

Sexism, Hypermasculinity, and Homophobia within James Baldwin's Life and Literature:

An Annotated Bibliography

Baldwin, James and Nikki Giovanni. "Nikki Giovanni and James Baldwin in conversation on 'SOUL!' PART 1 (1971)," All Arts TV, *YouTube*, 16 Dec. 2022, www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFGkNEt30Fo.

This is a video of a conversation between James Baldwin and Nikki Giovanni—both Black writers and activists. In this recording, they discuss: the ways in which slavery continues to affect African-Americans; the internal and external struggles that Black people experience in trying to survive a society rooted in white supremacy; and the importance of working to change America's society for the benefit of Black lives.

Baldwin argues that because of slavery—and the anti-Blackness that continues in the United States after it—Black men do not feel as though they are men, which causes them to be unsuccessful at correctly showing love to their Black wives and children. Giovanni challenges his statement by arguing that Black men are more than what white people say they are, so Black men and women should support one another, and work together, in order to defeat racial injustice. Ultimately, both Baldwin and Giovanni want people to understand that the oppression of African-Americans is still an issue in need of being addressed, and by continuing to speak and educate on this issue, hope is given for future generations to live in an American society which no longer perpetuates the false belief of Black individuals being inferior to white ones. This video will be of interest to viewers hoping to educate themselves more on the misogynist ideals held by members of the

Black community and the reasons for such ideals. This video is also great for those looking to actively watch and examine Baldwin's sexist and misogynistic ideologies.

Baldwin, James and Audre Lorde. "Revolutionary Hope: A Conversation Between Audre Lorde & James Baldwin." *Mosaic Literary Magazine*, no. 39, Summer 2016, pp. 42–52.

EBSCOhost,

search.ebscohost-com.ccsf.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lkh&AN=118429482&site=ehost-live.

This is a conversation between James Baldwin and Audre Lorde, which was originally published in *Essence Magazine* in 1984. Baldwin and Lorde—both queer, Black writers—discuss: the struggles of being Black in America, Black masculinity, issues of sexism and heteronormativity in the Black community, and the need for Black women and men to unite in order to fight against America's anti-Blackness. Baldwin makes an argument surrounding the idea that being an African-American man is the only real crime in this country by explaining how Black men are made to feel as though they are not truly men (51). Lorde responds to his claims by arguing that being an African-American woman is not only a crime in this society, but also in the Black community, as Black men abuse and assert dominance over Black women. Through this conversation, Baldwin and Lorde explore the need for the African-American community's sexism to be addressed, and the methods by which that can happen. This dialogue is useful for those interested in learning more about the deeply rooted misogyny in the Black community and the ways the struggles of Black women are ignored when addressing anti-Blackness.

Field, Douglas. "Looking for Jimmy Baldwin: Sex, Privacy, and Black Nationalist Fervor."

Callaloo, vol. 27, no. 2, 2004, pp. 457–480. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3300682.

This article analyzes homophobia in the Black community and the effects it had on James Baldwin's literature. It acknowledges Baldwin's resistance to using LGBTQ+ labels and portraying two Black men as lovers. It focuses on the ways in which well-respected Black activists, such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Eldridge Cleaver, excluded Baldwin from being part of movements, due to his homosexuality. Deep attention is paid to the sexist and hypermasculine ideologies upheld by the Black Panther Party as a whole, but the article further explains the public shame that Eldridge Cleaver placed upon Baldwin because of his sexuality. It then explains how Baldwin tried to assimilate to Black Nationalism by: putting his identity as a Black man before his identity as gay and using sexist and homophobic language in order to prove his masculinity. Essentially, the author wants readers to understand that Baldwin adjusted his views to be more misogynistic as a result of being emasculated, humiliated, and outcast by the Black community. This text is extremely worthwhile for those looking to become more knowledgeable about the ways Black Nationalism further ingrained sexism, homophobia, and hypermasculinity into African-American culture. It also helps explain much of the sexist and hypermasculine views found in Baldwin's literature and interviews.

Flanders, Laura and Eddie Glaude. "James Baldwin: Lessons for the US." *The Laura Flanders Show*, 5 Feb. 2021, lauraflanders.org/2021/02/james-baldwin-lessons-for-the-us/.

In this episode, Laura Flanders—a journalist and broadcaster—interviews Eddie Glaude, who is chair of African-American studies at Princeton University and author of *Begin Again*—a book about James Baldwin and racism in the United States (02:52-02:56).

Flanders and Glaude spend the show discussing reasons for the resurrection of Baldwin's literature and the ways in which his writings assist people today in understanding, and changing, oppression in America. Glaude argues that Baldwin's comeback is because his Black, queer identity allowed him to recognize, and defy, the United State's inequalities; he says that Baldwin's clear identification of America's white supremacy results in people feeling guided by his knowledge. Flanders and Glaude also discuss: the influence women had on Baldwin's writings, his hypermasculinity, and times he was challenged on his sexism by Black women. Glaude explains that Baldwin believed that many of America's issues had to do with people's personal problems. So: Glaude declares that he and others have learned, and can learn, from Baldwin's teachings—and mistakes—in order to change themselves within and consequently change the world. This video is beneficial to people looking to learn more about themselves, change-making, and injustices in America through James Baldwin's ideologies and errors.

Norman, Brian. "Crossing Identitarian Lines: Women's Liberation and James Baldwin's Early Essays." *Women's Studies*, vol. 35, no. 3, Taylor & Francis Group, 2006, pp. 241–64, doi:10.1080/00497870600571893.

This article analyzes the role of James Baldwin's essays in the 1970s movement concerning the liberation of white women. It explains the connection between the

exclusion of women and the dismissal of Baldwin (due to his homosexuality) in the Black nationalism movement. It also explores the link between a rise in Black masculinity and white feminism in the late 1960s. Norman, the author, argues that Baldwin was an accidental protofeminist, as his early essays commonly included white women as powerful, important characters in uncovering issues involving white supremacy and racism. The article also investigates the reaffirmation of power and masculinity that Black men find in white women, but not in Black women. It also focuses on Baldwin's words and ideologies which were incorporated into and popularized by the white feminist movement. Readers interested in deepening their understanding about the link between Black masculinity and white feminism, how they participate in oppression against Black women, and the ways in which Baldwin's toxic masculinity aided the white feminist movement but hindered Black women's liberation.

Rodriques, Elias. "The Black Feminist Roots of James Baldwin's 'If Beale Street Could Talk'."

The Nation, 16 Dec. 2018,

www.thenation.com/article/archive/barry-jenkins-james-baldwin-beale-street-black-feminism-essay/.

This magazine article examines the ideologies of Black feminism that are found in James Baldwin's novel, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, and the procedures by which the movie adaptation will more strongly focus on issues of intersectionality concerning race, gender, and sexuality. It recognizes that Baldwin's work has been brought into revival because of its significant relevance to issues and movements in America today, but it acknowledges

that much of what is written in his pieces is problematic, as they often perpetuate sexism by advocating for Black liberation solely for Black men. It explains how *If Beale Street Could Talk* is built on the beliefs of Black feminism, as it is one of Baldwin's only works to incorporate the perspective of Black women and display the unique oppression concerning racism and sexism that they experience. The article notes that the book mainly focuses on the oppression of Black men, and it mentions the ways in which the movie will do more to highlight the oppression African-American women endure. The article insists that, like the movie, we should use Baldwin's revival as a way to build on his teachings in order to give hope of a better life for all Black people in America—not just Black men. This article will be of interest for readers looking to understand sexism and erasure of Black women, in both society and Baldwin's writings, and the ways in which people can better advocate for Black women and tell their stories.

Ross, Marlon B. "Baldwin's Sissy Heroics." *African American Review*, vol. 46, no. 4, Winter 2013, pp. 633–651. *EBSCOhost*,
[search-ebscohost-com.ccsf.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lkh&AN=98033009](http://search-ebscohost-com.ccsf.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lkh&AN=98033009&site=ehost-live)
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This text explores James Baldwin's examination of his own identity as a Black, homosexual man in his memoir *No Name in the Street*. It focuses on a sexual encounter found in Baldwin's essay in which he is aggressively groped by a white man and uses it as a way to explain white supremacy's persecution of gay, African-American men. The author dissects Baldwin's declaration of his intersectional identity as a Black, queer man

being the reason he is deemed a “f*gg*t” and “sissy” by acknowledging: fears of homosexual men being a societal risk during the Cold War, hypermasculine and homophobic viewpoints upheld by the Black nationalism movement, and the difference in Baldwin’s struggles as a Black gay writer and Truman Capote’s as a white, gay one. Though he does recognize Baldwin’s use of hypermasculine language and muteness regarding his sexuality, Ross argues that Baldwin consistently used his “[B]lack sissy persona”, his embodiment of feminine energy, in order to demolish the homophobia connected to white supremacy (638). Overall, Ross wants readers to not consider Baldwin’s silence and ultramasculine language as a betrayal to the Queer community, because as he wrestled with public shame for his identity, he continued to oppose homophobia and hypermasculinity with his feminine characteristics. This article will be of great use to readers interested in learning more about the connections between white supremacy and homophobia in the emasculation of Black men, and it will also be a helpful tool in furthering understanding regarding the struggles Baldwin continually battled in trying to end oppression for Black and homosexual men.

Thorsson, Courtney. “James Baldwin and Black Women's Fiction.” *African American Review*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2013, pp. 615–631. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/24589858.

This journal article explores the influence that James Baldwin’s fiction has on fiction written by Black women, particularly in the way they portray homosexuality between Black girls. It focuses on the writings of three authors: Gayle Jones, Toni Morrison, and Gloria Naylor, and argues that the lesbian desires presented in their novels are

problematic, as they reflect the troubling homosexual relationships in Baldwin's own fiction. It claims that Baldwin's novels concerning homosexuality exude both heteronormativity—and hypermasculinity—because they solely involve love between white and Black men and never use LGBTQ+ labels. The article states that this is a result of toxic, Black masculinity, which taunted Baldwin for being gay, and therefore shamed him for having attributes similar to those of Black women. Though the article admits, and proves, that Jones, Morrison, and Naylor learned from Baldwin's novels to write about sexuality and include strong female characters unlike he did, the author concludes that all three writers celebrate heteronormativity—and hypermasculinity— by not representing Black lesbians in their novels. This article will be helpful to those interested in learning more about the toxic masculinity rooted in Black culture and the way it stems into sexism and homophobia, or those searching to become more knowledgeable about the effects hypermasculinity has had on novels written by Black authors.

Vogul, Joseph. "On James Baldwin's Radical Writing for Playboy Magazine." Literary Hub, 4 Apr. 2019, lithub.com/on-james-baldwins-radical-writing-for-playboy-magazine/.

This article explores James Baldwin's evolution in comfort regarding his masculinity as a Black, gay man and his education concerning Black Feminism. It focuses on "Freaks and the American Ideal of Manhood", an essay he submitted to Playboy magazine in 1985. Baldwin's essay: grapples with the topic of intersectionality with respect to gender, sexuality, and race; examines what it means to be a man in America; and explores the idea of all people being androgynous—all Black feminist ideals. The author, Vogul,

examines and explains the sexism that took place during Baldwin's generation in America and recognizes the ways in which Black and homosexual men were not included in conversations concerning manhood. Vogul deems this essay as Baldwin's most vulnerable, as it was his first to undisguisedly explore his sexuality and masculinity in a thoroughly Black feminist manner after years of struggling to fully embrace his individuality as a Black and homosexual man. He considers this essay to be tremendously influential to the deconstruction of hypermasculinity within society and Baldwin himself. For those interested in reading more about Baldwin's acceptance in regards to his own intersectional identity and the importance of Black feminism to his learning, this article is highly beneficial.

Williams, Anthony J. "James Baldwin's Black Queer Legacy." *Electric Literature*, 23 Mar. 2017, electricliterature.com/james-baldwins-black-queer-legacy/.

In this blog post, a Black, queer person explains the ways in which Baldwin has made them feel as though their experience with oppression is shared and understood, but they also explore reasons as to why they undergo identity erasure as a result of Baldwin's legacy. They mention a conversation between Baldwin and Audre Lorde where he claimed Black men were the only criminalized people in society, and they express why this comment made them feel as though Baldwin only fought against racial injustice for Black men. The article then concentrates on the film *I Am Not Your Negro*, which was meant to authentically represent Baldwin, but the author says the film only mentioned his homosexuality once. They argue that though the film accurately presents the struggles of

being Black in a white supremacist America, not fully recognizing Baldwin's sexuality is disgraceful to him and the rest of the Black, queer community. They then explain how Baldwin's literature concerning Black and homosexuality identities assisted them in self-acceptance, hence they vouch for the importance of depictions of Black queerness in media. This blog will be of particular interest to readers who would like to understand more about the significance of identity representation for Black, queer people. It also grants insight into the way Baldwin's own identity acknowledgment is extremely important to, and for, his readers.