

**Strangers in the Village: Democratic Poetry and the Politics of Love in the Political
Thought of Hannah Arendt and James Baldwin
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As an idea, love occupies a strange and central position in our democratic political consciousness. It seems that almost as many people claim that a politics of love is the one thing most sorely needed today as claim that it is powerless to change the world. My research this summer therefore sought to *think through* what it would mean to enact a politics of love. To do this, I placed two major 20th-century thinkers in conversation with one another—the political theorist Hannah Arendt and the democratic poet James Baldwin—and examining creating a new and truly multi-racial democracy for the first time.

With this exchange as a starting point, my research set out to probe the following questions: First, what are the demands on political life made by a politics of love? Does love, like a tyrant, really eliminate the spaces between human beings and wipe away the reality of a shared world, effacing the possibility of human plurality—a condition that for both Baldwin and Arendt is among the greatest of human goods? Second: what is the role of the poet or writer in the political culture of a democracy? And finally: can love contribute to a cultural project of re-imagining American democracy? In order to think through these questions, I focused on reading key texts by my pair of thinkers. First Arendt's *Love and Saint Augustine*, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, *The Human Condition*, and *On Revolution*, as well as some shorter essays from early and late in her career. Then Baldwin, beginning with his earlier fiction in *Go Tell it on the Mountain*, *Giovanni's Room*, and especially *Another Country*, as well as later works like *Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone* and *If Beale Street Could Talk*, before transitioning to closely reading his politicalr caicl (c) 0.2 (a) 0.2 (l) 02 (l) 0.2 (y) 0.2 (l (c) 0.1