

External Examiner's Report on the Dissertation of Emanuela Maltese

"blackness Next Time: James Baldwin's Prophecies of Beauty and Love"

Submitted in 2024 at the *Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures*

I. Brief summary of the dissertation

Emanuela Maltese's dissertation is a contrapuntal reading of James Baldwin's work. It connects Baldwin's critical thought with postcolonial theory, the Black radical tradition, and Black feminism.

II. Brief overall evaluation of the dissertation

This is an outstanding and innovative dissertation. Although there have been many excellent interdisciplinary studies on Baldwin, Emanuela Maltese's analysis adds a new dimension to Baldwin's work because she uses postcolonial theory, Black studies, and "third world" feminism in a contrapuntal and appositional manner.

III. Detailed evaluation of the dissertation and its individual aspects

Emanuela Maltese takes the translator task seriously. She draws from Benjamin's famous essay on the figure of the translator to elaborate on Baldwin's afterlife. For this aspect, we can frame Maltese's dissertation within the tradition of cultural studies, in which historical analysis is important. Still, it must always be undertaken from a contemporary perspective (the afterlife of a text or an event).

1. Structure of the argument

The dissertation aims to frame Baldwin's work alongside other emancipatory epistemologies. It does this successfully through critical insights that work as resonances and visual sounds.

2. Formal aspects of the dissertation

The argument is constructed in musical terms, like an orchestration of voices with contrapuntal elements. It engages authors such as Stuart Hall, Edward Said, Fred Moten, Denise Ferreira da Silva, Hortense Spillers, Nikki Giovanni, Jacqui Alexander, and Audre Lorde, focusing on postcolonialism (not simply as after the empire), intersectionality, Black aesthetics, spirituality, and the blues as a form of fugitivity. From the dissertation pages emerges an idea of "blackness" from below that contrasts with the notion of "Blackness" associated with the Enlightenment project. This "blackness," (with lowercase) as Emanuela Maltese puts it, is "an entanglement of joy and pain." Its roots are in the "limbo" of the Middle Passage, where new languages,

forms of resistance, and experimental lives emerged along with terror and horror.

3. *Use of sources and/or material*

The dissertation contains a wide range of secondary and primary sources. Quotations are well distributed throughout the text. Because it focuses on Baldwin's afterlife, all quotations and ideas are given new and fresh meanings.

4. *Personal contribution to the subject*

This will be a pathbreaking work in American studies, as well as cultural and postcolonial studies.

IV. Questions for the author

My question for the author concerns Baldwin's acoustic dimension. Can Emanuela give us some specific examples from Baldwin's literary work?

V. Conclusion

Without hesitation, I provisionally classify the submitted dissertation as *passed*.

August 12th, 2024

Alessandro Buffa