



The Evidence of Things Not Said: James Baldwin and the Promise of American Democracy

Lawrie Balfour

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The Evidence of Things Not Said employs the rich essays of James Baldwin to interrogate the politics of race in American democracy. Lawrie Balfour advances the political discussion of Baldwin's work, and regards him as a powerful political thinker whose work deserves full consideration. Baldwin's essays challenge appeals to race-blindness and formal but empty guarantees of equality and freedom. They undermine white presumptions of racial innocence and simultaneously refute theories of persecution that define African Americans solely as innocent victims. Unsettling fixed categories, Baldwin's essays construct a theory of race consciousness that captures the effects of racial identity in everyday experience. Balfour persuasively reads Baldwin's work alongside that of W. E. B. Du Bois to accentuate how double consciousness works differently on either side of the color line. She contends that the allusiveness and incompleteness of Baldwin's essays sustains the tension between general claims about American racial history and the singularity of individual experiences. The Evidence of Things Not Said establishes Baldwin's contributions to democratic theory and situates him as an indispensable voice in contemporary debates about racial injustice.

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