THE ROLE OF LOVE IN THE FICTION OF
JAMES BALDWIN

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Douglas Wayne Wright
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Master's Committee:  Charles J. Pelfrey, Chairman
                       Ruth Grainger
                       Robert A. Charles

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The fictional world of James Baldwin is a world of chaos and confusion. Baldwin goes to much length to utilize the music of the American Negro in establishing this world of chaos and confusion. It is the wailing and writhing of the blues or the brassy notes of jazz that often establish the key themes in his fiction. The messages in the blues songs of Bessie Smith and Ida Scott immediately set the despairing tone that plunges a reader into the very depth of alienation: "Do you love me?" "Who am I?"

Twentieth century literature seems to be earmarked as a quest for reality, and the fiction of James Baldwin appears to be no exception. Baldwin's characters seem to fit perfectly the mold labeled by Gertrude Stein as the "lost generation," characters who floundered around and lacked the power of direction to get their lives straightened out. As the "lost generation" characters were alienated by their psychic sex scars, Baldwin's characters appear sexually alienated as a result of social concepts. Critics have looked at the Baldwin characters and have seen the quest for love and the theme of loneliness and estrangement as being associated with the concept of alienation.¹

Thus, the question might bear repeating here: What is the mind behind the conception of so many alienated characters?

To contend that the answer to the question is merely the creative mind of James Baldwin building a world for his fictional characters is to underestimate totally the power of the question and the force of the author. The man behind the alienated mask is a composite man of generations of Negroes who have quested for a justifiable position in a white man's world. Also, the creation is the result of the estranged David Baldwin's hate toward his stepson, James, and the end result of that relationship.\(^2\) Born in 1924 and living through the "Great Depression" of the 1930's, the young Baldwin was aware of the separation of mankind as a result of economic and social pressures. He must have seen what Reich describes in *The Greening of America*:

\[
\text{The bonds of affection and concern between men were broken by harsh imperatives of competition. As pecuniary relationships replaced ties of tradition, custom, religion, and respect, men obeyed authority only when forced to by economic necessity or penal laws, and in consequence modern crime became the obverse face of society. Man was uprooted from his supporting physical and social environment and, like a polar bear in a city zoo, he would from then on suffer an alienated existence.}^{3}\]

Baldwin must have come to formulate this sense of utter hopelessness as is seen in his character's frantic questing for


reality beyond the conventional borders, especially in racial and sexual relations.\textsuperscript{4} Thus, James Baldwin is beset by his own alienation as a Negro, by his knowledge of the white's misconception about Negroes, and by his own vision of love.

Not only was James Baldwin alienated by his physical environment of Harlem set apart from the rest of New York City, but James Baldwin was also alienated by being born a Negro when Negroes were considered second-class citizens. Perhaps the greatest cause of Baldwin's alienation was the result of the guilt from the continued preaching of his stepfather, David Baldwin, that the stepson was an "ugly" Negro:

Such was the father whose paranoia distorted Jimmy Baldwin's childhood and destroyed it. Such was the man who taught the boy he was ugly, the ugliest child ever seen, ugly as the Devil's son (his peaked hairline ugly, his peaked eyebrows ugly, his protuberant eyes ugly, his faintly cleft chin ugly)--so ugly that he must relinquish all hope of achieving salvation through love. Such was the man who estranged Jimmy Baldwin from himself, divesting him of tenderness and self-esteem, until he believed that his very flesh and bone proclaimed him "a worthless human being."\textsuperscript{5}

Thus, young James Baldwin was to grow up with a different concept of love.

This new concept of love that the writer James Baldwin was later to employ in his writings contains a denouncement of


\textsuperscript{5}Eckman, \textit{The Furious Passage of James Baldwin}, p. 36.
the manifestation of the sex myth of the Negro: the myth that Negro woman is especially passionate and the Negro man is especially potent. Baldwin also had his own particular views of love and sex to come through the voices and actions of his characters. As a result of the reasons for his alienation, James Baldwin was to conclude that love in the Platonic sense does not exist, but that the only type of love that exists in the world is physical love. Baldwin has his heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual characters act out their physical assignments, and sex and love become synonymous.

This study will be thematic by evaluating the characters by their love types: heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual. The sex castes will be discussed as to their function in the fictional works to gain insights into the individual love types. Also, the study will consider the role of love assigned by Baldwin as a vehicle for social criticism, as a vehicle for religious criticism, and as a stay against alienation. In Baldwin's fiction the only progressive and productive type of love character is the homosexual character. The heterosexual affairs prove to be the least rewarding, and the bisexual affairs are essentially more neutral in their relationships.

To make the preceding discoveries, this study will encompass the greater portions of the fictional works of James Baldwin. It will consider four novels and two plays. The volume of short stories, Going To Meet The Man, will not be considered because the stories offer no significant insights into the role of love that are not expressed in the novels and plays. The
following novels will be considered: *Go Tell It On The Mountain*, *Giovanni's Room*, *Another Country*, and *Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone*. Also, the following plays will be considered for their social and religious impact: *The Amen Corner* and *Blues for Mister Charlie*. An investigation of the scholarship on James Baldwin in *MLA Bibliography*, *Annual Bibliography of English and American Literature*, and indexes to current periodicals revealed that no individual explication of this particular thesis on Baldwin exists. Thus the study is an original and valid one.

Chapter II will be concerned with the classification of characters as to their love types: heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual, and Chapter II will also evaluate the function of the characters in the novels and plays. Chapter III will include the actual roles of love in Baldwin's fiction. In this chapter particular attention will be given to establishing the function of love as a vehicle for social criticism, as a vehicle for religious criticism, and as a stay against man's alienation. Chapter IV will consist of a summarization of the types of love and the roles of love as discovered in the fiction of James Baldwin.
CHAPTER II

THEMES OF LOVE EMPLOYED IN THE FICTION

A revelation of the Baldwin mask of love is necessary before one attempts to characterize and scrutinize the controversial elements in James Baldwin's fiction. To be able to understand Baldwin's concepts of physical love expressed in the fiction, one must look to those concepts that he holds in real life because it is his openness in writing of sexual intercourse that might be the offensive element in his creative artistry. Warren Beck is just in his criticism; he remarks:

A certain unreality in them (the characters), together with a pervading desperation, springs from their frantic questing for reality, beyond conventional borders, especially in racial and sexual relations.¹

Thus, sex takes on a role as the means to the end of the questing for reality. But is there an end to this questing, or is man to remain the estranged, alienated individual that he is?

The "black veil" must be lifted and the rational roots of the creative genius be exposed before one can comprehend the Baldwin "message." After the veil has thus been lifted, one discovers that the rationale behind the concept is common knowledge, but it is this common knowledge that is often not acceptable:

"The reason I never will hate anybody again," Jimmy Baldwin testifies, "is that it's--it's too--too demeaning a confession, you know, on your own part, if you need to hate somebody. It means that you're afraid of the other thing, y'know--which is to love and be loved, which is another confession."²

Thus, it appears that Baldwin sees that man has no concept of love, but he is merely acting out a lie in his relationships with others.

James Baldwin sees man hiding behind this mask called love, and has no concept of the reality of the term. In an interview with Fern Marja Eckman, Baldwin explained his vision of the mask of love:

"Y'know, you simply cannot--I can be all kinds of people in public," Baldwin says. "Or to myself, in front of my mirror. But in relation to someone who loves me or someone I love, you know, all these masks have to go. And everyone's afraid of that. Afraid of being seen as he is or she is. But that's why love is so frightening, I'm sure. Because you really have to come down front and be whoever you are. And you don't know who you are, y'know. You discover that partly--you discover that really through somebody else. And everybody's afraid of this revelation. You know, it isn't done in a day. Once you've done it, it isn't so terrifying--though the hangover remains. Once you meet the barrier, I think--once you've made some crucial turning point, then, hopefully, you can handle it from then on out, y'know. Because you know you can."³

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²Eckman, The Furious Passages of James Baldwin, p. 28.
³Ibid., p. 29.
According to this concept of man's "hang-up," it appears that critics such as Whitney Balliett,4 Robert Root,5 and Paul Goodman6 have come to Baldwin's "barrier" and have not become illuminated to the reality that Baldwin presents.

Another barrier that Baldwin openly assaults is the white "hang-up" of the Negro myth. Baldwin contends that everyone lusts both heterosexually and homosexually for the Negro body:

If you're a Negro, you're in the center of that peculiar affliction because anybody can touch you—when the sun goes down. You know, you're the target for everybody's fantasies. If you're a Negro female whore, he comes to you and asks you do for him what he wouldn't ask his wife to do—nor any other white woman. But you're a black woman! So you can do it—because you know how to do dirty things! ... And if you're a black boy... you wouldn't believe the holocaust that opens over your head—with all these despicable—males—looking for somebody to act out their fantasies on. And it happens in this case—if you're sixteen years old—to be you!7

John Ciardi refuses to accept Baldwin's premises on white psychology of the Negro myth, and Ciardi is not alone in

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7Eckman, The Furious Passage of James Baldwin, pp. 32-33.
refusing to consider James Baldwin’s view of the Negro problem and societal problems.\textsuperscript{8} According to Saul Maloff, Baldwin presents sex as a "necessary war" and confuses love and sex.\textsuperscript{9} Through Baldwin’s contention that love is the answer to the racial situation, the grounds are thus established for possible black-white sexual relationships; however, it is not here projected that this love has a sexual base even though love might appear as sexual in Baldwin’s works.

Even with his presentation of black-white sexual relations, Baldwin carries the Negro myth to such a plateau that the reader or critic might immediately brand the sexual act "taboo." However, it is with this ultimate presentation of black-white sexual relationships that Baldwin establishes the possibility of black-white heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual reality. Baldwin explains that the reason Americans label sex types or themes "taboo" is inherent in the moral psyche of this country:

American homosexuality is a waste primarily because, if people were not so frightened of it--if it wouldn't, you know--it really would cease in effect, as it exists in this country now, to exist. I mean the same way the Negro problem would disappear. People wouldn't have to spend so much time being defensive--if they weren't endlessly being condemned. I know a whole lot of people who turn into junkies because they're afraid they might be queer. The only people who talk about homosexuality, you know, the way--in this terrible way--are Americans. And Englishmen


and French and Germans. The Anglo-Saxons. The Puritans. In Italy, you know, men kiss each other and boys go to bed with each other. And no one is marked for life... And no one ends up going to a psychiatrist or turning into a junkie because he's afraid of being touched. You know that's the root of the whole... it's not a fear of men going to bed with men. It's a fear of anybody touching anybody! That's what it comes to. That's what's so horrible about it.10

Thus, since Baldwin has lain all cards face up, one sees Baldwin's grounds for justification in his character presentations, and one comes to realize that the lack of knowledge of the creative mind of James Baldwin causes sex to become one of the most highly criticized points. After seeing behind the author's literary mask and after coming to see some concrete literary philosophy of Baldwin, one is made more aware of James Baldwin's individual treatment of sex types or themes.

Heterosexual

The complexities of love have seldom been explored more subtly or at greater depths than in Baldwin's fiction. Baldwin introduces the reader to heterosexual affairs and shows the reader that love is usually abstract sex which eventually turns to hatred. One of the most haunting heterosexual affairs in Baldwin's fiction is introduced in Another Country. Rufus Scott and Leona have a relationship that is torn between love and hate. From the onset of their relationship, Rufus is unable to prevent himself from hurting Leona. During the first intimate

10Eckman, The Furious Passage of James Baldwin, p. 32.
relations between them Rufus thinks of himself as an instrument of torture:

He wanted her to remember him the longest day she lived. And, shortly, nothing could have stopped him, not the white God himself nor a lynch mob arriving on wings. Under his breath he cursed the milk-white bitch and groaned and rode his weapon between her thighs. She began to cry. I told you, he moaned, I'd give you something to cry about, and, at once, he felt himself strangling, about to explode or die. A moan and a curse tore through him while he beat her with all the strength he had and felt the venom shoot out of him, enough for a hundred black-white babies.¹¹

Rufus cannot understand the cause of his torture; he appears as a wounded animal striking out at his closest associates. In his affair with a gentle white girl, Leona, and in his relations with a white friend, Vivaldo, he becomes an unappeasable black paranoiac whom no white man can understand and no amount of love can redeem, and as an individual, Rufus ceases to exist.¹²

Rufus is totally incapable of understanding himself, and Leona, evidently, does not understand the sadistic treatment of Rufus, but she comes to associate physical torture with heterosexual affairs. In a sense, Leona becomes a stoic because the reader learns that Leona left the South because her husband beat her. He was so cruel and so vicious in his treatment of his wife that Leona became forever marked by being incapable of having any more


¹²"New World Cacaphony," Time (June 29, 1962), 76.
The Rufus-Leona relationship becomes even more torturous as Rufus continues to torture and degrade white Leona. Finally, Leona loses her mind and is admitted to a sanatorium. Rufus, left alone to his total alienation, does not have the power to resist himself and ends his tortured affair by committing suicide. Thus, this black-white heterosexual affair destroyed both characters, Rufus and Leona.

To immediately make the assumption that all heterosexual relationships end in destruction is to overstate the case at this point. There is a second heterosexual relationship in the novel, *Another Country*. However, there is a new twist to this affair—the couple is white, married, and have children. The tension that exists between Cass and Richard Silenski has its foundation in a lack of love. The husband, Richard, achieves success with his second-rate novel and becomes quite famous, but Cass in her disillusionment over her famous, second-rate writer husband turns away from Richard and seeks the bed of the homosexual Eric Jones. When the novel begins, the Silenskis appear to be happily married, but after the death of Rufus, after the trying affair of Vivaldo with Rufus's sister, Ida, and after the publication of Richard's second-rate novel, the Silenski's marriage becomes a bed of turmoil. Richard becomes more and more involved in his novel writing and fails to pay enough attention to his wife, Cass. Thus, Cass is forced to seek fulfillment in the arms of the homosexual actor, Eric.¹⁴


¹⁴ Ibid., p. 375.
When Richard discovers that Cass has been seeing another man, he thinks that Cass is seeing Vivaldo Moore, his former pupil, and Richard goes searching futilely to kill Vivaldo. After Richard returns from his futile quest, Cass tells him that it was Eric whom she had been seeing. Richard becomes violent and beats Cass. After seeing himself as the result of beating Cass, Richard asks forgiveness for his cruelty. He does not ask forgiveness for his failure to understand Cass's needs. It was difficult for Richard to accept and forgive the fact that Cass had been sleeping with a homosexual. At this point in their heterosexual relationship, Richard has become aware of the sex puzzles that surround his life and has thus come to question his relationship to Cass and the children. It is obvious that Richard is saved from becoming alienated as a result of his agreeing to remain with Cass for the sake of the children. Cass likewise has come to some recognition; she knows herself "prey to ambiguities" and without protection not only from "the evil world" but against "the wilderness of herself." Although this married heterosexual affair is beset by much trouble and strife, this experience is not as destructive as Rufus's heterosexual experience. This married heterosexual experience is more the "fight" and "kiss" as opposed to the unmarried "fight" and "kill."

Baldwin in juxtaposing two heterosexual relationships, one unmarried black-white and the other married white-white, has

15Baldwin, Another Country, p. 374.

establishes some premises of love. One can visualize that if a positive existence can be attained that positive relationship would be in the married white-white relationship as opposed to the unmarried black-white relationship. Thus, what has Baldwin said concerning marriage as opposed to non-marriage? It appears that the answer is obvious. If one is to be involved in a heterosexual relationship, it is better to be involved in a married role with one of like race.

If one has trouble formulating which of the relationships is more positive in Another Country, Baldwin goes one step further and introduces a third heterosexual relationship. This time the relationship exists between unmarried black-white persons: white Vivaldo, Rufus's friend and lover, and black Ida, Rufus's sister. From the onset of this love experience, the outcome can almost be predicted. There seems to be no common grounds for Vivaldo's and Ida's relationship. Vivaldo is a sexually alienated individual having expressed a fear of latent homosexuality17 and Ida is color alienated and gambles their heterosexual arrangement for a singing career.18 Both Vivaldo and Ida lose in their chaotic arrangement. Ida ends up in a sexual affair with her white agent who fails to produce the singing career that he promised her, and Vivaldo ends up in the "bed" of homosexual Eric involved in a homosexual experience from which he has been running. Thus, sex only adds to further alienation for Vivaldo and Ida.

17Baldwin, Another Country, p. 51.
18Ibid., p. 360.
To contend that there is a genuine heterosexual affair in Giovanni's Room is partly to misread the relationship between David and Hella. Both characters are alienated Americans living in Paris. Hella wanders over much of Europe in an attempt of "soul searching" to try to decide if she would like to marry David. "David's dilemma," says Baldwin on the jacket of Giovanni's Room, "is the dilemma of many men of his generation; by which I do not so much mean sexual ambivalence as a crucial lack of sexual authority."19 After Hella has chosen to quest for her answer to the proposition of marital love in Spain, David meets Giovanni and is thus thrown in a psychological turmoil—does he prefer a heterosexual relationship, or does he prefer a homosexual affair with Giovanni? David chooses to have the heterosexual relationship with Hella, and his world falls apart as a result of his decision.20 Giovanni kills his former employer, Guillaume, and is sentenced to be guillotined because he sees the death of his love. Hella discovers the homosexual love affair that existed between David and Giovanni and is incapable of understanding the importance of the relationship. Thus, according to her procedure for questing for her unreachable love, she again leaves frustrated David. David wanders the streets and beds of Paris, a man further alienated as a result of his trying sexual experiences.

David and Hella's relationship is almost duplicated in Baldwin's novel, Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone.

20 Ibid., p. 208.
However, there is one major difference between the two relationships—David and Hella are white; Leo Proudhammer and Barbara King are once again Baldwin's black-white phenomenon. The heterosexual relationship that involved Leo and Barbara is not as violent as the circumstances that surrounded David and Hella. Leo and Barbara had been involved with each other in a heterosexual arrangement for fifteen years, and Leo had never once proposed marriage. Leo's interest in the relationship was the sex fulfillment of a sexually alienated individual, but Barbara wanted marriage from the experience. However, Barbara is rejected later in the novel as Leo completes himself by finding a black male lover, Black Christopher. Leo reaches a further state in his alienation as he becomes dependent upon Black Christopher. When Leo finally reaches his epitome of alienation, he is presented to the reader as submitting to his "color" protest and donating money to buy guns for the black power revolutionaries.

In the remaining novel, Go Tell It On The Mountain, and the two plays, Blues for Mister Charlie and The Amen Corner, Baldwin's treatment of the heterosexual caste is merely a presentation of troubled married couples. In Go Tell It On The Mountain, the relationship is subdued because the wife, Elizabeth, submits to the "iron rule" of her husband, Gabriel. It is through the flashback technique that the reader sees the violence that


22Ibid., p. 482.
has been associated with the heterosexual experiences of both Gabriel and Elizabeth. Likewise, those heterosexual affairs in *Blues for Mister Charlie* and *The Amen Corner* consist of relationships that are non fulfilling. Lyle Britten and Parnell James in *Blues for Mister Charlie* were forced to seek their sexual pleasures outside their immediate homes. In fact the only sexual affairs of any real consequence for Lyle and Parnell were with Negro women. 23 In *The Amen Corner* Sister Margaret flees her heterosexual relationship to become a minister of "a God Unknown."

After Baldwin's heterosexual affairs have been placed in perspective, many conclusions appear. There are no positive heterosexual love experiences in the fiction of James Baldwin. Those that are presented are destined as "tooth and claw" affairs. Baldwin's heterosexual black-white couples are also very color conscious. Those that involve the black-white combination are destined for total disaster because color-consciousness is disturbed within the characters, and the extent of the disaster is governed by the depth of the relationship. It appears that James Baldwin cannot conceive of a lasting black-white heterosexual relationship. His white-white heterosexual affair is chaotic and disasterous, but the affair itself does not fall into total ruin. Baldwin is also conscious of the bond of marriage; he sees that unmarried lovers cannot maintain a stable alliance. An interesting point in the unmarried sexual relationships is that the couple remains childless. There is always the

conscious knowledge of pregnancy in the minds of the characters, but the problem is skillfully managed by the author: one character is sexually incapable, and the others have a sense of birth control.

All of Baldwin's heterosexual characters get in serious trouble because they reject personal values, and they are unable to construct or discover other positive values to replace those rejected ones. It appears that the society itself that produced such troubled individuals is in itself a troubled society. Baldwin reveals part of society's problems when he deals with his themes and ideas about the special relations between persons and society and race and sex. Perhaps the force and drive in the artistry of James Baldwin is seeing the artistic vision of Baldwin's approach to those human relationships that had never been so candidly revealed before in fiction.

Homosexual

Much attention is given to a presentation of the homosexual theme in the fiction of James Baldwin. Bibliographically speaking, James Baldwin can be called a "homosexual writer" because he presents so extensively a treatment of the homosexual theme. Baldwin has one complete novel, Giovanni's Room, dealing with homosexuality as a justifiable kind of love. The remarkable characteristic of this theme is the openness in presentation on the part of the author. The reader can thus come to see Baldwin's justification of a relationship between a man and a man.

In looking at the homosexual theme in the fiction of James Baldwin, one is reminded of the criticism by Granville Hicks.
Hicks was kind and appreciative of Baldwin's unusual sense of feel toward his characters:

His most conspicuous gift is his ability to find words that astonish the reader with their boldness even as they overwhelm him with their rightness.24

It is thus agreed that James Baldwin is an artist of language, and he shows his artistry by creating David's dilemma in Giovanni's Room:

"David's dilemma," Mr. Baldwin says on the jacket of his book, "is the dilemma of many men of his generation, by which I do not so much mean sexual ambivalence as a crucial lack of sexual authority.25

Thus, David's dilemma is that he has to choose between a heterosexual or homosexual existence.

David, the narrator, in the novel tells his story on the night before his male lover is to be executed for the murder of his former employer. David's presentation appears biased and stilted as he recounts his problem of making the choice to accept Giovanni as his male lover:

I repent now--for all the good it does--one particular lie among many lies I've told, lived, and believed. This is the lie which I told Giovanni, but never succeeded in making him believe, that I had never slept with a boy before.26


25Baldwin, Giovanni's Room.

26Ibid., p. 7.
Since David's heterosexual love was not becoming a reality, David in his questing for self-discovery found the attraction in the form of a male lover:

There is something fantastic in the spectacle I now present to myself of having run so far, so hard, across the ocean even, only to find myself brought up short once more before the bulldog in my own backyard—the yard, in the meantime, having grown smaller and the bulldog bigger.27

The bulldog to which David refers is this psychic drive or power that seeks love, understanding, and companionship even if it be with another male. David has a great problem in deciding to accept or reject the homosexual relationship. It is the room itself which Baldwin uses as the master symbol of David's fear, distaste, and fascination with homosexuality as a way of love.28 David is fascinated by homosexuality, or he would not continue frequenting the bar which is a hangout for homosexuals.

Nelson Algren calls David the "Lost Man"29 because David could not make up his mind and say the definite yes to life. At length, however, David gave a partial yes to Giovanni and shared Giovanni's room. At first the room was vulgar and foreign to David, but in time the room came to contain the total David and Giovanni. Giovanni gave freely of himself to David and David

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29Nelson Algren, "Lost Man," Nation (December 1, 1956), 484.
to Giovanni in making this relationship stable for a time. However, the stability was disturbed because of the partial acceptance of David as to his ultimate function in the affair. David was waiting for the return of Hella so that he could get married and forget Giovanni's room; however, David was deceiving himself as to his commitment to heterosexuality.

When Hella writes David that she has decided to return and marry him, David becomes a trapped individual, trapped within his own psyche. David believes that Giovanni is the only person that he has truly loved, and he is happy for a limited time to make Giovanni happy. However, David also thinks he desires marriage to the wandering Hella. Thus, with Hella returning to Paris, David was forced to tell Giovanni of his desires for his future relationships and his disgust for his present relationship. Giovanni countered with the argument that David was incapable of love and had never loved him at all. Giovanni was probably correct in his accusation because there is so little love actually expressed in the novel. The reason that love seems to be absent from the novel is that love almost ceases to exist in Baldwin's world, and is replaced by sex.30

When Hella finally arrives in Paris, the homosexual relationship is brought to a close. Giovanni in an act of desperation kills his former employer, Guillume, and is sentenced to be guillotined for the murder. Thus, for the pure, sexually alienated Giovanni, death was the final and ultimate end of a road conceived in the death of his child. The case was not

30Hicks, "Tormented Triangle," 5.
conclusive for David. Hella discovered the relationship between David and Giovanni, and not being able to face the reality of the discovery, she bade good-by to David for the last time. Thus, the estranged David is left to confront himself.

Now that David is pondering his life and sexual dilemma on the night before the execution, he sees some startling facts about himself. He is an alienated individual because he has expatriated himself in his quest to determine whether he is capable of desiring homosexual relationships. David sees that his decision for actually leaving Giovanni's room was a desperate attempt to leave and escape his homosexuality. However, when he was left to face himself, he saw that his answer was not so simple because Giovanni's room was suddenly the "real" world which excluded Hella and all other women.

The second major homosexual character in Baldwin's fiction is Eric Jones in the novel, Another Country. Eric, a famous actor, is also discovered to be an expatriate as was David. He was forced to leave his Southern home because he got involved in a homosexual experience with a Negro. Eric then came North and formed a similar attachment to Black Rufus Scott, but Eric recognized the violence of total alienation in Rufus and left for Paris. While living in Paris, Eric met Yves, and once again the homosexual theme is recreated. Finally, Eric gets an offer to star in a film in New York, and he accepts the offer. Eric makes plans to have Yves join him in America after Eric has gotten himself established in the chaos of New York City.
During the time that Eric was getting established in his new movie role and waiting for the arrival of Yves, two important incidents happened. Eric became involved in a futile heterosexual relationship with Cass Silenski which almost ended in violence, and Eric became the one link that firmly convinced Vivaldo Moore of his homosexual tendencies when Vivaldo discovered the secrets of Eric's "warm bed." Finally, Yves arrives to assume his chosen place as Eric's lover; thus, the novel, Another Country, concludes with the question: Can a homosexual couple find true love and happiness in New York City?

Leo Proudhammer, the primary character in the novel Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone, is a third major homosexual character in Baldwin's literature. The very name "Proudhammer" reveals much to the reader about the intent of the author. Proudhammer represents a man who has a rich sex life. As a young boy, Leo had an incestuous affair with his brother while living in Harlem:

More than anything on earth, that night, I wanted Caleb's joy. His joy was mine. When his breathing changed and his tremors began, I trembled, too, with joy, with joy, with joy and pride, and we came together.31

As the youth who came to work in the actor's workshop, Leo had long been initiated into the world of the homosexual.

Leo went to live with a white couple, Jerry and Barbara King, who were also associated with the acting guild. However,

31Baldwin, Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone, p. 211.
after a trying time working together, there was a splitting of the couple, and Barbara declared her love for Leo. Thus, Leo becomes initiated into the heterosexual world:

I had to warm my girl, my freezing girl. I covered her with my body, and I took off her robe. I covered her, I covered her, she held me, and I entered her and we rejoiced.32

These heterosexual experiences with Barbara last for fifteen years, but there is no proposal of marriage by Leo. Barbara loves Leo, but Leo can only envision sex in their relationship, not marriage. Finally, after Leo has a heart attack while performing on stage and is sent to the hospital, he decides to retire.

His retirement is twofold: he physically retires from the theatre, and he sexually retires from Barbara. But in his further questing for his reality, he returns to his homosexual nature, and gets himself a male lover, Black Christopher. From this point onward in the story, the homosexual theme takes a new characteristic: the new lover becomes the master over Leo and completely dominates him. Finally, Leo has reached his epitome of alienation near the conclusion of the novel when he agrees to finance weapons for the black power movement.33

The homosexual theme is one of Baldwin's most brilliantly handled themes. Many conclusions can be formulated from the artistic handling of the man-to-man concept. As was predicted

32Baldwin, Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone, p. 272.
33Ibid., p. 482.
in the preliminaries, Baldwin's handling of the homosexual theme was the most positive and rewarding of all the sex themes. As was clearly established as the problem of David in Giovanni's Room, Baldwin sees that commonly man cannot conceive of homosexuality as being anything but dirty and unhealthy. Had David been able to cast aside this negative concept of homosexuality, he would not have experienced the violence that surrounded Giovanni. Concerning the case of Eric Jones in Another Country, he and Yves have no major conflicts in their homosexual arrangements because Eric had already withstood the trials of his experiences and he knew how to react to these adverse situations.

Of the types of relationships in the fiction of James Baldwin, the homosexual type is presented as the most desirable and the most rewarding. Likewise, from analyzing the three homosexual experiences, one can discern a pattern for the development of a homosexual: if one were involved in homosexual experiences as a youth, he would return to his homosexual questing in his later life, and if a character is able to face the reality of the situation, his life will be progressive and rewarding. In the final pages of Another Country and Giovanni's Room, Eric and David return from their expatriatism in Paris to America as a sign that they are stable enough to assert their independence and belief in the positiveness of their homosexual confirmations.

Of the three homosexual experiences in Baldwin's fiction, the introduction of Leo Proudhammer into homosexuality is the most negative because Leo's homosexuality also marked Leo's questing in the realm of violence. It is just that Leo chose
his new master from the symbolism involved in his male lover's name, Black Christopher, and it is through the "commandments" of this new Christ that Leo is to donate money to the black power movement to buy guns to rid the black world of the white evils. However, Baldwin creates dying Leo as a most alienated individual totally incapable of writing about love; Baldwin's creation is a minute love that often takes its expression in mutual understanding in sexual relationships: heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual.

**Bisexual**

Baldwin's bisexual characters are the most firmly established and the most adaptable of his characters. They can enjoy the opposite sex as heterosexuals, and they can enjoy the same sex as homosexuals. By Baldwin's creation of the bisexual, he has created the "perfectly" balanced sex psyche. The bisexual has no sex "hang-ups" as would a pure heterosexual or a pure homosexual. This bisexual serves as a mediator between the chaos of the heterosexual and the sublimity of the homosexual. Thus, no physical violence is associated with Baldwin's bisexuals.

The primary reason that there is no physical violence associated with the bisexuals is that the life span of a bisexual is relatively short. The bisexual experience is a transitional phase from the heterosexual to the homosexual state or vice versa. The bisexual state is the initiation state for a character who is experiencing a different type of relationship. This state offers the individual the physical experience and the mental experience. When an individual is in the bisexual state, he is
attempting to decide which state he best prefers. If he is a homosexual and is trying to experience the other side of the sexual experience, he becomes a bisexual in an attempt to justify his logical choice.

Considering the case of Rufus Scott in *Another Country*, one finds that Rufus only gets involved in bisexual relationships for physical nourishment. He has to have money to eat since he cannot find a job as a jazz musician. Rufus becomes the object of homosexual experiences to provide him with money to satisfy his basic needs: food, clothing, and sex. He allows others to act out their fantasies using his body as a rented demonstrator, but Rufus seeks heterosexual experiences for sexual fulfillment only providing that he has the knowledge of being sexually released after a sexual bout, although he recognizes on occasions that he is also the male prostitute:

"Oh," he said, astonished to hear the truth come out," sometimes I sort of peddled my ass."34

Although Rufus often finds himself in the bisexual state, he does not fit the typical pattern of those characters who use the bisexual state as a state for making a decision. Rufus has no desire to enter any sexual state other than the natural attraction to the opposite sex. In fact one wonders if Rufus even has a genuine sex desire that is basically based on love and understanding instead of merely an act for the fulfillment of a sexual necessity. Rufus is not motivated by dynamic love

and life; he is merely an alienated zombie controlled by the ultimate result of alienation, death.

The bisexual experiences of Eric Jones in Another Country and David in Giovanni's Room are similar. Eric, having been separated by his homosexual counterpart, Eric, begins to question his total dedication as a homosexual; thus, when Cass comes disillusioned to his "warm bed," he uses the experience as a means for final confirmation of his sex choice. When Vivaldo comes questing to his bed also, Eric is made concretely aware that he has made the right choice. David's bisexual experience is an experiment to test his choice also. After David had become totally engrossed in his homosexual experiences, he deliberately goes out in the street to search for a partner to enter a heterosexual affair to test his rightness of decision.35 Thus, when Hella returns to Paris, David enters this heterosexual affair as his final confirmation of his desire to continue homosexual experiences.

Vivaldo Moore in Another Country gets involved in the only troubled bisexual affair, and this affair does not involve violence. Vivaldo was having trouble in his heterosexual black-white relationship, and he was troubled by his fear of latent homosexuality. Thus, when his heterosexual bed is empty, Vivaldo seeks the bed of a homosexual in an act of submission to his fears. This presentation of Vivaldo caught between the world of the heterosexuals and the world of the homosexuals is a pathetic character revelation of the bisexual.

35Baldwin, Giovanni's Room, p. 139.
By actual count there are fewer bisexual experiences than there are heterosexual or homosexual experiences in Baldwin's fiction. The primary reason is that numerous characters go directly from one sex state to another without assuming a neutral state for thought and contemplation. By presentation, the bisexual experience is the most psychologically balanced of the sex states. The reason for this balance is that the persons who have entered into this sexual state by their questing have approached and accepted the state in a logical manner. This logic continues to dominate the experiences as the character samples the sex states in an attempt to justify his actual choice. The bisexual relationships place second in positive presentation in Baldwin's art. Perhaps the reason for their positiveness is that the bisexual affair is the "middle-of-the-road" affair between the pleasing and positive, homosexual and the chaotic and confusing heterosexual.

Now that the three love themes have been surveyed by their context and thematic implications, the basic love premises of James Baldwin have been rendered more concrete. Baldwin reveals the fear of body contact in his presentation of "tooth and claw" heterosexual affairs. His heterosexual affairs are totally beset by confusion and utter despair, and Baldwin shows that the only heterosexual experience that does not end in violence and death is a heterosexual affair between married persons because the children become the basis for stability. Baldwin's love characters are basically sterile characters because none of the unmarried heterosexual affairs is plagued by the girl
becoming pregnant. He also shows that typical dilemmas center in love as characters search for identity and challenges their particular vision of love.

His homosexual characters are the most positive type of character that the author presents. Baldwin furthers his contention that homosexuality is not a disease when all facets of homosexuality are considered; he contends that the Americans have made it the monster that it is by their ignorance of the subject. However, a fellow Negro, Eldridge Cleaver, becomes most critical of James Baldwin as a result of Baldwin's vision of sex and homosexuality:

His characters all seem to be fucking and sucking in a vacuum. I, for one, do not think homosexuality is the latest advance over heterosexuality on the scale of human evolution. Homosexuality is a sickness just as are baby-rape or wanting to become the head of General Motors.36

But the point is here made that a critic must consider the artistic rationale of an author before he condemns the artist for his vision of reality. To evaluate James Baldwin's types of love according to Eldridge Cleaver's standards is merely to stoop to the critical level of asking whether the art of an author agrees with a critic's personal philosophies. Baldwin developed his theme of love by employing the love types as mediums of criticism, social and religious, and as a stay against alienation.

CHAPTER III
ROLES OF LOVE IN THE FICTION AND PLAYS

James Baldwin has established himself as the "Great Black Bard," the seer and singer of love that is successful, unsuccessful, and cathartic. Baldwin, in his literary presentations, is the great manipulator of love as his characters fulfill their assumed roles. This love that comprises the love songs of James Baldwin is the messages of Bessie Smith and Ethel Waters singing of realistic, physical, yet hopeless love. As a result of all his alienation, James Baldwin is forced to sing only physical love because Aphrodite has not seen fit to reveal the vision of Platonic love to him. The directions that the physical love take are realistic as the author maneuvers his characters to voice social and religious protests in their vision of the possible salvation of man from alienation. Baldwin's cathartic love is established through dramatic presentations in Blues for Mister Charlie and The Amen Corner. The emotional release that the reader or viewer experiences from the social and religious confrontations is expressed in the form of love as the viewer sees the answer to the pleading cry of the protagonist. The cry of the protagonist is also the cry of the author.

Baldwin's cry or "yawp" constitutes the whole of his non-fictional output: Notes of a Native Son, Nobody Knows My Name, and The Fire Next Time. Baldwin's non-fiction is not complete with the three collections of essays, for his scattered
articles dealing with social criticism make up more writing than the whole of his fiction, drama, and the collected essays. From Baldwin's first published "Harlem Ghetto: 1948" essay, two distinct worlds emerge, one white and one black. The mass of Baldwin's social criticism concerns itself with the social position of the Negro in the white structured society and a condemnation of the white man in his relationships with the Negro, and the second portion of Baldwin's social criticism is the outcry against the American bias toward homosexuality. The height of Baldwin's condemnation of the white man comes in the powerful article, "The White Man's Guilt," and his quiet acceptance of the white man comes in the article, "The Discovery of What It Means to be an American." Thus, there appears to be a dichotomy in the reasoning of James Baldwin in his social concepts of the white man.

From his view of the white man owing a "bill" to the black man in "The White Man's Guilt" to his view of quiet acceptance by the fusion from the destruction of the white social order into an established place for the Negro in the new American order in "The Discovery of What It Means To Be An American," James Baldwin has made himself controversial to the critics. Time declared Baldwin a major Negro leader because he

speaks of social conditions of the Negro from a firsthand knowledge. Likewise, Kay Boyle in the introduction of James Baldwin in Contemporary American Novelists declared Baldwin unequaled in his social concepts because he speaks from the experience of living in a Negro ghetto as a member of the Negro race. Dr. Kenneth Clark, President of the American Psychological Association, firmly established the validity of Baldwin's anti-white arguments by asserting that Baldwin is "psychologically ghetto-bound" and is unable to view white America objectively. Thus, the critics have reacted strenuously to James Baldwin as a Negro spokesman.

Other critics have expressed much disgust for Baldwin's social views. James Finn declared that James Baldwin's social vision is an outrageous act, a mighty accusation, hurled at the white race. However, Baldwin continues to hammer home the point that the Negro is castigated by the white society, but the Negro's hope for survival lies within that white power structure. Albert Southwick found himself repulsed by Baldwin's concepts and suggestions that the problem of the Negro lies within the white environment itself. Southwick urged Baldwin to stop dumping the blame for social conditions on the white man, and suggested that Baldwin "get off his white throne and

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4Time (May 17, 1963), 26-27.
7James Finn, "James Baldwin's Vision," Commonweal (July 26, 1963), 447-449.
join hands with the rest of us sinners."8 It thus appears, according to the concepts of Eldridge Cleaver, that James Baldwin has joined forces with the white sinners.

Eldridge Cleaver's contempt of James Baldwin parallels Baldwin's contempt for Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison. Baldwin justifies his contempt for Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison's acceptance of the white man on the grounds that both authors were apologetic for being black men, and both had robbed the black man of his humanity in their acceptance of the white man on the white man's terms.9 Cleaver's argument partially supports Richard Wright's ingenuity and authenticity as a black author, but Cleaver goes "hard and fast" in his challenge of Baldwin's position as a Negro leader. In fact, Cleaver deems Baldwin too accepting in his vision of the black man's place in the white society. Cleaver refers to Baldwin as "the White Negro"10 because Baldwin had admitted adopting the history of the white man as a result of a lack of knowledge of his African origin. However the scholarship of the argument might evolve, the point in question is established: James Baldwin does write the novel of social and religious protest.

James Baldwin's technique in writing this social and religious protest is accomplished by his employment of the love

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9 Eckman, The Furious Passage of James Baldwin, pp. 121-122.
themes. Baldwin equates types of love to social and religious problems, and the reader's concept becomes more acute because Baldwin is handling both themes of love and types of criticism in the same context. By the very fact that Baldwin is a black writer, he brings to his fiction the social and religious protests and the Negro myth. The elements and employment of love in the fiction reveal that James Baldwin partially accepts the Negro myth as a technique to register his complaints and protests. Thus, the reader is first attacked by social criticism in a reading of the fiction of James Baldwin.

Vehicle for Social Criticism

James Baldwin's first novel Go Tell It On The Mountain is essentially the story of the religious conversion of a young boy, John Grimes, the illegitimate son of Elizabeth Grimes. Through flashback the heterosexual love stories of each of the principal characters are revealed. However, the reader is never once unaware of the voice of black protest in the novel. The epitome or symbol of social protest in Go Tell It On The Mountain is Gabriel Grimes, the deacon of "The Temple of the Fire Baptized." The literary voice of protest coming from Gabriel Grimes is in reality the voice of David Baldwin, stepfather of the author.

As a result of the deeds of the white man, Gabriel Grimes becomes in fiction the misanthrope that David Baldwin is in reality. Both Gabriel and David had suffered the "white experience" of the South and had immigrated to the North to escape this "white maddness," but the North did not have the
cure for the sickness; the North merely had new symptoms for the disease. The symptoms for the Southern sickness included rape, race violence, police beatings, suicide, white-hatred, and personal prejudice; in the North the sickness was essentially the same—the only difference was the method of contraction. Thus, seeing the plight of the Negro, Gabriel Grimes becomes, as David Baldwin, the alienated misanthrope:

His father said that all white people were wicked, and that God was going to bring them low. He said that white people were never to be trusted, and that they told nothing but lies, and that not one of them had ever loved a nigger. He, John, was a nigger, and he would find out, as soon as he got a little older, how evil white people could be. John had read about the things white people did to colored people; how, in the South, where his parents came from, white people cheated them out of their wages, and burned them, and shot them—and did worse things, said his father, which the tongue could not endure to utter. He had read about colored men being burned in the electric chair for things they had not done; how in riots they were beaten with clubs; how they were tortured in prisons; how they were the last to be hired and first to be fired. Niggers did not live on the streets where John now walked; it was forbidden; and yet he walked here, and no one raised a hand against him. But did he dare to enter this shop out of which a woman now casually walked, carrying a great round box? Or this apartment before which a white man stood, dressed in a brilliant uniform? John knew he did not dare, not today, and he heard his father laugh: "No, nor tomorrow neither!" For him there was the back door, and the dark stairs, and the kitchen or the basement. This world was not for him. If he refused to believe, and wanted to break his neck trying, then he could try until the sun refused to shine; they would never let him enter.11

Thus, Gabriel Grimes becomes at this point in his life alienated beyond his own expression of love. Those experiences of love of Gabriel Grimes that were revealed in the novel were heterosexual experiences which were troubled as a result of the "white madness." Gabriel's first wife, Deborah, was the victim of a mass rape and was forever marked by an inability to have children as a result of the sexual assault by white men. Gabriel married Deborah out of a guilt retribution for the white man. Gabriel's next heterosexual experience involved a young black housekeeper; from this crude union was born a son who later fell victim to the white man's knife.

Gabriel's heterosexual experience with Elizabeth was also marred by trouble; Elizabeth had an illegitimate son, John. Knowing and believing the Negro myth, Gabriel could not accept the illegitimate son; thus, the seeds of hate had long been sown in Gabriel, and his crop produced much hate for his family. Perhaps Gabriel sought too high a plateau for his family, and he lost their respect in so doing. He wanted his family to be safely out of reach of the white man's sickness; thus, he became the overprotective father whose hate almost cost the life of his second son, Roy. Gabriel became so embittered and protective of his family that he could not even see the basis for their needs and desires. He could not envision that he was partly to blame for the chaos of his marriage by his madness of hate toward the white man.

Gabriel is so confirmed in his hate toward the white man that the family sees manifest within the father the ultimate
symbol of the white man's hostile world. Thus, heterosexual love has played a vicious trick on the Grimes family; the relationship between the mother and father comes to be the mere expression of social protest as the mother is forced to bring the child under the submissive demands of the father to partially appease the father's hatred of "Mister Charlie," the white man. Baldwin is making this fictive play on the reality of the submission of the blacks to white authority.

The second novel that bears so heavily on the black man misanthropic as a result of hatred of the white man is Another Country. Rufus Scott, the alienated misanthropic black man, is totally possessed by his hatred of the white man. Rufus is an existentialist as he comes to be totally aware of his individual self, but his failure comes as a result of his inherent hatred; this hatred acts as the element that takes Rufus into a negative facet of existentialism, alienation. Rufus is aware that he is an individual who is a member of a minority group, but his positive realization turns in the negative direction as he attempts his quest for his identity at the expense of hate. However, the higher power of hate is pushing Rufus further into alienation as he realizes that he is unfelt, unheard, and unseen by the mere fact that he is a black man in a white world.

Rufus becomes a fallen member of his "another country" because he merely made an attempt to discover his identity, but he did not utilize all elements at his disposal. Thus, Rufus accepts his role as dictated by the white society:
The great buildings, unlit, blunt like the phallus or sharp like the spear, guarded the city which never slept. Beneath them Rufus walked, one of the fallen—for the weight of this city was murderous—one of those who had been crushed on the day, which was every day, these towers fell. Entirely alone, and dying of it, he was part of an unprecedented multitude.\textsuperscript{12}

Baldwin dictates Rufus's fall in terms of sexual images by saying that Rufus has been crushed by his lack of the white man's power to become dominant. Rufus's tower comes falling down because he does not stand to oppose this white man; instead he fails in his attempt to become a tragic figure and becomes a pathetic figure.

Rufus attempts to revenge the white power element in his heterosexual relationship with white Leona, but even here Rufus allows his "cancer" to destroy his genuine opposition. Rufus has entered this black-white heterosexual experience only on the level of physical sexual gratification; he has, even at this point, become so isolated within himself that he cannot realize the full potential of the relationship. Even during the first intimate experience of Rufus and Leona, Rufus allows his personal hatred to surface:

Under his breath he cursed the milk-white bitch...\textsuperscript{13}

During the experience, Rufus envisions the lynch mob not even being capable of thwarting this one bit of revenge on the white

\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Baldwin, Another Country}, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 22.
society. Rufus is once again employing Baldwin's social criticism of the white police authority. Baldwin is justifying the black premise that the policeman is a definite threat to the black man as Rufus voices his complaint of the policeman as he wanders about the world of Harlem:

He thought of the white policeman and the money they made on black flesh, the money the whole world made.14

Thus, Rufus makes the reader aware of his predicament as a member of a minority group governed by the rules and regulations of the white majority. Seeing that he can never fit into this society as a black individual, Rufus becomes even more alienated.

When Rufus has the chance to revenge the wrongs of the white man, he even fails in this venture. His heterosexual experiences could have been the turning point in his life toward a positive finale had he used Leona as a vehicle for initiation into the white society. Instead, Rufus chooses to degrade and torture Leona physically and sexually; thus, he accepts the white world in his own negative manner.

Rufus is even incapable of handling his best friend, white Vivaldo. Even though Rufus and Vivaldo have shared the same bed and are the best of friends, Rufus can never forgive the fact that Vivaldo is a white man. Rufus fights for someone to love him or to love someone as he verbally persecutes the white man:

14Baldwin, Another Country, p. 7.
"How I hate them—all of those white sons of bitches out there. They're trying to kill me, you think I don't know? They got the world on a string, man, the miserable white cock suckers, and they're tying that string around my neck, they're killing me—Sometimes I lie here and listen, for a bomb, man, to fall on the city and make all the noise stop. I listen to hear them crying, man, for somebody to come help them. They'll cry a long time before I come down there." He paused, his eyes glittering with tears and hate. "It's going to happen one of these days, it's got to happen. I sure would like to see it."15

Rufus had the chance for many loves: a heterosexual love with Leona and a homosexual love with Vivaldo and Eric, but Rufus is incapable of giving or receiving love. He merely uses people and is used by people.

Vivaldo and Eric saw that Rufus would destroy them if they continued in their relationships; Leona saw that Rufus would kill himself as a result of his estrangement. She was correct in her appraisal:

He was black and the water was black. He lifted himself by his hands on the rail, lifted himself as high as he could, and leaned far out...all right, you mother-fucking Godalmighty bastard, I'm coming to you.16

Leona, however, did not see that Rufus was also dictating her fate. After Leona is mentally destroyed, Rufus sees that he has destroyed the vital link that he could have used to change the white power structure. Thus, he submits to his feelings

15Baldwin, Another Country, pp. 67-68.
16Ibid., p. 78.
of personal failure and of hatred of the white man, and he casts himself into the very depth of the purgatory of alienation and is without hope of a salvation. Rufus completes the final step of total alienation by committing suicide. Even though Rufus is opposed to the white power structure, he submits ironically to the very element he hates when he chooses to die as a result of the white pressures.

Rufus is not destroyed by love, but he is destroyed by hate, a hate so violent that a life is destroyed. Had Rufus the power to accept love, heterosexual and homosexual, from the white characters, he would have been spared the agony of suicide; however, he could not accept the love because it was a white love. Rufus had the potential to respond to love, but this potential was never fulfilled because Rufus was so obsessed by his psychic hatred. Thus, Rufus becomes the pathetic figure who overshadows the remainder of the novel because the characters realize a sense of guilt in their futile efforts to save Rufus from himself.

A character that does stand up to fight the white society is Leo Proudhammer in *Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone*; however, Baldwin does not present an open confrontation between blacks and whites. Baldwin concludes this novel with an agreement to finance arms to support the black militant faction by Leo. The criticism directed at the white populace comes to life as a result of Proudhammer becoming involved in a homosexual experience with Black Christopher. The reader sees young Leo, the pacifist, being protected from the white society
by his hate filled father and brother. As Leo progresses in his aspirations to become an important black actor, he is continually accused of being Uncle Tomish, but Proudhammer has an individual goal that he feels more important than the entire black goal. Baldwin's criticism in this instance brings to mind that aspiring group of young Negroes who are seeking prominent positions in society for themselves but who are sacrificing the Negro cause to obtain their positions.

Leo's involvement with the white actress Barbara King caused some trouble in the town where the actor's workshop was located; thus, Leo experienced firsthand the results of racial prejudice. It is only because Leo is so pacifistic that he is not destroyed by his reaction to this "white madness." Leo and Barbara continued their heterosexual experience for a number of years, and it is only after Leo has a heart attack on stage and almost dies that he sees his position as a black man in a white cosmos. As Rufus cut himself off from the white world, so does Leo; Leo traded his white Barbara for Black Christopher. In terms of thematic consideration and implication, Leo has traded his heterosexual relationship for a homosexual relationship which serves as a baptism into his black heritage.

After Leo has established his new life, he begins to evaluate his family in terms of his salvation. His brother Caleb comes off badly in Leo's eyes because Caleb has become so accepting of the status quo by entering the ministry. Remembering the young hatred of Caleb which resulted in a prison term, Leo has much difficulty accepting his preacher
brother's pacifism. Leo could remember that Caleb was a hate filled individual when they were experiencing their homosexual experiences, but when Caleb became involved in a heterosexual experience and became a father, he submitted to the established white order.

Baldwin's criticism seems to have moved from the verbal abuse and acceptance of the white majority by Rufus to an implied confrontation between the blacks and whites as a result of Leo's arming the black militants. Leo is reduced by his decision to get involved in the black-white power struggle and comes to accept the woman's place, the inferior position, in the homosexual experience with Black Christopher. Thus, once again James Baldwin has established the dichotomy in his social criticism by accepting the black role in a white society and by the opposing the black role. At this point in his social presentations, Baldwin's criticism has been one-sided; he is turning the blame for the problems of the blacks on the shoulders of the white world.

Baldwin's outrageous social cry of the black-white world comes in the powerful drama, *Blues for Mister Charlie*: thus, when one considers the dedication and source of the play, one sees that again Baldwin is pointing his accusing finger at the white man. The *London Times Supplement* labeled the drama as "one-sided" and "unfair," and Granville Hicks deemed the

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17 Werner Stein, "Dark Exposure," *Times Literary Supplement*, 63 (December 10, 1964), 1122.
play as propaganda.\textsuperscript{18} Philip Roth labeled \textit{Blues for Mister Charlie} a soap opera designed to illustrate the superiority of blacks over whites.\textsuperscript{19} Even though the majority of reviews are derogatory, \textit{Blues for Mister Charlie} does have some saving grace.

The play is historically based on the murder of Emmett Till, the Negro youth who was murdered in Mississippi in 1955. The murderers in both cases, real and fiction, were acquitted. Baldwin also adds to the "white guilt" by dedicating the play to the memory of Medgar Evers, his widow and children, and to the memory of the dead children of Birmingham.\textsuperscript{20} One might be easily repulsed from reading \textit{Blues} by the straightforward accusations of the white man. To get so involved in the "white heat" of criticism repulses some critics; however, the saving grace of the drama and the white man's ego is Baldwin's presentation in the courtroom scene of a fair black and white social criticism.

The play revolves around the murder of Richard Henry, a young Negro who was asserting his place in the white society. Richard had recently returned from his stay in the North where he engaged in numerous black-white sexual experiences. Richard Henry becomes a "junkie" and is almost ruined by his unmarried black-white sexual experiences. When Richard was cured of his


drug problem, he returned to the South, his homeplace, to start a new life. Now that Richard is an experienced youth, he begins to demand his place in the Southern society, and his new life will ultimately lead to his death.

There is much hatred behind Richard's reasonings and demands. His mother had been killed by white men in a sexual bout, and his father, the minister, had lied to Richard in an attempt to protect the boy and not cause trouble among the blacks and whites. Richard discovers the truth about the death of his mother and gets furious with his father; also Richard is angered by this rememberance of Lyle Britten, the poor store owner, who killed an old Negro to take the black wife as a mistress. Lyle is acquitted in the murder, and he brags about his killing a black man for his black woman. Lyle had also had numerous heterosexual affairs with other black women because his white wife could not satisfy him; thus, the conflict between Richard and Lyle comes to be sexually based.

From the onset of the play, Richard employs the verbal force of Rufus and the confrontation force of Leo. Richard knows that he will be killed for his standing against the establishment, but he accepts the consequences as a tragic hero. In his verbal assault of the white populace, Richard employs the Negro myth in the revelation of the emasculating theme:

They can rape and kill our women and we can't do nothing. But if we touch one of
Thus, the Negro sees that he is desexed by the white man. The appearance of the emasculating theme in *Blues for Mister Charlie* is not a new innovation for James Baldwin; he has Rufus and Leo mouth the same idea. Rufus asserts the sexual premise but kills himself as a defensive measure; Leo envisions the concept and allows his money to buy him the necessary protection from being desexed, but the individually armed Richard asserts the concept and gets himself killed by doing something about it.

Baldwin's social criticism surfaces numerous times as Richard brags of his white sexual exploits and as Lyle boasts of his black sexual experiences. The majority of the town's Negroes are involved in a boycott of Lyle Britten's store because of Lyle's killing of the old black man for his young wife. However, the open confrontation comes between the white and black as Richard enters Lyle's store to purchase a soft drink. The confrontation involves a repudiation of white sexual supremacy and promotes the sexual prowess of the Negro male. Richard accuses Lyle of being inferior as a male, and Richard boasts of his sexual abilities as a pleaser of all women including Lyle's wife if the opportunity should avail itself. This open accusation of sexual supremacy is the key to the murder of Richard. A review in *Time* magazine openly stated the two propositions that Baldwin allows to dominate the play: one is

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that social impotence through the denial of his rights rob the Negro of manhood, and the other is that white sexual envy of Negro virility is a major motivation behind race hatred.22

Baldwin portrays his vision of social criticism through the physical act of love, sex, as he sings his blues for Mister Charlie. Even Baldwin's title of the drama is a clear example of his assertion of contempt for the white man. Baldwin tells the reader from the title of the play, Blues for Mister Charlie, that he is going to sing a dirge for the white man;23 however, after one reads Act III, he sees that James Baldwin is actually singing a dirge for the black man. Baldwin's criticism is here directed at the black people who lied in the court trial of Lyle Britten. Baldwin presents both sides, black and white, as lying to the court, and the heart of the black criticism comes as a result of the black man lying, especially Richard's father and grandmother. The black people did not have a reason to lie to the court; it was they who had lost one of their members and they did not have to justify his actions. The black truth would have set Lyle Britten free of the charges anyway; but the blacks lost face with their lies, and Lyle was found innocent all the same. Thus, the crux comes to be a social view of truth and justice, and Baldwin's dirge for his fellow blacks concludes the drama.

22 "Of Hurt and Hate," Time, 83 (May 1, 1964), 50.

James Baldwin's readers are never once in doubt as to the author's condemnation of the white power structure; however, Baldwin does not bore the reader into believing that he is only a social critic. The reader is aware of the artistry of handling both love themes and social criticisms in the same breath. Baldwin deals with relationships between the blacks and whites on the basis of skin color, and he presents an outcry against the white man's sexual bias in their concept of homosexuality.

The curious element that is prominent in Baldwin's artistry is that the majority of his homosexual characters are white: Eric Jones, Vivaldo Moore, and Yves in *Another Country* and Jacques, Gillalume, and David in Giovanni's Room. The author is criticizing the white mental attitudes toward homosexuality because he has the greater power to change the negative attitude of homosexuality if he can make the white masses of the population aware of their faulty thinking. As a member of the black population, James Baldwin has come to a justification of the relationship of the "Gay Movement" to the black man; however, other important black figures are having some difficulty coming to regard the importance of homosexuality on the future of the black man. As has previously been cited, Eldridge Cleaver is one who has not accepted the reality of the existence of the homosexual experience in terms of the black man. To judge Baldwin in light of his social criticisms of the white man and his criticisms against closed minded persons on homosexuality, the reader will agree that James Baldwin is voluminous in his writings on the accusation that the white man is responsible for
the social ills of the Negroes, but the reader will also agree that James Baldwin is at his best when writing the homosexual theme. His technique of handling the homosexual characters causes the characters to become more realistic because Baldwin is a homosexual writer. Also, Baldwin has the talent to write his spiritual experiences as part of his criticisms of his own race.

**Vehicle for Religious Criticism**

Since James Baldwin has the ability to see what is socially right and wrong with the Negro race, he likewise feels confident to criticize the religion of his people. Baldwin's life is his basis for his critical, religious premises because he became a minister at the age of fifteen. To visualize the impact of this ministering upon the young Baldwin, one has merely to consider the style of his writings. Baldwin establishes himself as a prophet, and his sermons are the medium for his art. Disagreeing with the premise that he must learn to inspire fear if he hopes to survive the fear inspired in him by the white man, James Baldwin resigned his religious calling. From this resignation has grown that great mass of criticism that often costs Baldwin praise as an artist.

When Baldwin writes his general criticism of religion in his literature, he puts no faith in conventional Christianity as a means of solving any of the social ills of the Negro. Louis E. Lomax in *The Negro Revolt* says that Baldwin is merely

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authenticating the place of the church in the life of the Negro. Lomax contends that the church became the crutch for the liberated Negro after the Civil War; the Negroes had no concept of how to manage their lives and solve their problems; thus, they established the church to fulfill this purpose.25 Frederick Wilcox Dupee contends that Baldwin placed too much blame for the Negro problem of inequality on the black's concept of Christianity, and not enough blame on the moral black man who failed in carrying out the "immortal ideals."26

Perhaps, Dupee is correct in his evaluation of Baldwin's religious criticism; however, Baldwin cannot be so easily evaluated in terms of his critical, religious premises. It appears that Baldwin has not been justified by Christian or non-Christian concepts in terms of love or hate. The entire religious criticism can be read as the surface Baldwin or can, at best, be read as the genuine James Baldwin. The major portions of Baldwin's religious criticism in fiction and drama are centered in two works, Go Tell It On The Mountain and The Amen Corner; however, other fleeting statements appear in the remainder of his fiction.

The lack of love comes to be the important element of religious criticism in Go Tell It On The Mountain. The apparent lack of love is seen in the family relationships of the Gabriel Grimes' family. The father, Gabriel, is a hardened and bitter


26Dupee, The King of the Cats, p. 211.
man as a result of the treatment of white people, and he allows this hate to be readily conveyed to his family. Gabriel is the senior deacon in the Temple of the Fire Baptized Church, and he apparently has no love for God or his fellowman, the white brother. Thus, his religious duty is an act of guilt retribution for the white man. It is firmly established that the father is a non-religious man when the father fails to recognize the signs of Christianity in his son's conversion. Gabriel is merely too blinded by hate to conceive of the spiritual reality.

After Baldwin tells each individual story of the primary characters through the flashback technique, it may be readily concluded that the only religious person is the young converted John Grimes who is prone to homosexual tendencies according to the author's implication. The father, Gabriel, is definitely lacking in spiritual matters, but he allows the church to serve as the element of support to aid in his social crisis. The story of Gabriel includes his young conversion and ordination as a minister in a Southern church after he had been presented as a drunk and a chaser of women. After his establishment as a preacher, a black girl is raped by a mob of white men and is sexually wounded for life. Gabriel marries this ruined girl, Deborah, as an act of retribution for the sins of the white man. It is thus apparent that this is the spiritual life in the church, but it marks Gabriel's beginning of the usage of the church for a crutch against the inhumanity of the whites.
Gabriel plunges further into sin as he resigns his pastorship but remains as a deacon in the church. He becomes more degraded as he couples with a young and beautiful Negro servant on the kitchen floor of their employer. Gabriel's mask of hate continues as the son is taken by the mother to Chicago where he meets his death by a knife. Gabriel, at first, does not confess his sins to Deborah, but before her death he tells her of his sad story about the conception and death of his first son, Royal.

After Deborah's death, Gabriel immigrates to the North and meets Elizabeth who is pregnant and unmarried. Again guilt overrides Gabriel, and he begins to evolve a new kind of hatred. He hates the illegitimate son, John, born to Elizabeth. Other children are born to the Grimes family, and Gabriel continues to force his hatred upon his family. The family is forced to bow to the demands of the father, and the father continues to be blinded to his family's feelings and needs. He was not even moved to repent for his failure to understand his family when Roy curses the father after being stabbed.

The novel concludes with Gabriel as guilt-ridden as ever still using the church for support for his hatreds. He only served God with his words and not by his actions or deeds. Gabriel indeed has a curious attitude toward religion. He respects it and does not find it comical, or anthropological, or pathetic.27. Even when he presents the church in a grotesque

manner, Baldwin allows the reader the opportunity of seeing the spirituality of his mask. The reader is constantly aware that this flashback history is revealed in the church and often through the histories of the other guilty characters.

Florence, Gabriel's sister, was never "brought low" in her religious experiences. Florence had abandoned her mother on her death bed to seek opportunity in New York. In New York, Florence met Frank who later became her husband. The couple could never get along so Frank left the high-strung Florence. Later, Florence discovered that Frank had died in France in the war and was never brought home. Baldwin shows Florence praying most earnestly, but he likewise shows her as a blackmailer of her brother Gabriel. Florence had the letter that Deborah had written telling of Gabriel's illegitimate child.

Other members of the tarry service do not come off as being religious in Baldwin's presentations. Baldwin gives an extraordinarily vivid picture of the intellectual seediness and poverty of this kind of religious life and of the secular life that produces it, since all the characters, particularly the women in the tormented stepfather's life, have histories that inevitably bring them into the Temple of the Fire Baptized.28 Even the sins of the church members often become the gospel from the pulpit. This gospel is often the warning against sexual experiences. The old Puritan concept seems to surface as the congregation is counseled against sexual relationships.

28*Sorry Lives,* "Books," *New Yorker*, 29 (June 20, 1953), 73.
Baldwin's contempt for religion is not as strong an element in *Go Tell It On the Mountain* as it is in *The Amen Corner*. In this play Baldwin presents the salvation of a woman intellectually, not spiritually. Sister Margaret, the self-appointed minister of the store front church in Harlem, sees her life as a spiritual leader about to collapse. She has always held that she was divinely called to "preach God's word" after the death of her infant child. She leaves her husband and takes her living child with her to do God's commands.

After Sister Margaret got the church started, she sheltered her son within the confines of her religion. She has the son a "prisoner within the house of God." She has the son play the piano for the church services when he prefers to join a jazz group and play music like his father. He often slips out of his religious duties to join his heathen friends, and he ends up lying to his mother where he has been. To add to Sister Margaret's problems her abandoned husband shows up in a dying condition, and the church discovers that Sister Margaret separated herself from her husband and not he from her. The church also begins to mutiny, and Sister Margaret is converted, converted into the reality of seeing her desiring state. She realizes that she had not received a genuine call from God and that she had only used religion for a hiding place for herself and her son. She also realized that she still loves her dying husband, and instead of crying about her predicament, Sister Margaret bursts into laughter at her disillusionment.
Baldwin shows Sister Margaret's laughter as a means of baptism. Sister Margaret is baptized back into reality and becomes more mortal; whereas before, she was presented as the epitome of holiness. In the beginning Sister Margaret's holiness is not all that sufficient and noble as it appears. She sees the reality of her love for her dying husband as opposed to her misguided spirituality of God. Religion has thus again become a second rate institution for its followers. Christians can barricade themselves within the confines of a church as celibate monks and refuse to accept the actuality of their situation, or they can approach their religion from a rational basis and reject the holiness of the abstract God. By Sister Margaret's acceptance of her position as a wife, she resigns Christianity for a more concrete love when she sees that her role as wife and mother is more important than her role as guide and director of the religious flock.

Baldwin's religious criticism tends to get bolder and stronger as Mother Henry and Reverend Henry give false testimony about the death of Richard Henry in *Blues for Mister Charlie*. Mother Henry is lying to preserve the reputation of her grandson, but Reverend Henry had lied to his son Richard about the death of Richard's mother because the Reverend wanted to protect his son from thinking evil of his mother's involvement with the white men. Richard later discovers that the father has lied about the mother's death, and he begins to hate his father for his passive attitude toward the guilty whites. Baldwin even presents the Negro caucus in the church as a scene of evil and hate as the
Negroes curse and lie about the death of one of their members, Richard Henry, at the hands of a white man. Thus, again the church is presented as the crutch where the black man can establish a revolt against the white man; thus, Baldwin's view that the church is the means for registering social protest becomes more actualized.

Rufus Scott, Leo Proudhammer, and Richard Henry can be classed together in their approach to the realism in the church. The three blaspheme continuously, and all see God as a "white God." When Rufus is engaged in his first sexual intercourse with Leona, he envisions that the white God does not even have the power to stop him. Rufus cannot justify religion and its purposes in his estranged state. Leo Proudhammer shows his contempt for God by saying that he would spit in God's face when he saw him. Leo's disgust parallels Richard Henry's social views that this "white God" is allowing the white people and the white police to misuse the Negroes. However, it is Richard Henry that becomes more assertive when he holds God responsible for the Negroes' plight:

You know I don't believe in God, Granmama.

Thus, Richard Henry has come to discount the belief in God because he sees the "white madness" and contends that this "white God"

29 Baldwin, Another Country, p. 22.
30 ______, Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone, p. 308.
is the cause. Richard's primary religious opposition to God is a social view in that God represents the white man, and Richard is anti-white. Richard became highly educated by his experiences in the white world. As he travels in the North and South, he sees the problems with the Negroes' religion—the Negroes use their religion as a social mask against the ills of the pagan white man. Thus, the black man must first free his physical personage from the hands of the white man before he can attempt to purge his sins to free his spiritual self.

James Baldwin is primarily writing anti-religious literature in *Blues for Mister Charlie*, *The Amen Corner*, *Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone*, *Go Tell It On The Mountain*, and *Another Country* because religion does not afford the black man the spiritual or social release that he needs and desires. The prime interest of the black man is freedom now, not a spiritual freedom in a utopian experiment but a social freedom from his white brother. With the presentation of the social ills in Baldwin's literature, one has little difficulty seeing the physicalness of the black religion; thus, religion is similar to sex in their physical natures. Baldwin presents the idea that the end of black religion is a curing of the social ills of the world; 'tis better to be free and equal on earth than to be burdened on earth and freed in heaven. Thus, the objectives of black religion are more feasible when considered from the sociological point of view.

Because black religion is so steeped in the curing of social ills, the social protest of the Negroes ends by being primarily non-violent. The case of Reverend Meridian is typical
of James Baldwin's non-violent premise because Reverend Meridian puts his faith in the possibility of salvation through social instruction. Baldwin also takes the reader one step further by religiously instructing both blacks and whites in social living, and the method for his social instruction comes to be the act or the physical expression of love.

This physical love carried through the black religion for the purpose of social instruction deals with both heterosexual experiences among blacks and whites in an attempt to bring men into a common brotherhood through this common basis of sexual intercourse. In *Blues for Mister Charlie*, the sexual affairs that are consequential are the black-white heterosexual ones of Lyle Britten and Parnell James with black women; thus, these affairs bring the white man and the black man closer to each other and not God. Lyle's black affairs cause him to kill a black man; thus, Lyle is fulfilled as a result of his sexual experiences because he builds his ego on the fact that he is a killer of black men. The opposite is the punishment of Parnell who becomes a reduced character when he becomes sympathetic to the Negro cause as a result of his experiences with Negro women. Parnell becomes a white champion for the black people, and as a result of his human understanding, Parnell is castigated by the white man and despised by the black man; thus, it appears that Baldwin expressed disgust for white sympathizers. It is the characters who enact the religion of sex who come more closely to understand physical, human nature as opposed to an understanding of spiritual nature; thus, Baldwin has written according to his premise that
religion is the socialization of the black man accomplished through the sexual role of love.

A Stay Against Alienation

Alienation is a state of physical, intellectual, or emotional withdrawal or estrangement from the human world. Total alienation is the result of a person choosing to withdraw and estrange himself from mankind. The choice that is necessary on the part of the estranged is often the result of the individual's inability to communicate politically, socially, economically, or culturally with the group he desires to identify himself. Persons who have become totally alienated are helpless; they are often termed "the walking dead."32 The key word in total alienation is choice, the decision of the person to continue to find blockades that prevent him from being able to arrive at a positive concept of himself.

The deciding of the person in his quest to solve the universal question of identity is the weighing of the group's objectives in justifying the purpose or state of the goals in terms of the concept of Who Am I? The person is attempting to define his existence by weighing his beliefs in relation to the group's beliefs. The search for identity is a positive quality in a person's existentialism but when the person has discovered that his choice of existence is outside the cult of his peers, he becomes alienated because he lacks identification. Thus,

32Reich, The Greening of America, p. 29.
alienation is a negative criterion in the personality of a character.

When Baldwin's characters see their estrangement and do nothing to solve their problem, they become psychic misfits as did the Lost Generation. Existentialism, the process of justifying a continuing self-existence, is an old mental process, but alienation, especially since World War I, is a negative outgrowth of the contempt for political, social, economic, or cultural states of mankind. Much of the alienation since World War I has been the result of dissatisfaction with current political ideas; thus, the person refuses to share in the outcome and results of the political scheme as did Natty Bumpo in The Last of the Mohicans. The alienation in the literature of James Baldwin is primarily seen as these forms of alienation.

Three alienated characters in Baldwin's literature are Rufus Scott and Vivaldo Moore in Another Country and Leo Proudhammer in Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone. Baldwin's titles even suggest social alienation—"another country" represents an individual concept of the same country, and "Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone" reveals one person or individual alone on the station platform after the majority of the people has moved on. The alienation implicit in the titles is indicative of the state and cause of alienation of the three characters.

In considering the two alienated characters in Another Country, one discovers that Rufus Scott is totally alienated. Socially and politically Rufus has numerous initial characteristics working against him. First, Rufus is a black man, and
second, Rufus does not know how to operate as a black man in a white society. Rufus feels that nature dealt him a bad hand when he was given his black "coat" in a white "closet." Rufus cannot come to any positive justification of himself; he only knows that he hates whites and prefers blacks like himself; however, he is not shown as having a preference for his black brothers. Rufus is aware that he is physically a black man, and he knows that he seeks self-identification socially with the white man. He further realizes that he can never fulfill his desire for self-identification in the white world; thus, he is forced to hate the white man in return for his failure.

Rufus's hate becomes a religion to him as he seeks ways to attack the social structure, but one realizes that Rufus attacks himself when he attacks the white society. Rufus had a chance to achieve some "white" social identity, but his hatred of the white caste destroyed that opportunity. Rufus resorts to masochistic treatment of white Leona as he degrades and humiliates the girl who symbolizes the old white order of the South. Leona contends that she could love Rufus, but Rufus is degraded to such a point that he sees Leona only as a fulfillment of his physical sex needs. It was possible for Rufus to buy his salvation with his involvement in the black-white sexual experience, but he was too alienated to realize this possibility. Rufus continues to strike out at the white world as he practices his revenge on defenseless Leona until Leona has a mental breakdown. Rufus continues to estrange himself as he blames himself for the ruin of Leona; however, Rufus does not have the willpower
to amend his condition. He merely bemoans his fate as a trapped animal. He continues to be this trapped animal, striking out at all those who came near him until he commits suicide.

Rufus's alienation is threefold: alienation from society, alienation from his black peers, and alienation from himself. Rufus was automatically alienated from society by being born a black man; however, his alienation did not have to become the destructive force in his life had he accepted the meaning of being a black man. Instead of being proud of being a black man and using his blackness for the initiative to become successful and diminish his blackness, Rufus alienated himself further by moving to a white neighborhood away from his black brothers; and finally, Rufus even estranged himself from himself. His final step placed him beyond the reach of his friends. Even though his friends realized the dangers of being so alienated, there was nothing they could do to soothe the tortured soul of Rufus Scott.

His friends saw the consequences of persons turning against themselves, and all asserted that Rufus needed to be loved. The closest he came to love was the sexual experiences, but even in the experiences Rufus could not conceive of his salvation. He was a destined man because he projected himself beyond the realities of physical love without grasping the abstract ideals of Platonic love. Platonic love simply does not come to be a reality to alienated characters.

Had Rufus been susceptible to understanding and friendship from his friends, he could have been spared the agonies of his
total alienation that resulted in his death. The contention is that had Rufus become involved with his associates sexually or otherwise, love, physical love in this case, would have prevented alienation. Love is not here projected to be the answer or cure of alienation; it is the stay against further alienation. Love did not become the stay in Rufus's alienation because Rufus's alienation became so serious that it transcended the power of love.

Rufus's friend, white Vivaldo Moore, was spared the agonies of total alienation because he saw the result of Rufus's condition and took steps to prevent himself from following Rufus's flight into death. Baldwin constructs this white man as the other side or personage of Rufus Scott. Vivaldo alienated himself from his white family and sought sexual fulfillment primarily in the Negro section of town. The Negroes recognized him as a white man with a problem of sexual alienation.

Vivaldo had expressed a fear of latent homosexuality to Rufus before Rufus died, but Rufus did not see the seriousness of Vivaldo's problem. Thus, Rufus thinks that Vivaldo is merely engaging in "small talk" and dismisses Vivaldo's fear. It is only after the torturous affair with Ida Scott, Rufus's sister, that one sees the "white heat" of Vivaldo's problem. When Vivaldo sees that he is losing Ida to her professional manager, he becomes a caged animal and displays characteristics of Rufus's sickness. However, Vivaldo found his cure in the bed of homosexual Eric Jones. Thus, Vivaldo is spared the hell of alienation. The same symptoms and the same cure is envisioned in Giovanni's Room as
David finds himself torn between heterosexuality and homosexuality; David's cure is also his choice of the homosexual experience.

Thus, homosexual love comes to be the salvation for Vivaldo and David. The two alienated individuals were spared the torments of total alienation by their decision to seek love even though their choice was a homosexual choice. Love again comes to be Baldwin's answer to a stay against alienation. To know how long the individuals were spared by their acceptance of love remains unanswered in the fiction of James Baldwin. Perhaps, the cure for alienation is not the goal that Baldwin seeks in his literature, but in the careers of Rufus, Vivaldo, and David there appears one response to alienation, homosexual love. This love becomes more positive because it has been equated as a salvation, a salvation from one's questing for sexual reality.

Homosexual love also becomes the answer to Leo Proudhammer's social alienation in *Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone*. Although Leo is a black actor, he has not been so pressured by his blackness because of his success in the theatrical world. He carried on a heterosexual affair with white Barbara for a number of years, but he could never bring himself to ask Barbara to marry him. Was this hesitancy to enter into a marriage a social or sexual problem? Evidence points to the former. Leo is bothered by her whiteness even though he was a homosexual before he knew her, and he chose homosexuality after their breakup. The whiteness has become more acute as Leo considers the plight of the black man. He sees the injustice of the white man as he lies in his hospital bed recuperating from a heart attack.
He sees all the things that he has shut out of his concern while aspiring to become the great black actor. Now, that he is an important black personality and has wealth, he decides to dedicate the remainder of his life to the social cause for righting the white injustices.

Leo is directed in his decision to support his black brothers by his homosexual partner, Black Christopher. Black Christopher becomes the dominating partner in the homosexual affair as he preaches white hate and persuades Leo to finance the arming of the black militants. Leo became socially and sexually alienated, but his choice of the homosexual partner solved the sexual alienation; the buying of guns for the militants was the answer to his social alienation. Had Leo not chosen to enter into the homosexual experience, he would never have come to solve his social alienation, and he would have been destroyed by the total social alienation as Rufus was destroyed. Leo's choice in homosexuality stayed the sexual alienation, and Black Christopher's persuasion to arm the black populace stayed the social alienation. The only point that is left unanswered in the novel is the outcome of the open confrontation between the blacks and the whites. Had Black Christopher been killed in the confrontation, Leo Proudhammer would have been cast once again into social and sexual alienation. However, since the novel does not pursue the future of Leo and the black militancy, the most that can be said is that James Baldwin does present love, physical love in the form of homosexuality, as a stay against alienation.
CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSION

Except for Giovanni's Room, the bardic yawp of James Baldwin is never once silenced on the social injustices of the white man on his black brother. From the onset of his fiction, James Baldwin never allows the reader to forget that there is a "debt" that needs to be paid. Baldwin's arguments on social injustice have brought shouts of critical comments whereby Baldwin's criticisms are labeled "biased," "unfair," and "propoganda." However, the controversy caused by Baldwin is still not a settled issue.

After reading the conclusions of the fiction carefully, there appears a startling realization--James Baldwin has created a new black man and a new white man. The black man that remains at the novel's conclusion is not the same black man that began the novel; likewise, the white man has evolved. The primary reason for this black-white evolution is that James Baldwin presents a world that will be white no longer.

Baldwin has insisted that the black man deserves the chance to live in the black-white world. The difficult problem that arises from the acceptance of the black brother is that the white man must find a way to live with the Negro to justify his living with himself. Thus, Baldwin continues to point an accusing finger.
The publication of Another Country in 1962 aroused a flurry of criticism because the novel dealt with heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual themes. Baldwin did not stop with a mere consideration of the sex themes, but he openly presented black-white sexual experiences in artistic language. Thus, the newness of the subject brought negative reviews. Many critics could not believe that this writer could create such a work after his genteel treatment of the Negro's religion in Go Tell It On The Mountain.¹ It was only after critics had looked at Go Tell It On The Mountain again that they were thrown into another panic by Baldwin's religious implications in the fiction. After the initial critical protest had passed, three elements still aroused critical protests: his treatment of sex, religion, and black prejudice.

In looking at the total fiction of James Baldwin, one discovers that Baldwin treats three types of sexual affairs: the heterosexual, the homosexual, and the bisexual. Baldwin's heterosexual themes prove to be the least accepted, especially if the heterosexual affair is between an unmarried black-white couple. When Baldwin handles unmarried black-white heterosexuality, he destroys the possibility of the relationship; he does not present a successful black-white sexual affair between man and woman.

His treatment of white-white heterosexual experiences is also concrete when he presents their physical love as a "tooth and claw" affair. Baldwin is not a writer of heterosexual love.

Baldwin's positive sexual presentations come in his homosexual characters. The characters themselves are prosperous and are believable. Baldwin has a talent for revealing insights into his homosexual characters that are startling. He presents homosexuality as an accepted form of physical love. After viewing the prosperousness of Eric Jones and Leo Proudhammer, one does not question the rightness of their sexual experiences. The point that Baldwin drives home is that homosexuality is a most misunderstood word in the English language. His commitment to homosexuality and his homosexual literature is enough to designate James Baldwin a writer of the homosexual theme.

Baldwin presents the bisexual theme as an intellectually balanced argument. The basis of the balance rests upon the idea that a character gets involved in a bisexual affair as an attempt to experience both heterosexual and homosexual affairs for the purpose of deciding which type of love he prefers. Usually the character who chooses to become involved in a bisexual experience decides that homosexuality is the most rewarding of the sexual experiences. Baldwin's bisexual affairs even appear more positive than a "pure" homosexual experience. He does not employ the bisexual theme extensively because his characters are usually distinctly homosexual or heterosexual; those characters who are not sexually assertive and experience bisexuality become homosexuals.
James Baldwin is unique in his employment of the sex themes. Instead of treating love in the language of Platonic ideal love, which Leslie Fiedler in *Love and Death in the American Novel* finds to be the American novelists' practice, Baldwin presents concrete physical love—sex. Baldwin employs his sex themes as vehicles for his social disgust in a critical presentation of the problems of the black man which are caused by the white man, as vehicles for religious condemnation of the order of the Christian concept of religion, and as a stay that prevents man from becoming totally alienated and destroyed in his alienation.

Baldwin's distinct social criticisms of the white man evolve around the emasculating theme. He feels that the white man has desexed the Negro; he also contends that the white man lusts heterosexually and homosexually for the Negro body. In taking these views, James Baldwin is accepting the Negro myth as fact. Baldwin's presentations are verbal killings and wishes of death for all white men, but the white men always kill the black men. Usually this killing is the result of a sexual bout that is resolved or unresolved by the killing. James Baldwin is showing how non-violent the black man is, but is Baldwin's view necessarily true? Evidently, he is changing some of his social concepts because his latest novel, *Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone* has the central character finance the purchase of guns for the black militants to kill all white men.

Baldwin's religious criticism is also essentially social criticism. He sees the church as a crutch for the Negro to show how non-violent the black man is to the white man. He
also sees that the church is the center for solving and discussing social ills because Baldwin has a problem admitting to genuine religious zeal. Baldwin is relying upon his knowledge and experience as a young minister; he portrays the characters who profess to be the real Christians as full of vile sin. His ministers use the church as a hiding place, and when the character realizes his full situation, he immediately resigns the church to fulfill himself. Thus, love and sex become central in the religious criticism of James Baldwin.

The use of love as the stay against alienation is an interesting conclusion. Baldwin sees the cause of his character's alienation as political, social, economic, and cultural. The character becomes alienated because he is unable to identify with a group. He has a choice before he becomes totally alienated; he can accept and justify his acceptance, or he can reject and die as the result of his total depravity. Baldwin's alienated characters are stayed by love in the alienation. Predominately the alienated character is saved by his becoming a homosexual. If he is totally alienated and does not accept homosexuality, he flings himself to his death. One definitely sees that the worst kind of alienation is that alienation from one's self. James Baldwin sees all Negroes alienated merely by the fact they are black men in a white world, and if these Negroes wish to amend the situation, they usually become alienated from the Negro populace. But the power and salvation as a stay against total alienation is love, centered around the sex act.
**TABLE 1**

**SEX TYPES IN BALDWIN'S FICTION**

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- Gabriel Grimes
- Elisah

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- Rufus Scott
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caleb Proudhammer</td>
<td></td>
<td>Black Christopher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Caleb Proudhammer
- Black Christopher

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heterosexual</th>
<th>Homosexual</th>
<th>Bisexual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richard Henry</td>
<td>Lyle Britten</td>
<td>Parnell James</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Richard Henry
- Lyle Britten
- Parnell James

*Author's note: This chart classifies James Baldwin's characters according to sex types, and the direction of the arrows shows the general direction that the characters and fiction move.*
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Since James Baldwin published his first novel, *Go Tell It On The Mountain*, in 1953, the author has received widespread criticism. Perhaps, this criticism reached its peak with the publication of *Another Country* in 1962 because this novel boldly introduced the subject of black-white sexual relationships. Not only were readers assailed with these black-white sexual relationships, but the novel went a step further in introducing heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual black-white relationships. This love in the fiction of James Baldwin is not the Platonic ideal love, but becomes synonymous with the act of physical love, sex; and Baldwin further characterizes love as to particular types: heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual love. Baldwin's vision of the role of love comes to be a vehicle for social criticism, a vehicle for religious criticism, and a stay against man's alienation. Thus, the subject of this thesis is the role of love in the fiction of James Baldwin.

Since James Baldwin is such a prolific writer and has much to say in both fiction and non-fiction about the Negro, the
Negro's place in society, the white man's view of the Negro, and the Negro's approach to religion, this study concerns itself only with the fiction of James Baldwin, four novels and two plays respectively: *Go Tell It On The Mountain*, *Another Country*, *Giovanni's Room*, *Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone*, *The Amen Corner*, and *Blues for Mister Charlie*.

Baldwin carefully constructed his heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual characters so that they would carry within their very nature his vision of the role of love. The role of love in Baldwin's fiction is revealed through an analysis of each type of love as exemplified by individual characters who have heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual experiences. The significance of love appears in its use by Baldwin as a vehicle of social criticism, a vehicle of religious criticism, and a stay against alienation.

In looking at the total fiction of James Baldwin, one discovers that Baldwin treats three types of sexual affairs; the heterosexual, the homosexual, and the bisexual. Baldwin's heterosexual themes prove to be the least accepted, especially if the heterosexual affair is between an unmarried black-white couple. His positive sexual presentations come in his homosexual characters. The characters themselves are prosperous and are believable. Baldwin presents the bisexual theme as an intellectually balanced argument. The basis of the balance rests upon the idea that a character gets involved in a bisexual affair as an attempt to experience both heterosexual and homosexual affairs for the purpose of deciding which type of love he prefers. Usually the
character who chooses to become involved in a bisexual experience decides that homosexuality is the most rewarding of the sex experiences.

Instead of treating love in the language of Platonic Ideal love, which Leslie Feidler in *Love and Death in the American Novel* finds to be the American novelists' practice, Baldwin presents concrete physical love, sex. Baldwin employs his sex themes as vehicles for his social disgust in a critical presentation of the problems of the black man which are caused by the white man, as vehicles for religious condemnation of the order of the Christian concept of religion, and as a stay that prevents man from becoming totally alienated and destroyed in his alienation.

Accepted by:  

Chairman

Ruth Barry