



# “The Evidence of Things Not Seen”

## Queering Europe with James Baldwin

*u<sup>b</sup>*

22 - 23 February 2018  
Hochschulstrasse 4, Hauptgebäude  
3012 Bern

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<sup>b</sup>  
**UNIVERSITÄT  
BERN**

Interdisziplinäres Zentrum für  
Geschlechterforschung (IZFG)

James Baldwin's work is preeminent in discussions around race in the US. Baldwin's writing, his persona as well as his public speeches, interviews and discussions have been rediscovered, rediffused and revived with the formation of the Black Lives Matter Movement, through Queer of Color Theory and activism, in the critical and artistic writing of Ta-Nehisi Coates and Claudia Rankine, by the Oscar nominated film "I am not your Negro", and not least within Baldwin studies themselves, as the collected works, anthologies and journals of recent years show. They jointly refer to the pertinence of his analysis of race as a persistent structuring category in neoliberal times, to the aesthetics and eloquence of his writings, as well as to its reverberations for queer-intersectional political activisms and academic approaches.

Baldwin has long been regarded as an African American in exile, whose primary concern with race was about the US. However, a growing scholarly body of critical race, queer and intersectionality studies have questioned the idea of Europe's white innocence, and asked for the ongoing effects of its colonial legacy, especially for Europeans of Color. In the context of these new developments, the focus on Baldwin's work has shifted to the question how Baldwin's writing about Europe and his artistic vision in general, "formed and informed by a black queer imaginative capacity", can also be used for insight into racial relations in Europe. Moreover, the circulation of films, interviews and texts from and of Baldwin on social media, have given James Baldwin a new topicality within intersectionally formed movements of People of Color, who fight deadly racist structures, racial and sexual profiling, mass-incarcerations within the asylum industrial complex, exclusion from residential rights, citizenship, and the reverberations of everyday racism.

The conference brings together scholars, artists and activists drawing on James Baldwin to engage with and question racial relations in the spatio-temporal formations condensed in, but not limited to the geographical space of Europe. We explore this renewed interest in Baldwin's work, the trajectory of this reception as well as the theoretical and political resonance his writing has had for and within these spatio-temporal formations. We will do so from a decolonial queer- feminist perspective, asking about the points of connection, but also the boundedness of his vision, and the delimitations this brings about, especially the theoretical and representational absences in Baldwin' work with regard to the positionality of Black women and lesbians, and for things unseen or overseen by Baldwin himself.

To participate at the conference, please register by email until February 15: [vanessa.naef@izfg.unibe.ch](mailto:vanessa.naef@izfg.unibe.ch)

Thursday, 22.02.18, H201, Hauptgebäude, Hochschulstr. 4

18:15 Keynote / Public Lecture  
Apparitions of the As-Yet-Unseen: Baldwin, Intelligibility, and Contemporary Lesbian of Color Life-Worlds, Theories and Practices in France  
Prof. Dr. Paola Bacchetta

20:30 Conference Dinner, IZFG, Vereinsweg 23

Friday, 23.02.18, A304, Hauptgebäude, Hochschulstr. 4

09:00 Welcoming and Introduction  
Jovita dos Santos Pinto, Patricia Purtschert

09:30 When I say dream, I don't mean vision – A live radio show about counter mythologies  
Amal Alhaag, Maria Guggenbichler

10:30 Coffee Break

11:00 *Panel I: Leukerbad in Circulation*  
*Moderation: Tina Büchler*  
Artistic memorialisation of James Baldwin in Leukerbad  
Sasha Huber  
  
The Black Boy looks at the Black Boy looking at the Black Boy  
Julian Warner

I Am a Neg  
Madafi Pierre

12:30 Lunch

13:30 *Panel II: Baldwin and the Radical Politics of Love*  
*Moderation: Noémi Michel*  
What will happen to all that beauty then? James Baldwin and Black Intersectional Poesis in Europe  
Vanessa E. Thompson

Beneath The Open Sky—James Baldwin's Negro and the Other Stranger(s) in the Room: Imagining a Future History of Black Queer Becoming in a Global World  
Keelyn Bradley

15:00 Coffee

15:30 Closing Discussion (1h)  
Commentator: Ana Sobral