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From Baldwin's Paris to Benjamin's: the Architectonics of Race and Sexuality in Giovanni's Room.

MAGDALENA J. ZABOROWSKA

This essay reads two strange bedfellows who employ Paris as an architectural and narrative referent to re-script Western cultural identity. In Giovanni's Room (1956), James Baldwin deploys a story of a 'maid's room'/closet to deconstruct post-World War II Americanness as racialized/sexualized and transnational. In The Arcades Project (1927-40), Walter Benjamin celebrates the covered passage as a structural symbol of the "capital of the nineteenth century." Reading Benjamin through Baldwin in our own troubled century helps us to see how the histories of transatlantic slavery, colonialism, and ethnic genocides shaped American and Western stories, spaces, and selves.

From the Harlem ghetto of his childhood, to the affluent salons of international literati he came to know in his later years, James Baldwin (1924-87) was perhaps the best-known African American author, intellectual, and civil rights spokesperson of the 1960s.¹ Like many other writers at mid-twentieth century—amid the post-1945 tumultuous transition into the Cold War and Civil Rights struggles—Baldwin believed that literature had power to alter social relations by changing individuals and challenging racialized power structures.² But while his commitment to writing as a tool of social change has been noted by virtually all of his critics, his life-long emphasis on links between spatiality and American identity as a function of race and sexuality has been virtually ignored.³ As I will show in this paper, having articulated this important notion several decades before theory scholars caught up with it, Baldwin's works link literal and literary built forms as vehicles for identity,⁴ and thus demonstrate material consequences and mutual dependence of discourse and space. I will examine this important contribution through an interdisciplinary lens of American and African American Studies approaches to literature and architecture as scripts of identity.⁵

In an early essay, "Preservation of Innocence" (1949), in which he links writing, sexuality, and race, Baldwin defines the novel as a genre that must perform specific cultural work by means of combating reductive notions of identity:

“A novel insistently demands the presence and passion of human beings, who cannot ever be labeled. . . . all things involving human beings interlock. Without this passion we may all smother to death, locked in those airless, labeled cells, which isolate us from each other and separate us from ourselves.”⁶

Baldwin illustrates passionless identity by means of an architectural metaphor of an “airless, labeled cell,” thus implying claustrophobia, segregation, and alienation. To a reader of American culture aware of Baldwin’s blackness, this metaphor becomes immediately racialized; it connotes Jim Crow South, cities split by train tracks, separate facilities for Whites and Blacks, inner city riots, and jails filled with male bodies of color. Interestingly, this epidermally charged metaphor of the “airless cell” seems to pertain as well to the collisions of urban space and identity, or built forms and narrative design, in Baldwin’s controversial gay novel, *Giovanni’s Room*. Written in 1956, this tragic homoerotic romance features a closeted, all-American tourist and a handsome Italian bartender, who meet and fall in love in Paris. Titled after the interior where the lovers first consume their passion and live together for a while, it is full of carefully described Parisian settings and cryptic references to race, which Baldwin sees as always intertwined with sexuality and national belonging.⁷

Baldwin’s mix of literal and literary private and public spaces of mid-twentieth century Paris in *Giovanni’s Room* is the main focus of this essay. However, Baldwin’s linking of the literary and the architectural prompted me to read, back to back as it were, this writer and Walter Benjamin—two rather unlikely bedfellows. There are several reasons for this unorthodox pairing. First, Benjamin’s *The Arcades Project* (1927-1940),⁸ and especially his celebration of that metropolis as the “capital of the nineteenth century,” helps to read Baldwin’s casting of Paris as having become the ultimate twentieth-century space for troubled white American exiles.⁹

Second, Benjamin’s “fragmented approach to the totality” of Paris,¹⁰ the very un-finish-ability and archive-in-progress nature of his text, help us to see how and why the French capital comes to function in Baldwin’s mid-twentieth-century novel as a part-for-whole, or synecdoche, for the totality of what Americans call the Old World. That is, Baldwin’s economically designed and executed novel brings Americans to Paris in search of spaces, passions, and identities that may be forbidden or lost in their self-absorbed New World. We can glimpse a premonition of these spaces, passions, and identities in Benjamin’s sprawling work-in-progress. The chaotic texture¹¹ of *The Arcades Project* reflects the dramatic historic transition that Benjamin captured. Its roughly sketched design interweaves loose notes on architecture, literature, philosophy, history, economics, and the arts with more structured attempts at defining Paris as the center of high European culture.

Third, and most important for my purposes, Benjamin’s protagonist of sorts is the omnipresent architectural form, the arcade, from which his work draws its title. The name of this main form/character comes from Benjamin’s native German, *Das Passagen-Werk*, and the French passage couvert, and designates the steel-and-glass arcades that reached like tentacles through the center of Paris in the nineteenth century. Filled with businesses and places of entertainment, these weatherproof structures

offered new spatial experiences to urban dwellers.¹² While holding the arcade as a central architectural image through which to read it, Benjamin sees the nineteenth century as conditioned by “dwelling in its most extreme forms,”¹³ and contrasts that era with the early twentieth century, when mass production and reconfiguration of modes of representation corrupted this ideal. It is soon after that historic moment of corruption that James Baldwin narrates the story of his American protagonist’s coming to Paris in *Giovanni’s Room*. Baldwin’s new American innocent abroad is haunted by a twentieth-century malaise, which manifests itself as an inability to dwell. While in Paris, he cannot secure a lasting physical shelter for his body or a haven for his mind, for the reason of being torn between his allegiance to American notions of morality and his attraction to European openness about eroticism. As I will show, like Benjamin’s archetypal passage, Baldwin’s novel progresses from one interior to another to illustrate this conflict and the protagonist’s search for a safe haven between America and Europe. The novel makes clear, too, that both the conflict and the search are conditioned by the main character’s race and sexuality. David, the protagonist, is a victim of the WASP desire for cultural superiority, which makes him shun otherness and unsanctioned desire in an effort “to be inside,”¹⁴ as he puts it, or to remain a model white straight American male.

My critical passages in this essay back and forth between Baldwin’s novel and Benjamin’s meditation on the arcade aim to show that, no matter how different, these two thinkers help us to make sense of the profound impact of urban space on cultural identity in our own troubled century. I take Benjamin’s contention that “the most important architecture of the nineteenth century is the arcade”¹⁵ as an invitation to consider the spatial experience of the American and European characters in Baldwin’s novel through the literal and literary manifestations of that architectural form. More specifically, I will argue that Baldwin’s novel employs a narrative design akin to Benjamin’s concept of the arcade and that such a format links social space and identity in his text while demonstrating that they must be seen as inextricably racialized and sexualized. The two writers, one an uprooted Jew and the other an exiled African American, would agree that “space [is not only] a context for material activity . . . [but] is produced by subjectivities and psychic states,” as Irit Rogoff puts it from the critical vantage point of the twenty first century.¹⁶

Tracing such a notion of space back and forth between Baldwin and Benjamin and into our moment should help us to re-conceive built objects as socially constructed forms and registers of national identities.¹⁷ The omnipresent and essential “framework for our lives,” as S. E. Rasmussen defined it in 1959, soon after Baldwin’s novel had been published,¹⁸ to Benjamin, architecture means “the most important testimony to latent ‘mythology’.”¹⁹ Taking cue from Benjamin and Rasmussen, I examine the spatial frameworks of literary and narrative underpinnings of architecture, what Dell Upton refers to as “an art of social story-telling, a means for shaping American society and culture and for ‘annotating’ social actions by creating appropriate settings for it.”²⁰ Inspired by the structure and content of Baldwin’s novel, I approach architectural settings as sexualized and racialized in all of their complex manifestations as metaphoric, material, theoretical, social, and practical engagements with identities in social space.²¹

This essay proceeds in three movements. First, I offer a glimpse of the key theoretical assumptions behind this project. This part is followed by two sections that combine a close reading of the central queer romance in Baldwin's novel with an examination of Benjamin's key articulations on interiority, private, and public space in *The Arcades*. Baldwin's novelistic architectonics plays out through an intriguing sequence of architectural and narrative forms that bring into confrontation European and American 'white' masculinities in Paris. I argue that Baldwin's revolutionary approach to racialized/sexualized and spatially contingent American national identity and Benjamin's notion of 'passage' help us to understand power relations and spatial regimes that have produced racism and homophobia in the west. These relations and regimes have been part and parcel of modern Western history in the wake of transatlantic slavery, colonialism, and genocide that attended the invention, establishment, maintenance, and eradication of racial, ethnic, and sexual otherness.

1. The Race and Sex of Architecture

Michel Foucault famously designated the twentieth century the "epoch of space."²² On the cusp of our own, we face what in a late essay Baldwin terms "the charged, the dangerous moment, when everything needs to be reexamined, must be made new; when nothing at all can be taken for granted."²³ Twenty first-century 'America'—an ambivalent shadow of John Winthrop's "city on a hill"—remains a recognizably Baldwinian "house of bondage," mired in racism, classism, homophobia, sexism, pietism, and imperialism. The American Studies scholar George Lipsitz stresses that critics have been caught in the "acts of cognitive mapping [that] leave us poorly prepared to understand the ways in which culture functions as a social force or the ways in which aesthetic forms draw their affective and ideological power from their social location."²⁴ That is why Baldwin's late essay, "Here Be Dragons" (1985), comes in handy to cultural critics these days. It reminds us that the struggle to remake Americanness that we have inherited from this writer implies a major shift in how we see and read the multi-dimensional world; discursively and socially, it "resemble[s] . . . the ancient struggle between those who insisted that the world was flat and those who apprehended that it was round."²⁵ Clearly, there is a need to wage a similar debate about how we do our work as scholars who chart the interdisciplinary terrains of spatially informed fields.

This need for a change of perspective on spatiality and more dialogue across our disciplines should be as important to scholars in architecture as it has been to critics in literary and cultural studies. Diana Fuss' recent book stresses that, "To attribute substance and materiality to architecture, and imagination and metaphor to literature, misreads both artistic forms. . . . [T]he architectural dwelling is not merely something we inhabit, but something that inhabits us."²⁶ However, in her attention to imagination, dwelling, and identity as material and discursive, Fuss forgets that, like identities, spaces cannot be taken for granted. Such an omission—or assumption about an inherently Western nature of dwelling and form—echoes Benjamin's totalizing approach to identity in *The Arcades Project*, where the notion of the modern exists in absolute oblivion of its own racialized, sexualized, and gendered underpinnings. As the feminist visual culture scholar, Irit Rogoff, stresses: "space . . . is always differentiated . . . sexual

or racial, it is always constituted out of circulating capital and it is always subject to the invisible boundary lines which determine inclusions and exclusions.”²⁷ Similarly to Rogoff, other feminist critics demonstrate further links between the larger domains of literary cultural studies and architectural theory. For example, while Leslie Kanes Weisman²⁸ points at the affinity between language and space as socially constructed and regulating gender and national body politic,²⁹ Delores Hayden stresses that place making—imbuing space with meaning—can be a liberating practice for people of color.³⁰ Other scholars—e.g., Mark Wigley, Beatriz Colomina, Mary McLeod, Karen Anthony, and Barbara Allen—emphasize that traditional approaches to architecture perpetuate patriarchal hierarchies in the field and the hegemony of white phallogocentric discourse.

The rich history of feminist theory and recent scholarship on sexuality and queerness teach us that bodies and discourses around them are complex and unreliable; they ‘matter,’ but they are ‘trouble.’³¹ In this unstable context, it interests me nevertheless how sexed-and-racialized bodies dwell in social space, and engender and occupy specific architectural forms, as well as how the identities that attach to these bodies are inflected by, encrypted into, and represented (or repressed) by these forms in cross-cultural settings. This approach signals a focus on form, both in spatial and narrative terms, the terms that both Baldwin and Benjamin share to a large degree. In a recent essay,³² Russ Castranovo stresses the necessity to put the study of race—as “both a marker and maker of identity”³³—and genre together, as “race has always been entangled, often anxiously so, with form.”³⁴ Stressing race as always present in architectural discourse and form, some of the African Americanists and Africanists whose work has been indispensable to this project—bell hooks, Cornel West, Kobena Mercer, Ian Grandison, Liam Kennedy, Coleman A. Jordan (e), and Charles Scruggs—point at urban space as under-girded by white supremacist concepts of form and style.³⁵

Bringing race to the fore in the discipline that has conspicuously resisted acknowledging its workings in its very midst, the architect and theorist Darell Fields stresses that “blackness is . . . architectonic and vice versa.” Cornel West confirms in his foreword to Fields’ landmark study, *Architecture in Black* (2000), that modern architecture has been embroiled in racist discourses inherent in much of post-Enlightenment west-European philosophy.³⁶ As these critics show, frozen in its post-Vitruvian³⁷ self-concept as the superior art and meeting ground for virtually all the fields of knowledge on the human subject, architecture ultimately fails to acknowledge and embrace differentiated identities of its practitioners and users. It may perhaps be seen, then, as somewhat akin to Benjamin’s monumental and seductive, but ultimately incomplete, confusing, and unfinishable *The Arcades Project*. At the same time, it still retains the potential to reinvent itself and tell a different story.

The race/sex divisions, racism, homophobia, and other intersecting systems of discrimination against which Baldwin wrote vehemently all his life, have so far overshadowed the majority of the scholarship on this writer. Interestingly, similar divisions persist in some interdisciplinary work on spatiality and race.³⁸ For example, Fields’ introduction to issues of blackness in architectural discourse leaves gender and sexuality out of the picture, and thus seems to strip spatiality of links to embodiment and the

erotic.³⁹ On the other hand, stressing the need to address the profound absence, or, in some cases deliberate institutional and discursive silencing of discussions on race, gender, and sexuality within architecture, some critics prioritize the body and sexuality, thus echoing Henri Lefebvre's appeal for the "mobilization of 'private life'" and a "restoration of the body . . . of the sensory-sensual . . . non-visual . . . and of the sexual."⁴⁰ Taking cue from architectural history, postcolonial theory, and travel narratives, the Turkish scholar Irvin Cemil Schick argues for acknowledging the erotic underpinnings of all (always racialized) spatial practices: "Sexuality was—or better still, sexualities were—produced precisely in order to be able to draw boundaries between 'us' and 'them'."⁴¹

Looking back on the complex transatlantic histories of Americanness, it is clear that racism, sexism, and homophobia could not be enforced without carefully planned, designed, built, and implemented spatial practices of segregation, exclusion, and violence. The modernist creed that form should follow function had been at work much earlier than it was uttered. It informed the design and adaptation of vessels to serve as slave ships, it helped set up auction blocks as stages of commerce in human bodies, it pervaded southern plantations, and can be seen today behind the setting up of these establishments as "national historic landmarks" and money-making tourist attractions. Indian reservations, inner city housing projects, and ethnic ghettos have had somewhat similar histories. Unlike the showcase plantations in the scenic American South, however, they are still realities of everyday life for many Americans of color. Always and everywhere, space and architecture have affected the proximity of our lives to each other in segregated or re-segregated towns, schools, country clubs, invented communities like Seaside or Celebration, cookie-cutter suburbs, gentrified or blighted city and town centers, not to mention the industrial prison complexes.

The resulting concept of American national social space has been drawn in extreme contrasts that reflect and refract the exclusionary notions of official national identity as still resoundingly white and straight.⁴² "White papers, black marks,"⁴³ to paraphrase the title of Leslie Lokko's important volume, or the practices of architects, urban planners, and developers have dictated not only how and where people live, but also how long and well they live. Historically, the slaves occupied the "back of the big house"⁴⁴; after emancipation, black commuters sat in the back of the bus in the Jim Crow land of the free; today, many real estate agents still match neighborhoods with epidermal hues of their customers. Sexism and homophobia have required maintenance of gender and sexual spatial hierarchies that have left traces in our everyday expressions—"a woman's place is in the kitchen," the man's or father's "at the head of the table"; if you are gay you either hide in or come out of "the closet"; places termed "friendly to families" usually connote spaces that scream heterosexual marriage with offspring (preferably) matching the parents' epidermal hues.⁴⁵ (And this is just the tip of the iceberg—that telling spatial and literary metaphor, or what in a late essay Baldwin calls "the things not seen.")⁴⁶

In the reading of Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* and Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* that follows, I show that the production of knowledge about architectonic underpinnings of race and sexuality can and should be conducted across genres and disciplines. In particular, architecture and literature—prominently

intertwined in Benjamin's theoretical work and seductively fictionalized in Baldwin's novel—can help us to desegregate and decolonize our thinking about what Patricia Yeager terms “the strange effects of ordinary space” on our imagination.⁴⁷ As Baldwin stresses, the artist's job is to “disturb the peace”⁴⁸ and to serve as a subversive architect of a common home by conquering the “great wilderness of himself [sic!]”: “to illuminate that darkness, blaze roads through that vast forest . . . to make the world a more human dwelling place.”⁴⁹

2. The Novel as Room and Passage⁵⁰

“Arcades are houses or passages having no outside—like the dream.”⁵¹

“[T]he most important architecture of the nineteenth century is the arcade.”⁵²

Let us look briefly at *The Arcades Project* and the ways in which its focus on a key architectural form as a representation of identity can be seen as foregrounding Baldwin's similar emphasis on the dwelling spaces in *Giovanni's Room*. The two epigraphs opening this section illustrate succinctly Benjamin's reliance on the complex reciprocities between literature—or metaphorical constructions of space—and architecture—or material realities of space. Thus, as Benjamin puts it, the arcade can be approached as a dreamy metaphor for the house that has “no outside,” or as a material construct attesting to spectacular achievements of engineering and urban planning. Most interesting for my purposes, however, is Benjamin's casting of the literary and literal aspects of the arcade as a rich metaphor for identity that blurs distinctions between interior and exterior spaces.⁵³ As such, it provides an excellent introduction into the spatial conundrum of exterior/interior that lies at the heart of *Giovanni's Room*.

Benjamin argues that the arcade is a hybrid form, whose “utter ambiguity” makes it both “street and house”; “street as interior/the sitting room/the dialectical reversal.”⁵⁴ In this process, the private is imprinted on the public, or the dwelling ideal embodied by the living room permeates the arcade as a public space, which serves as a kind of “casing” or receptacle for an urban traveler. Benjamin stresses the origins of this process in the nineteenth century:

“ . . . like no other century... [it] was addicted to dwelling. It conceived the residence as a receptacle for the person, and it encased him with all his appurtenances so deeply in the dwelling's interior that one might be reminded of the inside of a compass case, where the instrument with all its accessories lies embedded in deep, usually violet folds of velvet. What didn't the nineteenth century invent some sort of casing for!”⁵⁵

This image of an encased compass—a metaphor for the in-dwelt individual—interplays in the *Arcades Project* with those of the city's public spaces. These spaces replicate some of the characteristics of the interior on a grand scale by means of arcades, panoramas, cafes, streets, and railway stations. Conversely, the forms, gestures, textures, and technologies of public spaces of the city then seep back into the design and décor of the bourgeois living room.

This is possible because Benjamin's nineteenth-century individual fashions his shell, or casing—in short, his spatially contingent identity—in and through his rooms, and especially the so-called living, or drawing room. Having power over his dwelling gives him—male pronoun intended⁵⁶—a sense of self and belonging. By providing him with a space in which to collect objects as a spectator and consumer, the living room also gives its dweller an illusion of mastery over the world:

“[T]he interior . . . for the private man, represents the universe. In the interior, he brings together the far away and long ago. His living room is a box in the theater of the world. . . . The interior is not just the universe but also the *étui* of the private individual. To dwell means to leave traces. In the interior, these are accentuated.”⁵⁷

Designed to leave traces in and through private dwellings, this self-construction as architecture/interior decor project of the nineteenth-century individual then migrates into Parisian cityscapes, where “streets are the dwelling places of the collective.”⁵⁸ To Benjamin, the meeting between the in-dwelt individual and the city manifests itself most spectacularly through the form of the arcade, that “furnished and familiar interior of the masses,” where “glossy enameled street signs are a wall decoration as good as, if not better than, an oil painting in the drawing room of a bourgeois.”⁵⁹

The arcade also serves to illustrate and represent Benjamin's view of history, which links space, temporality, and materiality in a dialectics of passage:

“Being past, being no more, is passionately at work in things. To this the historian trusts for his subject matter. He depends on this force, and knows things as they are at the moment of their ceasing to be. Arcades are such monuments of being-no-more. And the energy that works in them is dialectics. The dialectic takes its way through the arcades, ransacking them, revolutionizing them, turns them upside down and inside out, converting them, since they no longer remain what they are . . . And nothing of them lasts except the name: passages . . . But their name was now like a filter which let through only the most intimate, the bitter essence of what had been.”⁶⁰

Once again, Benjamin's approach to the arcade as both an object—architectural form—and metaphor—literary form—is clear in this passage. The arcade is a space, where the private and public, the interior and exterior crossbreed and fertilize one another. It is also an object of historic research and a repository of things past. As such, it is a monument to the passing of time, lives, styles, and objects; it registers the flux of dialectic forces that shape a given cultural moment and those who dwell in and pass through it.

However, as David Harvey stresses, Benjamin's theory of the arcade suffers from structural overgeneralization. That is, in its heavy reliance on the form of the arcade, it does not account for the dramatic change in scale between the early nineteenth-century structures, such as *Passage de l'Opera*,

for example, and the later feats of engineering that allowed architects and engineers to explode this form into the gigantic structures of Les Halles and the Palais de l'Industrie.⁶¹ Acknowledging this change in scale might complicate, if not defeat the logic of, Benjamin's link between the living room and the arcade, or the interior of the house and the exterior/interior of the street in a city. But tracing Benjamin's oversights is not my purpose. Rather, by juxtaposing Baldwin's novel and its focus on the spatial conundrum between the room and city with Benjamin's study of the arcade as a hybrid of both, I will now focus on how race and sexuality provide an undercurrent for discourses on identity and spatiality in *Giovanni's Room*.⁶²

Such a critical maneuver allows us to trace a kind of 'change of scale' in constructions of Western cultural identity between Benjamin's time and Baldwin's. As Baldwin famously pronounced in his essay, "Stranger in the Village" (1953), which offers a provocative rethinking of the position of Africans in Diaspora in the West⁶³:

"The time has come to realize that the interracial drama acted out on the American continent has not only created a new black man, it has created a new white man, too. . . . It is precisely this black-white experience which may prove of indispensable value to us in the world we face today. This world is white no longer, and it will never be white again."⁶⁴

By locating the American "interracial drama" at the center of post-World War II world, and forecasting the outcome of western modernity as a global erasure of whiteness, Baldwin proposes a radical change in how we conceive of cultural identity. This intervention could be illustrated spatially with the photo of Charles Beistegui's living room, designed by Le Corbusier in 1935, and featuring a large African 'noble savage' sculpture at the center of the interior.⁶⁵ The photo's arrangement leaves no doubt that the African figure is central to it. And yet, to a casual Western eye the figure is virtually invisible as simply one of the many artifacts and elements of décor that are taken for granted, rather than seen as attesting to imperial histories behind the wealth of European nations. In other words, no matter its scale and central positioning, the story that the African figure tells is rendered as silent as the figure itself is rendered invisible for the sake of the overall design.

Baldwin's works probe the history of local and global invisibility and silencing of blackness with vehemence and in-your-face openness. For example, the grand scale of his essay, "Stranger in the Village" (1953), was inspired by rather localized events, that is, by the writer's autobiographic experience as the first African American who found himself stared at and even touched by the incredulous inhabitants of a tiny village in the Swiss Alps. Baldwin went to Loèche-les-Bains with his Swiss lover, Lucien Happersberger, to spend the winter, get away from Paris, and finish his first novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953). Like the black sculpture at the center of Beistegui's living room, he stood there surrounded by whiteness—of people, mountains, and blank minds. As a black man and intellectual who found himself objectified and exoticized/eroticized by white Europeans, many of whom were illiterate, Baldwin was deeply hurt. And yet he forced himself to turn this painful experience into a lesson and ultimately an

essay on western whiteness that compelled his audiences to embrace his point of view.

Baldwin's second novel about a white American in Paris, *Giovanni's Room*, arises from and channels some of that experience through the main character/narrator's sense of alienation and displacement caused by race and sexuality, even as it focuses on a clash of cultures among what we would classify as predominantly 'white' characters. The city vs. room spatial tension at its center is scripted through a series of interiors and exteriors—from bars, cafés, and Les Halles, to the 'maid's room' Giovanni rents, to a house in Provence from where David tells the story—and serves to illustrate the invisible/silenced blackness/queerness at the core of modern cultural identity.

3. Architectonics of Sex/Race: This Room, that City, Another Country

Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* is told in the first person, and framed by a nightlong vigil of its protagonist/narrator, a white American named David, who is waiting for the hour of his lover's execution on the guillotine. During this night of intense self-reflection and mourning, David relives his love affair with Giovanni, while having flashbacks of his American childhood marred by the early loss of his mother. He also remembers his first, youthful affair with a brown-skinned boy, Joey, in New York, and how it became a repressed reason for his flight to France. While in Paris, he hangs out with bohemians and gays, but also becomes engaged to an American woman, Hella, in hopes of erasing his homoerotic desires. This naïve plan backfires as much as David's act of pretending to be straight while frequenting gay establishments. Overwhelmed by and imprisoned in his homophobia, self-hatred, and American notions of white masculinity and heterosexist respectability, David deserts Giovanni, thus precipitating his lover's tragic end. When Giovanni murders his abusive employer in self-defense and is sentenced to death, David realizes that he has driven his lover to that desperate act. Having thus destroyed his only chance for a passionate union with another human being, he ends up locked forever in an "airless, labeled cell" of his conflicted identity.

The exterior-interior, or city-room, tension in *Giovanni's Room* manifests itself in the narrative design of the text, which structurally resembles Benjamin's arcade: the reader's passage through the novel follows temporally the passage of David's vigil, while the flashbacks in this vigil serve as stopovers on the way, or spatial diversions from the main path of the story. Like tempting establishments along a passage couvert in Benjamin's account, David's memories invite one to look, linger, but never to inhabit their spaces. In terms of textual and architectural referents, this plays out as an interweaving of a series of interiors that scripts David's character—room, gay bar, café, hotel, prison cell, rented house—with panoramic views of Parisian landmarks—boulevards along the Seine, Les Halles, and the Latin Quarter. In particular, Baldwin maps out David's journey of self-reflection and self-realization by means of powerful descriptions of the lovers' nest—a 'maid's room' on the outskirts of Paris—and those of centrally located Les Halles—the market complex of covered passages—where David and Giovanni begin their first day together.

The narrator of *Giovanni's Room* enlists the reader's spatial and geographic imagination on the very

first page of his story, when he introduces himself as an all-American male:

“My reflection is tall, perhaps rather like an arrow, my blond hair gleams. My face is like a face you have seen many times. My ancestors conquered a continent, pushing across death-laden plains, until they came to an ocean which faced away from Europe into a darker past.”⁶⁶

Caught in this generic, two-dimensional image of a stereotypical American whiteness, David presents his flight from America to France as a metaphorical turning away from the “death-laden plains” where his ancestors’ westward conquest took place. This implies his unease, even guilt, regarding the violent history that made the American ‘people’ into Whites—Native American genocide, slavery, and domination and oppression of other minorities at home and abroad. Such a foregrounding of his narrator allows Baldwin to subtly and deliberately stress David’s whiteness without naming it. That is, by doing so, he shows that, as a ‘marker’ of identity, American whiteness always pretends to be an unmarked category, at the same time as it is clearly its ‘marker’ and ‘maker,’ given its violent origins in the New World.

The image of a white man gazing at his likeness in a variety of surfaces becomes a powerful metaphor for David’s fractured identity throughout Baldwin’s narrative. David’s blurry reflections—a composite portrait of sorts—introduces and frames the first person narrator-protagonist, while the direction of his gaze locates the reader in the room with him. The resulting portrait of the white American-abroad-as-a-closeted-gay-man reflects the conflict between the models of masculinity and sexual conduct in the New and the Old Worlds. This confrontation, however, is as racialized as it is sexualized, given the interdependence—and to Baldwin inseparability—of sexuality and race in discourses on transatlantic Americanness. That David’s relationship with Giovanni implies a racial as well as a sexual transgression is proven by David’s references to homosexuality as connoting otherness, darkness, danger, and blackness that threaten to swallow him—all common metaphors for implied African American presence, as Toni Morrison contends.⁶⁷

According to another literary critic, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “sexuality functions as a signifier for power relations,”⁶⁸ that is, like ideology, it “both epitomizes and itself influences broader social relations of power” in its “mediation between the material and the representational.”⁶⁹ Hence David’s desperate attempts to appear straight in France arise from his knowledge that the definitions of ‘men’ and ‘equality’ in his country pertain only to straight white males and exclude, if not subjugate and enslave, all the Others. He is American as long as he remains hetero; he is expelled to the margin of minorities, including racial minorities, once he betrays this ideology through a sexual transgression. Evoking the importance of race for discussions of non-normative sexualities, Judith Butler notes in *Bodies that Matter* that “the social regulation of race” is linked with “the workings of the heterosexual imperative” because “the symbolic—that register of regulatory ideality—is also and always a racial industry.” Thus, as she emphasizes, “especially at those junctures in which a compulsory heterosexuality works in the service of maintaining hegemonic forms of racial purity, the ‘threat’ of homosexuality takes on

distinctive complexity.”⁷⁰ Translated into David’s actions and their consequences, this means that his sexual transgression is also a racial one, that is, by coming out of the closet, he betrays his American whiteness as much as his presumed WASP heterosexuality.

To flee what he construes as social and cultural death should he come out at home, David leaves America, which Baldwin describes in richly architectonic terms as a labyrinthine closet—“a maze of false signals and abruptly locking doors.”⁷¹ David goes to France, so as “to allow no room in the universe for something which shamed and frightened me,”⁷² as if by leaving the place where his transgression was enacted, he could pretend—as he does in front of Giovanni and others—that it had never happened. He also flees from an emptiness left by his mother’s early death and from a father who wants him to “grow up to be a man . . . [not] a Sunday school teacher,”⁷³ and whom David fears and judges harshly for his heterosexual promiscuity. As the architectural historian Aaron Betsky remarks in *Building Sex*, being manly is associated with the artifice of construction, “we ironically . . . continue to build a world in which structure, artifice, and meaning are associated with masculinity, and appearance, comfort, and reality are feminine notions.”⁷⁴ Trying hard to maintain the rigid structure of his manhood, David succeeds in making everybody believe that he is indeed an all-American young man, but he can accomplish this fiction only by means of self-inflicted blindness and flight, that is, “by not looking at the universe, by not looking at [him]self, by remaining . . . in constant motion.”⁷⁵ David’s flight to Europe is thus preceded by one within America, the flight into a carefully constructed closet of white supremacist, heterosexist masculinity.

That David takes this American notion of the closet with him to France is proven by the intense architectonic descriptions of the room in which David and Giovanni conduct their love affair. This cramped, clearly closet-like space that Giovanni refers to jokingly as his ‘maid’s room’ on the outskirts of Paris triggers in David spatial memories of his first sexual transgression back home. Having provided a space of liberation for a brief period when David surrenders to his desire and love for the Italian, the room quickly metamorphoses into a projection of his American fears and self-hatred. It subsequently prompts his psychological abuse of Giovanni, once David has decided to leave him and their shared space for Hella. David’s retrospective descriptions of the room dwell on its perpetually disheveled state—luggage and boxes spilling their contents in the corners, an unmade bed, a window painted over white (or ‘blinded’) for privacy, and perpetually unfinished renovation projects. While he insists on what Benjamin might term the ‘detritus’ and ‘phantasmagorias’ of Giovanni’s “regurgitated life” as the objects of his description, David makes Giovanni’s room an architectonic projection of his conflicted identity and especially of his investment in whiteness and heterosexuality as markers of true American manhood. Like Benjamin’s arcade, David’s account of the room is highly ambivalent and metaphorical—it allows for detours from its main, descriptive passageway into the moments when David communicates his intense feelings by means of references to the room. It soon becomes clear that we are reading David’s own interior/exterior of which the room becomes a reflection, repository, and re-enactment.

This reworking of sorts of Benjamin's notion of the in-dwelt individual results in a portrait of an American that is cast vividly against the background of the many public spaces of Paris, and especially the monumental hybridic form of Les Halles. "The choked boulevards and impassable side-streets of Les Halles"⁷⁶ are the scenery in which David and Giovanni, accompanied by the latter's wealthy elderly employer, Guillaume, and their friend Jacques, search for a place to eat following the night of their first meeting. Baldwin includes an extended description of the structures, produce, and wares sold at Les Halles, commenting that "[i]t scarcely seemed possible that all of this could ever be eaten . . . [by] the roaring multitude."⁷⁷ As the taxi bearing the men passes through Les Halles, there are flashes of local characters—"a red-faced woman burdened with fruit, [who] shouted—to Giovanni, the driver, to the world—a particularly vivid cochonnerie"; the pavements are "slick with leavings, mainly cast-off, rotten leaves, flowers, fruit, and vegetables which had met with disaster natural and slow, or abrupt."⁷⁸ In the buildings they pass, there are all sorts of entries leading to "pissoirs, dull-burning, make-shift braziers, cafes, restaurants, and smoky yellow bistros," where "men, young, old, middle-aged, powerful, powerful even in the various fashions in which they had met, or were meeting, their various ruin."⁷⁹ As a descendant of the American Founding Fathers' vision of "the city upon a hill," David is scandalized by the fact that, when enacted spatially, ideas and ideals become forms, bodies, city-scapes. Real cities like Paris live and breathe, take space, eat, excrete, and stink to high heaven, no matter the WASP notions of purity and myths of national origins.

David admits to such feelings, thus conveying his American-tourist horror at the French and their living spaces, at the same time, as he feels both drawn to and repelled by the stinking underbelly of the city around him. "Nothing here [in Les Halles] reminded me of home, though Giovanni recognized, revelled [sic!] in it all."⁸⁰ This abundance of humanity—the "roaring masses"—is overwhelming and terrifying. The narrator's descriptive emphasis on male bodies and desires suggests, too, that they are the source of David's deepest fascination and fear. Rather than enjoying his immersion in Paris like Giovanni does, he "ache[s] . . . to go home . . . home across the ocean, to things and people I knew and understood."⁸¹ Despite the openness, diversity, and fluidity of the spaces of Les Halles, David feels imprisoned, boxed-in, and, in essence, closeted, once again. He also resorts to consumption, rather than contemplation of his situation—he is a passive viewer who skims the surface rather than risking a deeper understanding of what and who he sees and, most important, of what his reactions might teach him about himself. Around Les Halles, everything seems to be for sale: produce, bodies, desires, lives, and dreams. David's reaction to his phantasmagoric surroundings seems to echo what Benjamin terms the "collective dream-sleep of consumption" characteristic of modern culture, a "hypnosis that reintroduces mythic and cultic elements to modern secular time."⁸²

Thus locating himself as an American hopelessly impervious to other cultures, one who considers his birthplace and compatriots superior and more virtuous than anybody else in the world, David effectively precludes an opportunity to meet his would-be lover on equal terms. His disgust at and fear of the spaces of Paris and the French bodies that occupy them suggests his resistance to passion, to what Giovanni, during their last night together, calls the "stink of love." That is why David can

never embrace the room where they consume their affair; that is why he can never escape the closet of Americanness. Despite the beauty and passion that it enables him to glimpse at first, the room to David is predominantly a witness to the lovers' bodily functions; the inevitable excretion of body fluids and the realistic mode of sex acts make him confront the fact that the underbelly of romance is the "stink of love." David's inability to embrace all parts of love and life within and without Giovanni's dwelling space thus makes him unable to embrace his own and other people's humanity.

While Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* scripts David's identity conflict as indicative of the twentieth-century, post-World War II Western malaise, Walter Benjamin's analysis of dwelling and passage in *The Arcades Project* hints at the origins of this malaise in the earlier historic and cultural transitions associated with modernity. That is, the opposition that Baldwin sets up between the interiors as closets for identity and exteriors as spaces for its liberation becomes even clearer when we consider Benjamin's approach to occupying space. To dwell, Benjamin notes, is "a transitive verb—as in the notion of 'indwelt spaces'"; it is "an indication of the frenetic topicality concealed in habitual behavior. It has to do with fashioning a shell for ourselves."⁸³ Benjamin sees the origins of dwelling and interiority in the nineteenth century, hence locating the act of occupying space in that historic moment, in opposition to Foucault, we might say, who sees the twentieth century as dominated by processes of defining space.

Given its philosophical background, however, Benjamin's notion of dwelling and interiority takes for granted a middle-class, Eurocentric notion of modern identity—what David clearly inherits as a white American in Baldwin's novel. Unlike Giovanni's room, Benjamin's bourgeois living room contains luxurious objects. But these objects, like Benjamin's compass incased in the opulent "violet folds of velvet," link the bourgeois living room to travel, navigation, and thus colonial conquests, exploitation, and imports/plundering of artifacts and resources that created the economic and aesthetic wealth of Western Europe at the time. The 'Oriental' and 'exotic' objects adorning living rooms that Benjamin would have seen—such as Beistegui's, for example—included pieces of furniture from the 'colonies,' sculptures of dark-skinned native figures, paintings, textiles, and books that attested to the inhabitants' worldliness and wealth as much as to their place in the racial and class hierarchies. We can say that, by coming to Paris, by leaving his father's house in America, Baldwin's protagonist is both fleeing and seeking such a western interior and its imperial and bourgeois contents. As David ironically acknowledges early on in *Giovanni's Room*, he has come to France to "find himself," to engage in a ritual journey of young Americans who travel to Europe in hopes of adventure, romance, and culture. Yet his journey is not prompted by a youthful spirit of discovery but by a "nagging suspicion that something has been misplaced"⁸⁴; he ends up finding/seeking within and without himself what he was trying to escape.

David's horror at Giovanni's room and his recoiling from the openness of Les Halles — or, his inability to overcome the closet of his Americanness— result from his sense of superiority as an American in Europe. "[W]e have led different lives than you; things have happened to us there which have never happened here," he says to Giovanni, who questions American exceptionalism and teases David about how seriously he takes his nationality.⁸⁵ Paradoxically, David's ability to perform his Americanness in any milieu—to win the approving gaze of any man, gay or straight—again arises from David's successful

assimilation of the prohibitions that delineate acceptable sexual conduct for the men of his culture. As Judith Butler stresses, “prohibitions produce identity ... along the culturally intelligible grids of an idealized and compulsory sexuality.”⁸⁶ As long as David obeys these prohibitions in his public performance, he not only retains the stronghold on his straight WASP Americanness, but also manages to keep his foreign glamour. But the national identity constructed through such prohibitions cannot be shaken off once one enters a private bedroom. Like the spaces of Les Halles, like his fall from grace with Giovanni, the Old World architectural settings liberate David to glimpse scary freedom of desire far away from his father’s America, and deep within himself. But this freedom is too much to bear. David’s initial reaction to Giovanni’s room is telling in this context. It occurs when he is falling into his lover’s arms for the first time, and expresses best his sense of dislocation and spatial confusion, and ultimately his inability to learn from his experience: “With everything in me screaming No! yet the sum of me sighed Yes.”⁸⁷ Unless he can reconcile the part and the whole, all the conflicting aspects of his identity and their sum in his body, David can never become an architect of his fate.

When asked in one of his interviews about what he thought about the role of the artist, Baldwin stressed the connection between the individual and national, or the private and the public by saying that, “the role of the artist is exactly the same ... as the role of the lover”:

“[T]he people produce the artist ... The artist also produces the people. And that’s a very violent and terrifying act of love. ... If I love you, I have to make you conscious of the things you don’t see. ... And I will not see without you, and vice versa ... An artist is here not to give you answers but to ask you questions.”⁸⁸

This is a good place to finish this essay. And if I have raised more questions on the vicissitudes of dialogue between literature and architecture than I was able to answer in these pages, let me conclude for now that our explorations of space and identity may very well be served in such a way in our “moment of danger.”⁸⁹

Endnotes

- 1 For biographic information on Baldwin, see David Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography*, New York: Henry Holt, 1994; for a concise note on his life, see Magdalena Zaborowska, “James Baldwin”: <http://www.literaryencyclopedia.com>
- 2 In this, Baldwin anticipates a fellow author, C. L. R. James, who professed the “inseparability of great literature and of social life” in 1953, soon after Baldwin in *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In*, Hanover: University Press of New England, 2001, p. 125. For both writers, literature’s role in society, and vice versa, is closely linked to actual experiences of racialized—and eroticized in Baldwin’s case—space.
- 3 Baldwin’s works and life have by now gained the stature of an aesthetic object, but continue to appear caught in a bi-polar stronghold of race and sex. On the one hand, there is the need to present his complex vision in, let’s say, more *straightforward* terms for those concerned with racial justice (Baldwin as a Black Writer). On the other hand, there is the desire to enlist his works in the politics of *gay* liberation for those

who may leave other aspects of identity—race, class, and non-binary sexualities—out of the picture (Baldwin as a Gay Writer). Diverse and divergent critiques and representations of his works by critics of all hues and orientations—book reviews, biographies, literary criticism, documentary film, photography, popular articles, and a fat FBI file—often blatantly link Baldwin’s art, life, and *lifestyle*. Others tend to explain his rhetoric epidermally, so to speak, through his race and involvement in the civil rights struggle, while mentioning his sexuality hardly at all.

- 4 The extensive discourses on identity make it impossible to include references to all the approaches to this notion in this paper. E.g., I rely on Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993, and his notions of the “inescapable hybridity and intermixture of ideas” and the “instability and mutability of identities which are always unfinished, always being remade” (p. xi). I also take for granted his statement, “different nationalist paradigms for thinking about cultural history fail when confronted by the intercultural and transnational formation that I call the black Atlantic” (p. ix). Diana Fuss’s concept of “identity as difference” is important, too: “To the extent that identity always contains the specter of non-identity within it, the subject is always divided and identity is always purchased at the price of the exclusion of the Other, the repression or repudiation of non-identity” (Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference*, New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 103).
- 5 For introductions to the links between architecture and literature, see the works of Jennifer Bloomer (*Architecture and the Text: The Scripts of Joyce and Piranesi*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993; Fredrick Jamieson (*Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham: Duke UP, 1991): “perhaps postmodern architecture is the property of literary critics ... and textual in more ways than one” (p. 99); and Mary Ann Caws (*A Metapoetics of the Passage: Architectures in Surrealism and After*, Hanover: UP of New England, 1981, and especially the introduction, pp. xiv-xv).
- 6 James Baldwin, “Preservation of Innocence,” *Zero* (Summer 1949). See also Tony Morrison (ed), *James Baldwin: Collected Essays*, New York: Library of America, 1998, pp. 594-600, (p. 600).
- 7 I explore this issue in greater detail in my forthcoming study of Baldwin, *Erotics of Space*. For approaches to this novel and spatiality, see also Kathleen N. Drowne, “‘An Irrevocable Condition’: Constructions of Home and the Writing of Place in *Giovanni’s Room*,” in D. Quentin Miller (ed), *Re-Viewing James Baldwin: Things not Seen*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000, p. 72-87.
- 8 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999.
- 9 Mark Lilla’s review essay emphasizes Benjamin’s reliance on “Michelet’s maxim that ‘each age dreams the next’ ... [as] this new history would teach us ‘to recognize the monuments of the bourgeoisie as ruins even before they have crumbled’”; see “The Riddle of Walter Benjamin.” *New York Review of Books*, May 25, 1995: pp. 37-42 (p. 41).
- 10 David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*. New York: Routledge, 2003, p. 18.
- 11 To Lilla, *The Arcades Project* “... seems less a study of the ruins of bourgeois life than the ruins of an intellectual’s last productive years. Thirty-six files of quotations and aphorisms—on fashion, boredom, steel construction, prostitution, the stock exchange, the history of sects, and so on—are occasionally revealing, often funny, but generally repetitive and even dull.” Lilla, “Riddle of Walter Benjamin,” p. 42.
- 12 I leave out the discussion of the *flâneur*; it is rather well known and not immediately relevant to my focus in this essay.
- 13 Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, p. 220.
- 14 Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room*. New York: Dell, 1956, p. 137.

- 15 Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, p. 834.
- 16 Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture*, New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 23. Rogoff comments here on Lefebvre's contribution and stresses that his *Production of Space* made possible a discussion of such subjective and psychically produced space as an arena in which "social relations take place." I would like to add race and sex to the mix—what many of the architecture and social and urban space critics neglect to do. See Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995.
- 17 I resort to Rogoff's reformulation, as Lefebvre's claim about the "spatial underpinnings of all social relations" does not account for difference, that is, why certain bodies are perceived and emplaced as different in social hierarchies, and subsequently represented as such. Like Rogoff, some feminists and African American architects—Leslie Kanes Weisman, Craig Barton, Ian Grandison, Coleman Jordan, Mabel Wilson, and Delores Hayden—stress gendered and racialized dimensions of spatiality as reflecting identities of those who do or do not have power to dictate how it is used, designed, developed, and limited.
- 18 Rasmussen's explanation concerns the validity of individual experience of form and style in space: "architecture creates the framework around our lives." Steen Eiler Rasmussen, *Experiencing Architecture*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1964, p. 10.
- 19 Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, p. 834.
- 20 Dell Upton, *Architecture in the United States*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, p. ii.
- 21 I contextualize this reading within the current discussions on identity and social space by such scholars as bell hooks, Darell Fields, Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, Elizabeth Wilson, Mary Ann Caws, and Aaron Betsky.
- 22 Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics: A Review of Contemporary Criticism* 16, no. 1 [1986 Spring]: p. 22-27 (p. 22).
- 23 James Baldwin, *The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction 1948-1985*. New York: St. Martin's Marek, 1985, p. 674.
- 24 Lipsitz, George, *American Studies in a Moment of Danger*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001, p. 17.
- 25 Baldwin, *The Price of the Ticket*, p. 679.
- 26 Diana Fuss, *The Sense of an Interior: Four Writers and the Rooms that Shaped Them*, New York: Routledge, 2004, p. 4, 5.
- 27 See Rogoff, *Terra Infirma*, p. 35. As theorized by Lefebvre, space is all around us and results from specific actions of social agents. It is thus a product that operates as a triad of experienced, perceived, and imagined encounters with physical, represented, and interpreted space: 1) we negotiate spatiality in our everyday life through spatial practice, 2) we orient and organize ourselves according to graphic representations of space on maps, plans, and blueprints, and 3) we employ our creativity and imagination to construct alternative representational spaces as consumers, artists, and interpreters.
- 28 Leslie Kanes Weisman's feminist stance against the 'man-made' discourse and environment, articulated in her *Discrimination by Design: A Feminist Critique of the Man-Made Environment*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992, echoes Lefebvre's claim that traditional Western architectural discourse "imitates or caricatures the discourse of power," for it "suffers from the delusion that 'objective' knowledge of 'reality' can be obtained by means of graphic representation" (Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, p. 145). Lefebvre likens this "reign of the facade over space" in the West, of the blue-print based architecture that mindlessly replicates social order and thus suppresses the body and its needs, to the reign and proliferation

of shallow images, to spectacularized two-dimensionality of capitalist, consumerist societies.

- 29 Patricia Yeager's introductory essay to her edited volume, *The Geography of Identity*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996, offers a rich and illuminating investigation of issues related to spatiality, narrative, and subjectivity, as well as an impressive review of literature on this subject.
- 30 See Delores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995.
- 31 I refer in shorthand to the groundbreaking work of Judith Butler, Diana Fuss, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.
- 32 Russ Castranovo, "Race and Other Clichés", *American Literary History*, 14, 3 (Fall 2002): pp. 551-65.
- 33 Castranovo, "Race and Other Clichés", p. 554.
- 34 Castranovo, "Race and Other Clichés", p. 552.
- 35 Darell Wayne Fields, *Architecture in Black*. London and New Brunswick: The Athlone Press, 2000. Fields makes an especially groundbreaking point by defining the "psycho-historical form of denial . . . [that is, that] architecture and blackness as we know and practice them were born into the world together" (p. xxvii).
- 36 Cornel West, "Foreword" to *Architecture in Black* by Fields, xvii-xviii.
- 37 Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture* has been considered the founding text of the discipline. Its Chapter 1, "The Education of the Architect," spells out in detail what we would now consider incredibly versatile and interdisciplinary skills of the practitioner. See the edition translated by Morris Hicky Morgan, New York: Dover, 1960, pp. 5-13.
- 38 Discursive links between literature and architecture have been pointed by, among others, Fredric Jameson, Jennifer Bloomer, and Catherine Ingraham. Unlike these critics, who, much like Gaston Bachelard and Rene Girard, often relegate located and embodied identity to the realm of the abstract verging on irrelevant, critics who emphasize gendered and racialized dimensions of the built environment focus on the agency of those who do and do not have power to dictate how space is used, built, designed, and limited.
- 39 I refer here to the complex and difficult issue of negative stereotypes of oversexed blackness and to the vast body of scholarship on this subject in African American Studies.
- 40 See also Lefebvre's gendering of this triad in his *Production of Space*, p. 245.
- 41 Irvin Cemil Schick, *The Erotic Margin: Sexuality and Spatiality in Alteritist Discourse*. London and New York: Verso, 1999, p. 57.
- 42 Class is part of this equation as well, but I leave it out for the sake of brevity.
- 43 Leslie Lokko, *White Papers, Black Marks: Architecture, Race, Culture*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- 44 John Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.
- 45 I am grateful to Coleman Jordan and our students in AC 498 at the University of Michigan for our rich discussions on this topic.
- 46 This a reference to a late essay, *The Evidence of Things Not Seen* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1985) that Baldwin wrote about a series of child murders in Atlanta. The biblical reference in the title is to the words of St. Paul that serve as an epigraph to the work: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."
- 47 Yeager, *The Geography of Identity*, p. 38.

- 48 Interview with Studs Terkel, 1961. Quoted after transcript in Fred L. Standley and Louis H. Pratt (eds.), *Conversations with James Baldwin*, Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1989, p. 21.
- 49 Baldwin, "The Creative Process," *The Price of the Ticket*, p. 315.
- 50 Some ideas that made it into this reading have had a trial run in a much earlier piece of mine, "Mapping Transcultural Masculinities: James Baldwin's *Innocents Abroad*, or *Giovanni's Room* Revisited," in Magdalena J. Zaborowska (ed.), *Other Americans, Other Americas: The Politics and Poetics of Multiculturalism*, Aarhus and Oxford: Aarhus University Press, printed in the UK, 1998, pp. 119-31.
- 51 Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, p. 406.
- 52 Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, p. 834.
- 53 I develop a more detailed analysis of this issue in *Erotics of Space*. For the same reason, I do not explain and foreground the quotations from *The Arcades Project* within the multiple versions that the 1999 English language edition includes, but simply quote them as referring to the pages where they appear in that volume.
- 54 Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, p. 861, 833.
- 55 Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, p. 220.
- 56 The subject of gender bias in Benjamin's study deserves its own separate study. I use the male pronoun here to follow his usage and emphasize the decidedly phallogentric character of Pairs that emerges from the bits and pieces of *The Arcades Project*.
- 57 Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, p. 9.
- 58 Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, p. 879.
- 59 Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, p. 879.
- 60 Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, pp. 833-4.
- 61 Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity*, p. 13.
- 62 Ken Warren, in *So Black and Blue: Ralph Ellison and the Occasion of Criticism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, employs the dialogue between literature and music in ways that have inspired some of the design of mine between literature and architecture.
- 63 James Baldwin, "Stranger in the Village," first appeared in *Harper's Magazine*, Oct., 1953 and was later collected in Baldwin's first volume of essays, *Notes of a Native Son*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1955.
- 64 Baldwin, *Collected Essays*. New York: The Library of America 1998, p. 129.
- 65 Interestingly, although he uses this image to illustrate his arguments on 'queer space,' in a study under the same title (pp. 106-7), Aaron Betsky does not mention its prominent presence even once in his *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire*, New York: William Morrow, 1997, p. 107. Somewhat similarly, the imperialist underpinnings of Paris are rendered invisible in Benjamin's work.
- 66 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, p. 7.
- 67 See Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- 68 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, pp. 7.
- 69 Sedgwick, *Between Men*, p. 13.
- 70 Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 18.

- 71 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, p. 16.
- 72 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, p. 30.
- 73 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, p. 24.
- 74 Betsky, *Building Sex*, pp. 173-4.
- 75 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, pp. 30-31.
- 76 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, p. 64.
- 77 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, p. 64.
- 78 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, p. 65.
- 79 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, p. 65.
- 80 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, p. 66.
- 81 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, p. 84.
- 82 Lutz Koepnick, *Walter Benjamin and the Aesthetics of Power*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999, p. 156.
- 83 Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, p. 221.
- 84 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, p. 31.
- 85 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, p. 47.
- 86 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge, 1990, p. 135.
- 87 Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, p. 87.
- 88 *Conversations with James Baldwin*, eds., Fred L. Standley and Louis H. Pratt. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1989, p. 156.
- 89 Lipsitz, *American Studies*, p. 17; Baldwin, Baldwin, *The Price of the Ticket*, p. 674.

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