

Welcome to the Hood:**The Hood as Symbolic Code of Difference (2004)****Raimi Gbadamosi**

Preamble

Forty-one years ago, in 1964, James Baldwin published a collection of essays entitled *Nobody Knows My Name*. One essay, “Notes for a Hypothetical Novel,” was the text of an address he had delivered before a group of fellow Americans in the United States. Here he states:

I shall be absolutely reckless [today] and pretend that I’m writing a novel in your presence. I’m going to ramble on a little about my own past, not as though it were my own past exactly, but as a subject for fiction. I am doing this in a kind of halting attempt to relate the terms of my experience to you; and to find out what specific principles if any, unites us in spite of all the obvious disparities, some of which are superficial and some of which are profound and most of which are entirely misunderstood. We’ll come back to that . . . this misunderstanding, . . . in a minute, but I’m not pretending to be unbiased.¹

The role of personal history in one’s choice of topic for research and writing is not heavily disputed in our world of post-phenomenological sensibilities.

I too will attempt recklessness by telling you stories; as with Baldwin, this is an exercise in rationalization. This essay is a discussion of form rather than content, and it would be perfectly reasonable to dispense with any prior explanation if the ultimate intention were to put an idea across rather than discuss the idea of an idea and in the process leave the core of the issues behind.

The Coming

Salakó had arrived with his own hood.

¹ James Baldwin, *Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of A Native Son* (London: Penguin, 1964), 119.