

Guide to the James Baldwin Early Manuscripts and Papers

JWJ MSS 21



by Timothy G. Young

October 1998

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library
P. O. Box 208330
New Haven, CT 06520-8330
(203) 432-2977
beinecke.library@yale.edu
<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/>

CALL NUMBER: JWJ MSS 21

CREATOR: Baldwin, James, 1924-1987

TITLE: James Baldwin early manuscripts and papers

DATES: 1941-1945

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: 2.7 linear feet (6 boxes)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: An early group of materials by Baldwin, including manuscripts, correspondence, artworks and personal papers. Among the manuscripts are drafts of a novel, "Crying Holy", which evolved much later into Baldwin's first published novel, "Go Tell It On the Mountain." The correspondence includes letters from Baldwin's friends in the military, including Tom Martin. Some of the artwork, mostly pencil sketches, is by Baldwin while a number of other items are by a high school friend of his, Martin Weissman. Among the personal papers is one photograph of a very young Baldwin.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.baldwin>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Beinecke Library reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/beinecke.baldwin>.

To order reproductions from this collection, please send an email with the call number, box number(s), and folder number(s) to beinecke.images@yale.edu.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Bart Kaplan, 1998.

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Restricted Fragile in Box 6 may only be consulted with permission of the appropriate curator. Preservation photocopies or photographic prints for reference use have been substituted in the main files.

Conditions Governing Use

The James Baldwin Early Manuscripts and Papers are the physical property of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the appropriate curator.

Preferred Citation

James Baldwin Early Manuscripts and Papers. James Weldon Johnson Collection, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

JAMES BALDWIN, 1924-1987

The life of James Baldwin, novelist, essayist and civil rights advocate, has been described in a number of biographies and critical works, including David Leeming's *James Baldwin: A Biography* [Viking Penguin, 1994] and James Campbell's *Talking at the Gates: A Life of James Baldwin* [Faber, 1991 and Viking, 1991]

The provenance of the papers is a matter of some intrigue. The donor, Bart Kaplan, acquired the papers through eminent domain, after his company took possession of a storage building in downtown Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, sometime in the early 1960s. The space in which they were stored had apparently once belonged to a publishing company which had left behind a suitcase containing these materials from James Baldwin. The relationship between Baldwin and the publishing company, as well as how a small parcel of his earliest literary effects was left with them, is uncertain. According to several sources, the materials in this archive were known to have been created by Baldwin, but were thought discarded or simply forgotten. In his introduction to *New Essays on Go Tell It on the Mountain* [Cambridge UP, 1996], Trudier Harris indicates that, following Harper's rejection of a draft section of "In My Father's House" [alternately "Crying Holy"], Baldwin put the manuscript "in a 'duffel bag'" and turned his attention to another project. Other circumstantial evidence - the dating of the first draft of "Crying Holy" to November 1941, while Baldwin was still in high school, and the length of the typescript version (57 pages - a few shy of the 60-page manuscript Richard Wright urged Baldwin to submit to Harper's) - suggests that this recovered cache of material fills in the gap that bibliographers have noted.

Scope and Contents

The James Baldwin Early Manuscripts and Papers contain material documenting a short period of Baldwin's young adult life between 1941-1945, when Baldwin was just beginning his literary career. The material has been organized into four series: *Writings*, *Correspondence*, *Artwork*, and *Personal Papers*.

[Series I, Writings](#) (1941-45, n.d.), consists of works by Baldwin and other writers. The various draft stages of Baldwin's "Crying Holy" include at least two distinct plotlines. The first group of drafts, focusing on the subtitle "The Prisoner", concern a plot which varies from the final version of the decade-long project which culminated in *Go Tell It on the Mountain* in 1953. The second group of drafts, "The Sacrifice" et seq., follows more closely with the themes and characters of the finished novel. Other works by Baldwin are a section of an untitled short story featuring the characters Julius Greenberg and Mark Hayward, notes for a play entitled "Vanguard", a folder of poetry, including a lengthy narrative poem, and an issue (missing its

cover) of what is likely to be *The Magpie*, the literary magazine of Baldwin's alma mater, De Witt Clinton High School, featuring several items by Baldwin.

Writings of Others includes two folders of material by Werner Loeb - poems, press releases, short stories, and play scenarios, evidently written for a school class. The unidentified writings at the end of the series are in several different hands and include poetry, essays, and stories.

[Series II, Correspondence](#) (1941-45, n.d.), contains principally letters addressed to Baldwin between 1941 and 1945. Many of these are addressed to Baldwin by friends serving in the military, including Sheldon Beigel, Paul Gertz, and Arthur Moore. A series of letters from 1944 is from Tom Martin, with whom Baldwin had lived during his brief stay in New Jersey in 1942-43. There are two drafts of outgoing letters, apparently in the hand of Baldwin. One is most likely to Tom Martin, while the other is to a "Dan'l". There are also two letters signed with this name only in the "Unidentified" folder.

Among the third-party letters is one addressed to "Sister" by James's brother, David Baldwin. Remaining letters are a rejection form letter from *Harper's Magazine* and a letter of recommendation for Baldwin from a Clinton High School advisor.

The majority of the pieces in [Series III, Artwork](#) (1945, n.d.) are not by James Baldwin, though there are a few pencil doodles which were found with manuscripts he wrote. Identified artwork includes one folder of watercolor sketches by "Leon K." and a group of ink sketches and etching proofs by Martin Weissman, a high school friend of Baldwin's. The remaining pieces, principally academic studies and sketches are unidentified.

The varied assortment of items which make up [Series IV, Personal Papers](#) (1943-45, n.d.), provides a snapshot of Baldwin's early life in New York. Here are a bank book, military papers (some of which document Baldwin's attachment to the Office of War Information), notices from *PM Magazine* (another temporary assignment for Baldwin), a single photograph of what appears to be a very young James Baldwin, and tax documents from 1944. The group of printed items consists mainly of issues of small-circulation newsletters for Socialist organizations. A few of these bear a mailing label for Martin Weissman.

Collection Contents

Series I: Writings, 1941-45, n.d.

0.4' (1 box)

Series I, *Writings*, is divided into two subseries and arranged alphabetically by title or author.

WRITINGS BY JAMES BALDWIN

"Crying Holy"

b. 1, f. 1	Synopsis, typescript and holograph, corrected	n.d.
b. 1, f. 2	"Glad Tidings: Book 1: The Prisoner", draft, holograph	1941 Nov
b. 1, f. 3	"Crying Holy: Prologue -- The Prisoner," draft typescript, corrected	1941
b. 1, f. 4	"The Prologue to Crying Holy," draft, holograph and typescript, corrected	n.d.
b. 1, f. 5	"The Prisoner," draft, typescript carbon With original folder	n.d.
b. 1, f. 6	"Crying Holy: Book 1 [The Prisoner]," draft, holograph, corrected	1941 Nov
b. 1, f. 7	"Crying Holy: Book I: The Sacrifice," draft, holograph, corrected	n.d.
b. 1, f. 8	"Glad Tidings," draft pages, typescript	n.d.
b. 1, f. 9	"Crying Holy: Book I: The Sacrifice," notes	1945 Feb 4
b. 1, f. 10	"Book II / In My Father's House," draft pages, holograph, corrected	n.d.
b. 1, f. 11	Untitled draft beginning: "Gabriel Grimes, negro, born 1884..." , holograph, corrected	n.d.
b. 1, f. 12-13	Untitled draft beginning: "Gabriel Grimes, negro, born 1884..." , typescript, and carbon corrected [lacking page 7]	n.d.
b. 1, f. 14	Mailing envelope for manuscript	1945 Apr 27
b. 1, f. 15	Untitled story, re: Julius Greenberg and Mark Hayward, holograph, corrected	n.d.
b. 1, f. 16	Poems, holograph and typescript, corrected With original folder labelled: "WORK-IN-PROGRESS" and "Ignorant Armies", n.d.	n.d.
b. 1, f. 17	"Vanguard: A Play in One Act", notes, holograph With doodles	n.d.
b. 1, f. 18	Printed works from issue of The Magpie[?] [De Witt Clinton High School literary magazine] Includes: "Judgment Day" [poem] "Youth" [poem] "Mississippi Legend" [short story] "Incident in London" [short story]	n.d.

WRITINGS OF OTHERS

b. 1, f. 19-20	Loeb, Werner Includes: poems, press releases, short stories and play scenarios, typescript, corrected	1943, n.d.
	Unidentified	
b. 1, f. 21	Essay: "Then expansion strain-lateral...", typescript	n.d.
b. 1, f. 22	Essay on Joseph Conrad, J. M. Barrie and W. H. Hudson, holograph	n.d.
b. 1, f. 23	Poetry fragments, holograph and typescript	n.d.
b. 1, f. 24	Short story: "It was late; very late; about eleven o'clock," mimeograph, corrected	n.d.
b. 1, f. 25	Story fragments re: military argument in restaurant, typescript	n.d.

Series II: Correspondence, 1941-45, n.d.

0.2' (1 box)

Series II, *Correspondence*, is arranged alphabetically.

b. 2, f. 26	Alexander, Dot	n.d.
b. 2, f. 27	American Negro Theatre	1945 Apr
b. 2, f. 28	Beigel, Sheldon Includes: draft of response by James Baldwin and draft of letter to "David" in unidentified hand	1943-44
b. 2, f. 29	Carlson, Esther	1945 Jun
b. 2, f. 30	[Darling?], ---	1944 Dec 14
b. 2, f. 31	Gertz, Paul	1944
b. 2, f. 32	James, Stephen D. Envelope only	1944 Nov
b. 2, f. 33	Lloyd, David [agent]	1942 Jun 25
b. 2, f. 34	MacLow, Jackson	1944 Dec 16
b. 2, f. 35	Martin, Tom	1944
b. 2, f. 36	Mehlman, Roy	n.d.
b. 2, f. 37	Moore, Arthur	1944
b. 2, f. 38	Palakian, Rose	n.d.
b. 2, f. 39	United States. Office of War Information	1945 Jan 3
b. 2, f. 40	[Weissman?], Martin	1944 Mar 31
b. 2, f. 41	Young People's Socialist League	1944, n.d.
b. 2, f. 42	Unidentified	1944, n.d.
b. 2, f. 43	Draft of letter: James Baldwin to Tom [Martin?]	1944 Sep 2
b. 2, f. 44	Draft of letter: James Baldwin to "Dan'l"	n.d.
b. 2, f. 45	Third-party letters Includes: Baldwin, David, to "Sister"; "Marge" to John Matysuk; "Mother" to Louis Weinberg; Socialist Party, Manhattan Committee to Lois Davis	1944-45
b. 2, f. 46	Rejection form letter, <i>Harper's Magazine</i>	n.d.
b. 2, f. 47	Letter of recommendation for James Baldwin to the Editor of the Amsterdam Star-News from Wilmer T. Stone, faculty advisor, "The Magpie", DeWitt Cinton High School	1941 Oct 16

Series III: Artwork, 1945, n.d.*0.2' (1 box)*Series III, *Artwork*, is listed by type of material.

b. 3, f. 48	Pencil doodles [by James Baldwin?]	n.d.
b. 3, f. 49	Watercolor sketches by "Leon K."	n.d.
b. 3, f. 50	Ink sketches and etching proofs by Martin ["Mottke"] Weissman	1945, n.d.
b. 3, f. 51	Ink sketches, unidentified artists Also stored in: Oversize, Box 5, folder 69	n.d.
b. 3, f. 52	Ink and pencil sketches on onion-skin paper, unidentified artists	n.d.
b. 3, f. 53	Ink and pencil sketches (after Picasso and Weber; life studies), unidentified artists	n.d.
b. 3, f. 54	Watercolor sketches, unidentified artists	n.d.

Series IV: Personal Papers, 1943-45, n.d.

0.2' (1 box)

Series IV, *Personal Papers*, is arranged alphabetically by type of material.

b. 4, f. 55	Advertising booklet: Bocour colors	n.d.
b. 4, f. 56	Bank book	n.d.
b. 4, f. 57	Clippings	1945, n.d.
b. 4, f. 58	Label "Schapiro's"	n.d.
b. 4, f. 59	Military papers	1943-45
b. 4, f. 60	Notes	n.d.
b. 4, f. 61	Notices from <i>PM Magazine</i>	1945 Feb
b. 4, f. 62	Paper and envelopes, blank	n.d.
b. 4, f. 63	Photograph: [James Baldwin as young child?]	n.d.
b. 4, f. 64	Postcard set: Roualt paintings	n.d.
b. 4, f. 65-67	Printed items Includes issues of: <i>Challenge!</i> [Young People's Socialist League]; <i>Enquiry: A Journal of Independent Radical Thought</i> ; <i>The Key Reporter</i> [Phi Beta Kappa] <i>Labor Action</i> ; <i>New Yorker</i> ; <i>Senior Scholastic</i> ; <i>War Commentary</i> [For Anarchism]; <i>Why?: A Bulletin of Free Inquiry</i> ; <i>Zionist Review</i>	1943-45
b. 4, f. 68	Tax documents	1944

Oversize
1.5' (1 box)

b. 5 (Oversize), f. Artwork: Ink sketch, unidentified artist
69

n.d.

Restricted Fragile Papers

Restricted fragile material. Reference surrogates have been substituted in the main files. For further information consult the appropriate curator.

b. 6, f. 70	Box 1, folder 3
b. 6, f. 71	Box 1, folder 4
b. 6, f. 72	Box 1, folder 12
b. 6, f. 73	Box 1, folder 13
b. 6, f. 74	Box 1, folder 16
b. 6, f. 75	Box 1, folder 19
b. 6, f. 76	Box 1, folder 23
b. 6, f. 77	Box 1, folder 25
b. 6, f. 78	Box 2, folder 44

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

African Americans in literature
Authors, American -- 20th Century -- Archives

Names

Baldwin, James, 1924-1987
Weissman, Martin