

just above my head james baldwin

Just Above My Head James Baldwin: Exploring Themes and Legacy of a Powerful Novel

just above my head james baldwin is a phrase that often draws readers into the world of one of America's most influential authors. James Baldwin's novel **Just Above My Head** stands as a profound exploration of identity, family, and the turbulent social landscape of mid-20th century America. For anyone curious about Baldwin's work or the themes he so passionately addressed, diving into this novel offers a rich and compelling experience.

Understanding Just Above My Head by James Baldwin

Just Above My Head is one of Baldwin's later novels, published in 1979. Unlike some of his earlier works, which focused more narrowly on racial tensions and personal identity, this novel broadens the scope to encompass the complexities of family dynamics, sexuality, religion, and the civil rights movement. Baldwin crafts a story that is as much about personal struggles as it is about the larger African American experience during a time of profound change.

Plot Overview: A Tale of Brothers and Brotherhood

At the center of **Just Above My Head** is the relationship between two brothers, James and Arthur, whose lives unfold against the backdrop of the civil rights era. James is a talented gospel singer, embodying a spiritual and artistic connection to his community, while Arthur is a gay man navigating his identity amid societal pressures. The novel traces their individual journeys, their shared history, and the challenges they face as they strive to find acceptance and meaning.

Why the Title Matters

The title **Just Above My Head** is a metaphorical reference that resonates on multiple levels. It evokes the idea of something powerful yet intangible – like a song or a spirit – that hovers just out of reach but is deeply felt. This imagery connects to Baldwin's themes of transcendence through music, faith, and love, suggesting that hope and liberation exist “just above” everyday struggles.

Thematic Depth in *Just Above My Head* James Baldwin

Baldwin's novel is layered with themes that invite reflection and discussion. Understanding these themes can enhance readers' appreciation of the work and its relevance to contemporary issues.

Exploring Identity and Sexuality

One of the novel's groundbreaking aspects is its candid portrayal of homosexuality within the African American community, a topic Baldwin himself was deeply engaged with throughout his life. Arthur's character challenges stereotypes and societal norms, presenting a nuanced exploration of what it means to be both black and gay in a time of widespread discrimination. Baldwin's treatment of sexuality is compassionate and unflinching, making **Just Above My Head** a pioneering work in LGBTQ literature.

The Role of Music and Spirituality

Music, especially gospel, is woven throughout the narrative. It acts as a symbol of cultural heritage, resilience, and emotional expression. Baldwin's depiction of music transcends entertainment; it is a form of communication with the divine and a means of coping with hardship. Spirituality, similarly, is portrayed with complexity—both as a source of comfort and as a force that can be oppressive. This

duality enriches the novel's emotional texture.

Family, Brotherhood, and Community

At its core, **Just Above My Head** is about relationships—between brothers, within families, and among communities. The novel explores how love and loyalty can endure despite differences and conflicts. Baldwin also highlights the importance of collective struggle, illustrating how personal and political battles are intertwined.

James Baldwin's Literary Style in Just Above My Head

Baldwin's prose in **Just Above My Head** is both poetic and direct, reflecting his background as an essayist and orator. His storytelling is marked by vivid imagery, emotional honesty, and a rhythmic flow that mirrors the musical elements in the story. Readers often find themselves drawn into the intimate moments between characters as well as the sweeping social commentary.

Why Baldwin's Voice Still Resonates

Even decades after its publication, **Just Above My Head** remains relevant because Baldwin addresses universal human experiences—love, pain, identity, and hope—in a way that transcends time and place. His fearless approach to difficult subjects encourages readers to confront uncomfortable truths while also inspiring empathy and understanding.

How to Approach Just Above My Head: Tips for Readers

If you're new to James Baldwin or this novel specifically, here are some insights to help you engage

more deeply:

- **Read with Context:** Familiarize yourself with the historical backdrop of the civil rights movement and the social attitudes of the 1960s and 70s to fully grasp the novel's significance.
- **Pay Attention to Symbolism:** Music and religious imagery are not just decorative; they carry profound meaning related to the characters' inner lives and the broader cultural landscape.
- **Reflect on Character Dynamics:** The relationship between James and Arthur offers a powerful lens through which to examine themes of acceptance and conflict.
- **Don't Rush:** Baldwin's prose can be dense and poetic, so take your time to savor the language and the emotional nuances.

The Legacy of *Just Above My Head* James Baldwin

Just Above My Head occupies a unique place in Baldwin's oeuvre. It bridges his earlier work's focus on racial injustice with a more expansive exploration of identity and community. The novel contributes to ongoing conversations about intersectionality long before the term became widely used. Its influence can be seen in contemporary literature that explores the intersections of race, sexuality, and spirituality.

Moreover, the novel has inspired adaptations and scholarly analysis that continue to highlight Baldwin's visionary insight. For readers and writers alike, Baldwin's work serves as a reminder of the power of storytelling to challenge societal norms and illuminate the complexities of human experience.

In exploring *Just Above My Head*, readers not only encounter a compelling narrative but also a call

to empathy and understanding—a summons to look beyond surface divisions and recognize the shared humanity that binds us all.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main theme of James Baldwin's poem 'Just Above My Head'?

The main theme of 'Just Above My Head' by James Baldwin is the exploration of spirituality, identity, and the struggle for personal and collective freedom, often reflecting on the African American experience.

How does James Baldwin use imagery in 'Just Above My Head'?

Baldwin uses vivid and evocative imagery in 'Just Above My Head' to convey deep emotional and spiritual states, often drawing on religious and musical metaphors to highlight themes of hope, suffering, and transcendence.

Is 'Just Above My Head' a poem or a novel by James Baldwin?

While 'Just Above My Head' is primarily known as a novel published in 1979, James Baldwin also wrote poems with similar themes; however, the title most commonly refers to his novel.

What inspired James Baldwin to write 'Just Above My Head'?

James Baldwin was inspired to write 'Just Above My Head' by his personal experiences with race, sexuality, and family, as well as his desire to explore the complexities of African American identity and the power of music and community.

How does music influence the narrative in 'Just Above My Head'?

Music, particularly gospel and soul, plays a central role in 'Just Above My Head,' symbolizing cultural heritage, emotional expression, and spiritual resilience within the African American community depicted in the novel.

What is the significance of the title 'Just Above My Head'?

The title 'Just Above My Head' refers to a spiritual hymn and symbolizes the presence of hope, faith, and a higher power guiding individuals through hardship and struggle.

How are LGBTQ+ themes addressed in 'Just Above My Head'?

James Baldwin, who was openly gay, incorporates LGBTQ+ themes in 'Just Above My Head' by exploring the experiences of gay African American characters, addressing issues of identity, acceptance, and social marginalization.

What role does family play in 'Just Above My Head'?

Family is a central element in 'Just Above My Head,' highlighting both the bonds and tensions within African American families, and illustrating the impact of love, loss, and loyalty on personal identity.

How has 'Just Above My Head' been received by critics and readers?

'Just Above My Head' has been praised for its lyrical prose, emotional depth, and insightful portrayal of African American life and LGBTQ+ experiences, though some critics note its complex narrative structure can be challenging.

Additional Resources

Just Above My Head by James Baldwin: A Profound Exploration of Identity, Love, and Struggle

just above my head james baldwin stands as a compelling testament to the literary genius of one of

America's most influential writers. James Baldwin, renowned for his incisive explorations of race, sexuality, and human connection, crafted *Just Above My Head* as a powerful novel that delves deeply into the complexities of African American life in the mid-20th century. This work extends far beyond a mere narrative; it is an intricate tapestry of personal and societal struggles, love, and resilience.

In this article, we explore the multifaceted dimensions of *Just Above My Head* by James Baldwin, analyzing its themes, narrative techniques, and cultural significance. Through a detailed examination, we aim to uncover why this novel remains an essential read for those interested in understanding Baldwin's literary legacy and the broader context of American social history.

Contextualizing *Just Above My Head* in Baldwin's Oeuvre

James Baldwin's career was marked by his fearless engagement with social issues, particularly race relations and the African American experience. *Just Above My Head*, published in 1979, arrived late in Baldwin's literary journey and is often regarded as one of his most ambitious and personal novels. Unlike some of his earlier works, this novel intertwines the personal with the political in a narrative that spans decades and touches on themes of family, music, religion, and civil rights.

The title itself, *Just Above My Head*, suggests a proximity to something transcendent or spiritual—a motif that Baldwin explores through the characters' struggles and aspirations. To fully appreciate the novel, it is important to understand its place within Baldwin's broader body of work, which includes seminal texts like *Go Tell It on the Mountain* and *Giovanni's Room*. While those earlier works focus more narrowly on identity and sexuality, *Just Above My Head* incorporates a wider social panorama, reflecting Baldwin's growing engagement with activism and cultural change.

The Narrative Structure and Character Study

Just Above My Head centers on the lives of two brothers, Arthur and David Scott. Arthur, a charismatic gospel singer, represents a figure of public success and spiritual expression, while David, a writer and

activist, embodies intellectual resistance and personal introspection. Through their intertwined stories, Baldwin explores the tensions between public and private identities, as well as the intersections of race, sexuality, and faith.

The novel's narrative is nonlinear, moving fluidly across time periods and perspectives. This structure allows Baldwin to juxtapose moments of joy with episodes of pain, reflecting the complexities of African American life. The characters' development is nuanced, avoiding simplistic portrayals and instead presenting deeply human individuals grappling with societal expectations and internal conflicts.

Themes Explored in *Just Above My Head*

At its core, *Just Above My Head* is a meditation on love in its many forms—familial, romantic, and spiritual. Baldwin's treatment of love is neither idealized nor sentimental; instead, it is fraught with challenges and contradictions. For example, the novel addresses homosexuality at a time when such topics were often taboo, especially within the African American community. David's identity and experiences offer a poignant exploration of sexual and racial marginalization.

Religion and spirituality are also central to the narrative. Arthur's gospel singing is more than a career—it is a means of survival and a source of hope for both the characters and their community. Baldwin critiques organized religion's failures while acknowledging its profound emotional and cultural significance.

Lastly, the novel is steeped in the political realities of its era. The Civil Rights Movement, racial violence, and social upheaval form a backdrop that informs the characters' choices and struggles. Baldwin's prose captures the urgency and complexity of this historical moment without descending into didacticism.

The Literary Style and Impact of Just Above My Head

Baldwin's style in *Just Above My Head* is marked by lyrical prose, rich dialogue, and evocative imagery. His language conveys both the beauty and brutality of the characters' experiences, often blending poetic sensibilities with journalistic clarity. This stylistic approach enhances the novel's emotional resonance and underscores Baldwin's skill as a storyteller.

Critics have noted that *Just Above My Head* reads almost like a musical composition, with rhythmic cadences and recurring motifs that mimic the gospel music integral to the story. This connection between form and content enriches the reading experience and highlights Baldwin's innovative literary craftsmanship.

In terms of impact, *Just Above My Head* has influenced subsequent generations of writers and activists by offering a complex, intersectional portrayal of African American life. Its candid exploration of sexuality, spirituality, and political activism challenges readers to confront uncomfortable truths while celebrating resilience and hope.

Comparisons with Other Baldwin Works and Contemporary Literature

When compared to Baldwin's earlier novels, *Just Above My Head* stands out for its expansive scope and its explicit engagement with the intersections of race, sexuality, and faith. Unlike *Giovanni's Room*, which focuses predominantly on sexual identity in a European setting, or *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, which centers on religious awakening, *Just Above My Head* weaves these themes together within the context of the African American experience in America.

Contemporary to Baldwin's work, other authors such as Toni Morrison and Alice Walker also explored similar themes of identity, community, and history. However, Baldwin's unique voice—combining personal narrative with political critique—distinguishes *Just Above My Head* as a seminal text within the canon of African American literature.

Relevance and Legacy in Modern Discourse

The enduring relevance of *Just Above My Head* lies in its unflinching examination of issues that continue to resonate today. Conversations around race, LGBTQ+ rights, and systemic inequality remain at the forefront of cultural and political debates. Baldwin's novel offers a historical lens that enriches contemporary understanding by highlighting the continuity of these struggles.

Moreover, *Just Above My Head* has gained renewed attention in academic and literary circles for its layered portrayal of Black queer identity—a subject often marginalized in mainstream narratives. The novel's candidness and emotional depth provide valuable insights into the complexities of intersectional identity.

For readers and scholars seeking to engage with Baldwin's full spectrum of themes, *Just Above My Head* is indispensable. Its nuanced approach to storytelling and its empathetic portrayal of complex characters make it a rich subject for literary analysis and cultural reflection.

Key Features That Distinguish *Just Above My Head*

- **Intersectional Themes:** The novel intricately combines issues of race, sexuality, religion, and politics.
- **Musical Influence:** Gospel music shapes both the narrative structure and character development.
- **Complex Characters:** Portrayals of flawed, deeply human individuals defy stereotypes.
- **Lyrical Prose:** Baldwin's writing style blends poetic language with narrative clarity.
- **Historical Context:** The backdrop of civil rights activism lends urgency and authenticity.

Exploring the Title: Just Above My Head

The phrase "just above my head" metaphorically suggests something within reach yet elusive, a spiritual or emotional state hovering close but not fully grasped. Baldwin's title encapsulates the tension in the novel between aspiration and reality, hope and despair. The characters' pursuit of justice, love, and self-acceptance is often hindered by societal constraints, yet their resilience keeps these ideals perpetually "just above" their immediate circumstances.

This symbolism extends to the gospel music motif, which represents a transcendent force that uplifts the characters despite adversity. By choosing this title, Baldwin invites readers to reflect on the nature of struggle and the possibility of redemption—concepts that remain profoundly relevant.

Just Above My Head by James Baldwin is a literary work of considerable depth and significance. Through its exploration of intersecting identities, its evocative prose, and its rich historical context, the novel continues to resonate with readers and scholars alike. Baldwin's ability to weave personal narratives with broader social commentary ensures that Just Above My Head remains a vital contribution to American literature and an enduring source of insight into the human experience.

[Just Above My Head James Baldwin](#)

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just above my head james baldwin: Just Above My Head James Baldwin, 1994-10-27 This is the fictional story of the great gospel singer Arthur Montana. Arthur was found dead in the basement of a London pub at the age of thirty-nine, yet he lives on in this memoir. Written by Hall, his brother

and manager, it is in part a subtle and moving study of the treacherous ebb and flow of memory. Set against a vividly drawn background of the civil rights movement of the sixties, *Just Above My Head* explores how Arthur discovers his love for Jimmy - 'with his smile like a lantern and a voice like Saturday nights' - and portrays how profoundly racial politics can shape the private business of love.

just above my head james baldwin: Salvific Manhood Ernest L. Gibson (III), 2019-10 2020
Choice Outstanding Academic Title *Salvific Manhood* foregrounds the radical power of male intimacy and vulnerability in surveying each of James Baldwin's six novels. Asserting that manhood and masculinity hold the potential for both tragedy and salvation, Ernest L. Gibson III highlights the complex and difficult emotional choices Baldwin's men must make within their varied lives, relationships, and experiences. In *Salvific Manhood*, Gibson offers a new and compelling way to understand the hidden connections between Baldwin's novels. Thematically daring and theoretically provocative, he presents a queering of salvation, a nuanced approach that views redemption through the lenses of gender and sexuality. Exploring how fraternal crises develop out of sociopolitical forces and conditions, *Salvific Manhood* theorizes a spatiality of manhood, where spaces in between men are erased through expressions of intimacy and love. Positioned at the intersections of literary criticism, queer studies, and male studies, Gibson deconstructs Baldwin's wrestling with familial love, American identity, suicide, art, incarceration, and memory by magnifying the potent idea of salvific manhood. Ultimately, *Salvific Manhood* calls for an alternate reading of Baldwin's novels, introducing new theories for understanding the intricacies of African American manhood and American identity, all within a space where the presence of tragedy can give way to the possibility of salvation.

just above my head james baldwin: *Colored Women Sittin' on High* Melanie R. Hill, 2025-04-29
From blue-note turmoil to grace-note power, Black women preachers stand tall. In *Colored Women Sittin' on High*, Melanie R. Hill offers a new perspective on the art of the sermon in African American literature, music, and theology. Drawing on the womanist cadence of Alice Walker in literature and the rhythmical flow of named womanist theologians, Hill makes interventions at the intersections of African American literary criticism, music, and religious studies. Pushing against the patriarchal dominance that often exists in religious spaces, Hill argues that Black women's religious practice creates a "sermonic space" that thrives inside and outside the church, allowing for a critique of sexism and anti-Black racism. She examines literature by writers such as Zora Neale Hurston and James Baldwin, music by Aretha Franklin and Ms. Lauryn Hill, and sermons by theologians Ruby Sales and Vashti M. McKenzie, and she takes readers into a sermonic artwork of artists, preachers, and freedom movement activists who are, as Hill contends, the greatest "virtuosic alchemists" of our time.

just above my head james baldwin: *James Baldwin's Later Fiction* Lynn O. Scott, 2002-02-28
James Baldwin's Later Fiction examines the decline of Baldwin's reputation after the middle 1960s, his tepid reception in mainstream and academic venues, and the ways in which critics have often mis-represented and undervalued his work. Scott develops readings of *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone*, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, and *Just Above My Head* that explore the interconnected themes in Baldwin's work: the role of the family in sustaining the arts, the price of success in American society, and the struggle of black artists to change the ways that race, sex, and masculinity are represented in American culture. Scott argues that Baldwin's later writing crosses the cultural divide between the 1950s and 1960s in response to the civil rights and black power movements. Baldwin's earlier works, his political activism and sexual politics, and traditions of African American autobiography and fiction all play prominent roles in Scott's analysis.

just above my head james baldwin: *That Which Awakens Me* Ananda Kiamsha Madelyn Leeke, 2009-11
In the poetic memoir *That Which Awakens Me*, Ananda Kiamsha Madelyn Leeke shares her journey of self-discovery from a law school graduate to a creative woman who learned to open the door to authentic living. When Leeke graduated from law school in 1989, she was a twenty-something with a life plan focused on becoming a successful attorney. Using her multiple bar exam failures and two bouts of unemployment as a catalyst for self-discovery and lifestyle

reinvention, Leeke followed her own unique path during the past twenty years and made changes in the way she feels, thinks, lives, works, and manages her finances. Through poetic reflection and personal stories, she shares the lessons that taught her to trust her intuition, expand her spiritual practices, heal emotional wounds, tap into her creativity, discover her passions, open her eyes to hidden opportunities, volunteer and serve her local community, travel the world, and heed her calling as a writer, artist, creativity coach, yoga teacher, Reiki Master practitioner, radio host, blogger, social media strategist, and innerpreneur. *That Which Awakens Me* provides insight for anyone seeking guidance on how to both handle and benefit from the ups and downs of their own life journey.

just above my head james baldwin: The Columbia Guide to Contemporary African American Fiction Darryl Dickson-Carr, 2005-10-14 From Ishmael Reed and Toni Morrison to Colson Whitehead and Terry McMillan, Darryl Dickson-Carr offers a definitive guide to contemporary African American literature. This volume-the only reference work devoted exclusively to African American fiction of the last thirty-five years-presents a wealth of factual and interpretive information about the major authors, texts, movements, and ideas that have shaped contemporary African American fiction. In more than 160 concise entries, arranged alphabetically, Dickson-Carr discusses the careers, works, and critical receptions of Alice Walker, Gloria Naylor, Jamaica Kincaid, Charles Johnson, John Edgar Wideman, Leon Forrest, as well as other prominent and lesser-known authors. Each entry presents ways of reading the author's works, identifies key themes and influences, assesses the writer's overarching significance, and includes sources for further research. Dickson-Carr addresses the influence of a variety of literary movements, critical theories, and publishers of African American work. Topics discussed include the Black Arts Movement, African American postmodernism, feminism, and the influence of hip-hop, the blues, and jazz on African American novelists. In tracing these developments, Dickson-Carr examines the multitude of ways authors have portrayed the diverse experiences of African Americans. *The Columbia Guide to Contemporary African American Fiction* situates African American fiction in the social, political, and cultural contexts of post-Civil Rights era America: the drug epidemics of the 1980s and 1990s and the concomitant war on drugs, the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement, the struggle for gay rights, feminism, the rise of HIV/AIDS, and racism's continuing effects on African American communities. Dickson-Carr also discusses the debates and controversies regarding the role of literature in African American life. The volume concludes with an extensive annotated bibliography of African American fiction and criticism.

just above my head james baldwin: Halsted R. Holman and the Struggle for the Soul of Medicine Matthew H. Liang, Edward R. Lew, 2022-01-18 This book describes the major changes in American medicine and healthcare that took place during 100 years of efforts to deliver the fruits of biomedical science to all. The story is told through the life of Halsted Reid Holman, an icon in American academic medicine and arguably one of the most notable academic leaders in the US. His story is extraordinary, human, and inspiring. A charismatic figure, a beloved doctor, brilliant bench scientist, innovative teacher, mentor to many leaders in American medicine and leader of one of the world's great academic medical centers, Holman was a change agent who challenged orthodoxy, injustice and arrogance and took others to a vision they could not imagine. He was a major figure shaping and reacting to the rise of molecular medicine and all the changes in US healthcare: the beginning of Medicare/Medicaid, the growth of the health insurance industry and the medical-industrial complex, health maintenance organizations, the disappearance of municipal hospitals and chronic disease and mental health hospitals, widening health disparities, Obama's Affordable Care Act, and the tension between health care as a basic human right and as a business. Holman's responses were singular, humanitarian, principled, action-oriented, data-driven, collaborative with patients, and a departure from a worldview that knowledge and technology will solve all ills and that only experts can see the truth.

just above my head james baldwin: Ex Auditu - Volume 18 Klyne Snodgrass, 2004-06-23 *Ex Auditu* began as the journal incorporating the papers of the Fredrick Neumann Symposium of

Princeton Theological Seminary. After the first four volumes the journal began publishing the papers from the North Park Symposium on the Theological Interpretation of Scripture. The intent from the first has been to provide a forum for doing interdisciplinary theology from a biblical perspective for the benefit of the Church. Each annual publication focuses on a topic crucial to the life of today's Church. Additionally, each issue contains an annotated bibliography and a sermon, which makes it a practical guide for pastors. EDITOR: Dr. Stephen Chester, Associate Professor of New Testament North Park Theological Seminary EDITOR EMERITUS: Dr. Klyne R. Snodgrass, Paul W. Brandel Professor of New Testament Studies at North Park Theological Seminary ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Dr. D. Christopher Spinks, Acquisitions Editor at Wipf and Stock Publishers. EDITORIAL BOARD: Terence E. Fretheim, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN; Richard B. Hays, Duke Divinity School, Durham, NC; Jon R. Stock, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR; Miroslav Volf, Yale Divinity School, New Haven, CT; John Wipf, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION: Individuals: U.S.A. and all other countries (in U.S. funds)-\$20.00 / Students-\$12.00 Institutions: \$30 in the U.S., and \$40 for international shipments (in U.S. funds) To subscribe: Send pertinent information to Wipf and Stock Publishers at orders@wipfandstock.com and indicate your preferred method of payment. Back issues are available through Wipf and Stock Publishers. Symposium on the Theological Interpretation of Scripture at North Park DETAILS: For more information about the symposium click [here](#). INQUIRIES: Other inquiries should be addressed to one of the following: Dr. Dennis Edwards, Associate Professor of New Testament North Park Theological Seminary 3225 W. Foster Ave. Chicago, IL 60625 Telephone: (773) 244-6238 / Email sdredwards@northpark.edu Chris Spinks, Acquisitions Editor Wipf and Stock Publishers 199 W. 8th Ave., Ste. 3 Eugene, OR 97401 Telephone: (541) 344-1528 / Fax: (541) 344-1506 / Email: chris@wipfandstock.com

just above my head james baldwin: Why Love Leads to Justice David A. J. Richards, 2016 This book tells the stories of notable historical figures whose resistance of patriarchal laws transformed ethical, political, and legal standards.

just above my head james baldwin: **Antique Trader Book Collector's Price Guide** Richard Russell, 2006-07-05 This new edition of Antique Trader Book Collector's Price Guide provides readers with the information and values to carve a niche for themselves in a market where rare first editions of Jane Austen's Emma and J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter and the Philosophers Stone recently sold at auction for 254,610 dollars and 40,355 dollars respectively. Organized in 13 categories, including Americana, banned, paranormal and mystery, this guide discusses identifying and grading books, and provides collectors with details for identifying and assessing books in 8,000 listings.

just above my head james baldwin: A Spy in the Enemy's Country Donald A. Petesch, 1989 Paperbound reprint of a 1989 study that provides background for understanding the works of black American writers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Annotation copyrighted by Book News, Inc., Portland, OR

just above my head james baldwin: **In The Break** Fred Moten, 2003-04-09 Investigates the connections between jazz, sexual identity, and radical black politics In his controversial essay on white jazz musician Burton Greene, Amiri Baraka asserted that jazz was exclusively an African American art form and explicitly fused the idea of a black aesthetic with radical political traditions of the African diaspora. In the Break is an extended riff on "The Burton Greene Affair," exploring the tangled relationship between black avant-garde in music and literature in the 1950s and 1960s, the emergence of a distinct form of black cultural nationalism, and the complex engagement with and disavowal of homoeroticism that bridges the two. Fred Moten focuses in particular on the brilliant improvisatory jazz of John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, Albert Ayler, Eric Dolphy, Charles Mingus, and others, arguing that all black performance—culture, politics, sexuality, identity, and blackness itself—is improvisation. For Moten, improvisation provides a unique epistemological standpoint from which to investigate the provocative connections between black aesthetics and Western philosophy. He engages in a strenuous critical analysis of Western philosophy (Heidegger, Kant, Husserl, Wittgenstein, and Derrida) through the prism of radical black thought and culture. As the critical,

lyrical, and disruptive performance of the human, Moten's concept of blackness also brings such figures as Frederick Douglass and Karl Marx, Cecil Taylor and Samuel R. Delany, Billie Holiday and William Shakespeare into conversation with each other. Stylistically brilliant and challenging, much like the music he writes about, Moten's wide-ranging discussion embraces a variety of disciplines—semiotics, deconstruction, genre theory, social history, and psychoanalysis—to understand the politicized sexuality, particularly homoeroticism, underpinning black radicalism. In the Break is the inaugural volume in Moten's ambitious intellectual project to establish an aesthetic genealogy of the black radical tradition

just above my head james baldwin: *Me and My House* Magdalena J. Zaborowska, 2018-03-29 The last sixteen years of James Baldwin's life (1971–87) unfolded in a village in the South of France, in a sprawling house nicknamed "Chez Baldwin." In *Me and My House* Magdalena J. Zaborowska employs Baldwin's home space as a lens through which to expand his biography and explore the politics and poetics of blackness, queerness, and domesticity in his complex and underappreciated later works. Zaborowska shows how the themes of dwelling and black queer male sexuality in *The Welcome Table*, *Just above My Head*, and *If Beale Street Could Talk* directly stem from Chez Baldwin's influence on the writer. The house was partially torn down in 2014. Accessible, heavily illustrated, and drawing on interviews with Baldwin's friends and lovers, unpublished letters, and manuscripts, *Me and My House* offers new insights into Baldwin's life, writing, and relationships, making it essential reading for all students, scholars, and fans of Baldwin.

just above my head james baldwin: *The Sphinx Contemplating Napoleon* Gilane Tawadros, 2021-01-28 Anchored in artistic practice, this vibrant collection of essays and writings spans a period from 1992–2017 and the work of leading artists such as Adel Abdessemed, Richard Avedon, Sonia Boyce, Frank Bowling, Omer Fast, Mona Hatoum, Susan Hiller, Alfredo Jaar, Glenn Ligon and Shen Yuan. A key figure in British and international art, Gilane Tawadros draws difference to the surface, recuperating it as a potentially radical frame through which to understand contemporary art and the everyday world. Playing with forms of writing, from critical analyses to fictional narratives, the book functions as a practice-based meditation on how to write about contemporary art.

just above my head james baldwin: *God-Fearing and Free* Jason W. Stevens, 2010-11-15 Religion has been on the rise in America for decades—which strikes many as a shocking new development. To the contrary, Jason Stevens asserts, the rumors of the death of God were premature. Americans have always conducted their cultural life through religious symbols, never more so than during the Cold War. In *God-Fearing and Free*, Stevens discloses how the nation, on top of the world and torn between grandiose self-congratulation and doubt about the future, opened the way for a new master narrative. The book shows how the American public, powered by a national religious revival, was purposefully disillusioned regarding the country's mythical innocence and fortified for an epochal struggle with totalitarianism. Stevens reveals how the Augustinian doctrine of original sin was refurbished and then mobilized in a variety of cultural discourses that aimed to shore up democratic society against threats preying on the nation's internal weaknesses. Suddenly, innocence no longer meant a clear conscience. Instead it became synonymous with totalitarian ideologies of the fascist right or the communist left, whose notions of perfectability were dangerously close to millenarian ideals at the heart of American Protestant tradition. As America became riddled with self-doubt, ruminations on the meaning of power and the future of the globe during the "American Century" renewed the impetus to religion. Covering a wide selection of narrative and cultural forms, Stevens shows how writers, artists, and intellectuals, the devout as well as the nonreligious, disseminated the terms of this cultural dialogue, disputing, refining, and challenging it—effectively making the conservative case against modernity as liberals floundered.

just above my head james baldwin: *The Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Fiction, 3 Volume Set* Brian W. Shaffer, 2011-01-18 This Encyclopedia offers an indispensable reference guide to twentieth-century fiction in the English-language. With nearly 500 contributors and over one million words, it is the most comprehensive and authoritative reference guide to twentieth-century fiction in

the English language. Contains over 500 entries of 1000-3000 words written in lucid, jargon-free prose, by an international cast of leading scholars Arranged in three volumes covering British and Irish Fiction, American Fiction, and World Fiction, with each volume edited by a leading scholar in the field Entries cover major writers (such as Saul Bellow, Raymond Chandler, John Steinbeck, Virginia Woolf, A.S. Byatt, Samuel Beckett, D.H. Lawrence, Zadie Smith, Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Nadine Gordimer, Alice Munro, Chinua Achebe, J.M. Coetzee, and Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o) and their key works Examines the genres and sub-genres of fiction in English across the twentieth century (including crime fiction, Sci-Fi, chick lit, the noir novel, and the avant-garde novel) as well as the major movements, debates, and rubrics within the field, such as censorship, globalization, modernist fiction, fiction and the film industry, and the fiction of migration, diaspora, and exile

just above my head james baldwin: Evangelical Disenchantment David Hempton, 2008-12-01 David Hempton looks at evangelicalism through the lens of well-known individuals who once embraced the evangelical tradition, but later repudiated it. The author recounts the faith journeys of nine creative artists, social reformers, and public intellectuals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries--Publisher description.

just above my head james baldwin: Queer Pollen David A. Gerstner, 2011 This book discusses three notable black queer twentieth century artists and how they turned to various media to work through their experiences living as queer black men.

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