELLE C. HEARD
## CONTENTS

7  Baldwin and Yoran Cazac’s “Child’s Story for Adults”  
NICHOLAS BOGGS  

**PART II  COLLABORATIONS AND CONFLUENCES**

8  Baldwin’s Collaborations  
BRIAN NORMAN  

9  Baldwin and Black Leadership  
ERICA R. EDWARDS  

10  “As Though a Metaphor Were Tangible”: Baldwin’s Identities  
ALIYYAH I. ABDUR-RAHMAN  

11  Baldwin and the Occasion of Love  
CHRISTOPHER FREEBURG  

12  Baldwin’s FBI Files as Political Biography  
DOUGLAS FIELD  

13  Domesticating Baldwin’s Global Imagination  
MAGDALENA J. ZABOROWSKA  

Coda: The Heart of Baldwin  
D. QUENTIN MILLER  

Guide to Further Reading  

Works by James Baldwin  
Index  

© in this web service Cambridge University Press  
www.cambridge.org
ILLUSTRATIONS


13.1 Magdalena J. Zaborowska, front door of Chez Baldwin, St. Paul-de-Vence, June 2000. 214

13.2 Magdalena J. Zaborowska, living room of Chez Baldwin, St. Paul-de-Vence, June 2000. 216
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Aliyyah I. Abdur-Rahman is Associate Professor of English, African and Afro-American Studies, and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Brandeis University. She is the author of Against the Closet: Black Political Longing and the Erotics of Race (2012).

Nicholas Boggs is Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of English at New York University. He has published essays in Callaloo and James Baldwin Now. His book-in-progress about James Baldwin’s collaboration with French artist Yoran Cazac has been supported by a fellowship from the MacDowell Colony and a grant from the Jerome Foundation.


Soyica Diggs Colbert is Associate Professor at Georgetown University. She is the author of The African American Theatrical Body: Reception, Performance, and the Stage (2011) and has published in Theatre Journal, Theatre Topics, and elsewhere.

Erica R. Edwards is Associate Professor of English at the University of California, Riverside. She is the author of Charisma and the Fictions of Black Leadership (2012) and has published in American Quarterly, Callaloo, and American Literary History.

Michele Elam is Professor of English, Olivier Nomellini Family University Bass Fellow in Undergraduate Education, and former Director of African and American Studies at Stanford University. The author of Race, Work, and Desire in American Literature, 1860–1930 (2003) and The Souls of Mixed Folk: Race, Politics, and Aesthetics in the New Millennium (2011), she has published in
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

American Literature, African American Review, Theatre Journal, and Genre, among others.

DOUGLAS FIELD is Lecturer in twentieth-century literature at the University of Manchester. He is the editor of A Historical Guide to James Baldwin (2009) and founding coeditor of the James Baldwin Review. He is author of James Baldwin (2011) and the forthcoming All Those Strangers: The Lives and Art of James Baldwin (2015).

CHRISTOPHER FREEBURG is Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and author of Melville and the Idea of Blackness: Race and Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century America (2012). He is working on a monograph on Baldwin and everyday life. He has published widely on race and American literature, including the forthcoming “James Baldwin and the Unhistoric Life of Race.”

JACQUELINE GOLDSBY is Professor at Yale University. She is the author of A Spectacular Secret: Lynching in American Life and Literature (2006), which won the Modern Language Association William S. Scarborough Prize (2007), and coeditor with Philip Brian Harper of The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man (2012).

DANIELLE C. HEARD is Assistant Professor at the University of California at Davis. The recipient of a Mellon Mays fellowship, she is the author of the forthcoming Buggy Jiving: Comic Strategies of the Black Avant-Garde.


META DUEWA JONES is Associate Professor of English at Howard University. She is the author of The Muse Is Music: Jazz Poetry from the Harlem Renaissance to the Spoken Word (2011), which received an honorable mention for the Modern Language Association William Sanders Scarborough Prize. Her current book-length project examines contemporary black writers’ visually expressive aesthetics and black visual artists’ literary engagements with photography, painting, poetry, and other texts.

D. QUENTIN MILLER is Professor and Chair of English at Suffolk University. His publications include Re-Viewing James Baldwin: Things Not Seen (2000) and “A Criminal Power”: James Baldwin and the Law (2012). He is currently completing
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

_The Routledge Introduction to African American Literature_; his next projects include books on John Edgar Wideman and American literature of the 1980s.


**Magdalena J. Zaborowska** is Professor at the University of Michigan and author of *James Baldwin’s Turkish Decade: Erotics of Exile* (2009), winner of the 2009 William Sanders Scarborough Prize; *How We Found America: Reading Gender through East-European Immigrant Narratives* (1995); and the forthcoming *James Baldwin in the Company of Women*. 
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This edited collection came together in a truly collaborative spirit. The editor would like to thank those whose names appear in the table of contents. They enthusiastically formed a close community in dialogue about all things Baldwin. In honor of Baldwin, who loved good conversation over food and drink, the contributors met over meals to talk, confer, share insights, and trade resources during the writing of their respective essays whenever they found themselves together at a conference. One important member of this group, who we wish could have appeared in the table of contents, José Esteban Muñoz, passed away as he was completing his essay for this volume. We would like to honor him here with the recognition that his influence runs throughout this Companion. The editor would also like to acknowledge the following individuals whose efforts were essential to the completion of this book. Ray Ryan, the senior editor of English and American Literature at Cambridge University Press, always appreciated the necessity for a Cambridge Companion to this brilliant writer and thinker, and encouraged my vision for it. Jennifer DeVere Brody contributed substantially to an early version of the essay on Baldwin and children’s literature and was an important advisor throughout. Nigel Hatton prepared both the Chronology and Further Reading sections. Alice E. M. Underwood, PhD student in comparative literature at Stanford University, with good-natured attention to both duty and detail, helped copyedit and proofread the essays and assisted at every stage with the preparation of the manuscript for press. Harry J. Elam, Jr., offered vitalizing intellectual and emotional support, which enabled his wife to spend a joyful sabbatical entirely devoted to Baldwin’s works. He deserves special credit for encouraging her to spend a marvelous week in New York in the spring of 2014 with no other charge than to attend all the inaugural events of the city’s “Year of James Baldwin.” Finally, the editor wishes to acknowledge a debt to her daughter, Claire Elise. Currently an undergraduate, she and her peers are among the target audiences for this collection, and we hope it leads them to a James Baldwin who speaks as powerfully to their time as he has to the generations before them.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>James Arthur Jones, first child of Emma Berdis Jones and a father never revealed, is born on August 2 in Harlem Hospital, New York, New York.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Emma Berdis Jones marries the Reverend David Baldwin and James is given his stepfather’s surname. His parents have eight additional children: George, Barbara, Wilmer, David, Gloria, Ruth, Elizabeth, and Paula.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>Baldwin attends Public School 24.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>Baldwin attends Frederick Douglass Junior High School where his influences include the poet, teacher, and literary club advisor, Countee Cullen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Baldwin begins preaching at Fireside Pentecostal Assembly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Baldwin graduates from DeWitt Clinton High School, where his classmates include Sol Stein and Richard Avedon. He leaves the church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>The Reverend David Baldwin dies. The funeral was held on James’s nineteenth birthday, which was also both the day his stepfather’s last child was born and the day of the Harlem Riot of 1943.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Baldwin has his first book review, on Maxim Gorki, published in <em>The Nation</em>. With the help of Richard Wright, he wins a Eugene Saxton Memorial Trust Fellowship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Baldwin wins a Rosenwald Foundation fellowship and publishes his first short story, “Previous Condition.” Fed up with racism in the United States, where he “was going to kill somebody or be killed,” Baldwin moves to Paris.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>“Many Thousands Gone,” a critique of Richard Wright, appears in <em>Partisan Review</em>. This leads to a rift between Baldwin and Wright.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chronology

1953 Publishes *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, his first novel. Langston Hughes writes to Baldwin with congratulations. Baldwin's mentor and friend, the painter Beauford Delaney, moves to Paris.

1954 Awarded Guggenheim fellowship.


1957 Meets the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. Travels to the American South as correspondent for *Harper’s Magazine*. The short story “Sonny’s Blues” appears in *Partisan Review*.

1959 Awarded Ford Foundation grant.


1962 Baldwin visits Africa (Dakar, Senegal; Conakry, Guinea; and Freetown, Sierra Leone) for the first time. *Another Country* is published by Dial.

1963 “The Fire Next Time” is published in *The New Yorker* and subsequently in book form by Dial. Baldwin appears on the cover of *Time* magazine. He receives the George Polk Memorial Award.

1963 In May, Baldwin meets with Attorney General Robert Kennedy at his home in McLean, Virginia, bringing a group of civil rights activists and artists, including Lorraine Hansberry, Harry Belafonte, Jerome Smith, Kenneth Clark, and Clarence B. Jones.

1963 Leads a civil rights demonstration in Paris on August 19.


1965 *Going to Meet the Man*, Baldwin’s first short-story collection, is published by Dial. Baldwin travels to Israel.

1966 Baldwin completes *Tell Me How Long the Train’s Been Gone*, his fourth novel, in Rumeli, Hisari, Turkey.

1967 “War Crimes Tribunal” is published in *Freedomways*. Baldwin asserts that any official international tribunal should be held in Harlem.

Conference. Deeply affected by the assassination of King on April 4, Baldwin quits the Malcolm X project and returns to Europe.

1969
“Negroes Are Anti-Semitic Because They’re Anti-White” published in Black Anti-Semitism and Jewish Racism by Richard W. Baron.

1970
Baldwin falls ill with hepatitis. Sedat Pakay makes the twelve-minute film James Baldwin: From Another Place, released by Hudson Film Works; portions of this film were incorporated into the American Masters/PBS biography of the author.

1971

1972
Dial publishes both One Day When I Was Lost: A Scenario Based on “The Autobiography of Malcolm X” and No Name in the Street, Baldwin’s third essay collection. Collaborates with Ray Charles at the Newport Jazz Festival.

1973
Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., interviews Baldwin, the dancer Josephine Baker, and novelist Cecil Brown in St. Paul-de-Vence.

1974
If Beale Street Could Talk, Baldwin’s fifth novel, is published by Dial Press. Baldwin celebrates his fiftieth birthday in St. Paul-de-Vence.

1976
The Devil Finds Work, Baldwin’s meditation on the film industry, is published by Dial. The children’s book Little Man Little Man: A Story of Childhood (illustrations by Yoran Cazac) is also published by Dial.

1978
Begins first of three teaching stints at Bowling Green College. City College of New York awards Baldwin the Martin Luther King Memorial Medal.

1979
Baldwin teaches at the University of California at Berkeley. Dial publishes Baldwin’s sixth novel, Just above My Head. Beauford Delaney dies. Baldwin travels to Russia for the first time.

1980
Participates in dialogue with Chinua Achebe on the “African aesthetic” as part of a meeting of the African Literature Association at the University of Florida. Makes a trip through the American South, which forms the basis of the television documentary I Heard It through the Grapevine.

1981
“The Evidence of Things Not Seen,” Baldwin’s essay on Atlanta child murders, is published in Playboy.
### Chronology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td><em>Jimmy's Blues: Selected Poems</em> is published by Michael Joseph. Begins teaching literature and African-American studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where he stays for several months with regular visits to his home in St. Paul-de-Vence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Baldwin is hospitalized for exhaustion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Baldwin is made an officer of the Legion of Honor in France during a ceremony presided over by president François Mitterand. Baldwin makes a trip to Russia with his brother David.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Baldwin is diagnosed with cancer of the esophagus. He works on “The Welcome Table” and other writing projects while being cared for by his brother David. Dies at home on December 1. Viewings take place in St. Paul-de-Vence and Harlem and a funeral service is held at St. John the Divine. Thousands attend and hear Baldwin eulogized by famed writers such as Amiri Baraka, Toni Morrison, and Maya Angelou. Baldwin is buried on December 8 at Ferncliff Cemetery, Hartsdale, New York.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>