

dence with a survey of subsequent history. Bailey's book drew attention to a number of neglected subjects, including the **intertestamental** literature, the legislation of the Christian emperors, the **penitentials**, and the link between **heresy** and **sodomy**. The author's interpretation of Genesis 19, where he treats the Sodom story as essentially nonsexual—an instance of violation of hospitality—has not been generally accepted. The work of Bailey and his colleagues prepared the way for the progressive **Wolfenden Report** (1957), which was followed a decade later by Parliament's **decriminalization** of homosexual conduct between consenting adults in England and Wales.

BALDWIN, JAMES (1924–1987)

American novelist, essayist, and playwright. Born in New York City's **Harlem**, his experiences as a child evangelist in the ghetto provided a rich store of material, as well as contributing to his sometimes exhortatory style. His first novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), which derives from this world, gave him immediate fame. Following the example of fellow black author Richard Wright, Baldwin had moved to Paris at the age of 24; he was to live in France for most of the rest of his life, though most of his concerns and work continued to center on the United States.

The acclaim that he had garnered in the 1950s emboldened him to publish *Giovanni's Room* (1961), an honest novel about homosexuality sent out into a literary world that was scarcely welcoming. This book recounts the story of David, an athletic, white American expatriate who discovers his homosexuality in a relationship with a working-class Italian in Paris; although it ends tragically with the death of Giovanni, the lean, yet intense style of this book, and its candor, left a lasting impression. At the time, to be sure, critics urged Baldwin to abandon such "exotic" subject matter and return to native themes. Baldwin responded with his most ambi-

tious work yet, *Another Country* (1961), in which the sexual and racial themes are inextricably interwoven. Only partially successful, this novel presents the lives of a number of New Yorkers of varying sexual persuasions, who are linked by their friendship with a black musician.

Having successfully withstood the homophobia of the immediate post-war years, the emergence of the Civil Rights movement gave Baldwin the chance to play a role at the center of the stage. His prose work *The Fire Next Time* (1963) effectively captures the moral fervor of the Kennedy years, and Baldwin seemed the Jeremiah that the country needed. Although he continued to publish after this point, the writer seemed unable to find a balanced viewpoint, and his later novels and plays are sometimes diffuse and strident. Some of his former admirers felt that he had become too much wrapped up in the rhetoric of black liberation, with its angry indictment of white injustice; conversely, some black critics found him insufficiently militant. Try as he might, he could not convince the younger black radicals that he had not sold out to whiteness. Baldwin's estimate of the urgency of the racial crisis led him to downplay the homosexual theme. Yet as a commentator on the continuing "American dilemma" of race, Baldwin failed to deliver a message that could carry full conviction for any group. Despite his best efforts, in the view of many readers he never recaptured the crystalline precision of his earlier works. These suffice, however, to assure his reputation as a writer of compelling power, a sensitive observer not merely of blackness and gayness, not merely of America and Europe, but of the inherent complexities of the human condition.

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