

A Queer Perspective on James Baldwin's Early Novels

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Bachelor Thesis
2014



Tomas Bata University in Zlín
Faculty of Humanities

Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně
Fakulta humanitních studií
Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur
akademický rok: 2013/2014

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

Jméno a příjmení: **Lucie Švecová**
Osobní číslo: **H11452**
Studijní program: **B7310 Filologie**
Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk pro manažerskou praxi**
Forma studia: **prezenční**

Téma práce: **Queer pohled na rané romány Jamese Baldwina**

Zásady pro vypracování:

Vymezení termínu queer
James Baldwin v kontextu americké literatury
Analýza queer prvků ve vybraných románech
Zhodnocení užití queer prvků s ohledem na historický kontext

Rozsah bakalářské práce:

Rozsah příloh:

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**

Seznam odborné literatury:

Dunning, Stephanie K. Queer in Black and White: Interraciality, Same Sex Desire, and Contemporary African American Culture. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012.

Jagose, Annamarie. Queer Theory: An Introduction. New York: New York University Press, 1996.

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Summers, Claude J. glbtq: An Encyclopedia of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Culture. Chicago, IL: glbtq, 2002–2013. <http://www.glbtq.com/>.

Vedoucí bakalářské práce:

Mgr. Roman Trušník, Ph.D.

Ústav moderních jazyků a literatur

Datum zadání bakalářské práce:

29. listopadu 2013

Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce:

2. května 2014

Ve Zlíně dne 22. ledna 2014


doc. Ing. Anežka Lengálová, Ph.D.
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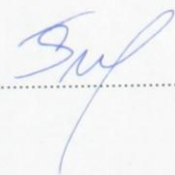
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ABSTRAKT

Tato práce se zabývá problematikou termínu *queer* a jeho využití v románech Jamese Baldwina *Giovanniho pokoj* (*Giovanni's Room* 1956) a *Jiná země* (*Another Country*, 1962). Zabývá se tím, jakou podobu termín v románech zaujímá a jak je vyobrazen. Práce dochází k závěru, že termín *queer* je aplikovatelný i na černošskou problematiku, spojenou s rasou a tím pádem je aplikovatelný i na práci Jamese Baldwina, který je často označován jako autor pojednávající nejen o homosexualitě, ale i o problematice rasy.

Klíčová slova:

Americká literatura, James Baldwin, queer, sexualita, identita, gay literatura, rasismus, černošská literatura, homosexualita, heterosexuality, bisexualita

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the term *queer* and the applicability of the term on James Baldwin's novels *Giovanni's Room* (1956) and *Another Country* (1962). It examines how the term *queer* is exploited in the novels and which elements are used to picture the term. The thesis concludes that the term *queer* is applicable also for the African American literature, which is connected with racism and therefore also for James Baldwin's novels as James Baldwin is often labeled not only as an author who deals with homosexuality but also with problems of race.

Keywords:

American literature, James Baldwin, queer, sexuality, identity, gay literature, racism, black literature, homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to give my sincere thanks to Mgr. Roman Trušník, Ph.D., the supervisor of my bachelor thesis, who provided me with his patience, kindness, irreplaceable knowledge and guidance through the difficult topic.

I would also like to thank to my family and friends for their support during my studies.

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INTRODUCTION

James Baldwin was often standing between two raging sides. He was either accepted by homosexuals, who admired him for his straight-forward statements or by African Americans who admired him for his part in Civil Right Movement. Therefore, James Baldwin was considered either as a homosexual writer or an African American writer. But rarely, he was accepted as both. However, James Baldwin was an African American and a homosexual and that undoubtedly reflected in his works, but it also puts him into position, where he faced criticism from both sides. This bachelor thesis takes for purpose to prove that this division is incorrect and puts these two themes under one term *queer*.

Many people do not know what the term *queer* means and that may make the title of the present thesis confusing. Therefore, the first chapter focuses on the explanation of the term and development of the term. The very basic meaning of *queer* is connected with sexual identity, but this thesis goes further and proves that *queer* can stand also for racial identity. The connection of sexual identities and racial identities is established in the thesis and therefore is proved that to analyze Baldwin's works only from one point of view would be inadequate.

Baldwin was an author who was not afraid to write about taboos. Homosexuality, interracial couples or extramarital affairs are definitely topics people are not willing to discuss. At least in the 1960s when Baldwin was on the top of his career these topics were not the favorite subjects of discussions. Therefore, Baldwin's second novel *Giovanni's Room* (1956), which I have chosen for the analysis, was firstly rejected by publishing house. Baldwin portrays there the themes of homosexuality, self-discovery and identity. Many critics also claim that despite the fact that only white characters are in the book, the symbolism of blackness is presented in the novel. This is also the reason why the thesis uses the term *queer*. The homosexual/gay analysis is not sufficient because then we would not be able to include also the themes of blackness. All these themes are analyzed in the second part of the thesis.

The other novel I have chosen is Baldwin's third one, *Another Country* (1962). He finished this novel in Turkey and themes which are presented in this novel brought up also controversial topics. Besides the homosexuality, the novel portrays also interracial couples and racial issues. This thesis purposely omits Baldwin's first novel *Go Tell it on the Mountain* (1953). Baldwin shows there certain preconditions of homosexual themes but they are not fully developed and the novel mainly focuses on religion themes. The truth is

that Baldwin deals in the novel with repression and moral values in the America but for the complex queer analysis it is necessary to choose novels, where both homosexual themes and themes of blackness are developed.

The analysis of selected works focuses on the main scenes that make use of queer themes and therefore this thesis shows that these themes are present in the novels. Therefore, the thesis concludes that queer reading of the novels is possible on James Baldwin's novels. This thesis comes to the conclusion, that Baldwin uses some patterns which are similar in both novels and in the last part of the thesis these similarities are explored and observed.

1 QUEER

Michael Warner once said that “the appeal of ‘queer theory’ has outstripped anyone’s sense of what exactly it means.”¹ From this short quotation we can see that the term *queer* has been confusing for a lot of critics and up to now, critics argue about what *queer* actually means or more importantly, what meaning it has for people. The term *queer* is extremely difficult to define. The interesting fact is, that despite the reality that critics actually never agreed on the definition, people are still describe themselves as queer. Michael Warner writes in his article “Queer and Then?” that “queer people of various kinds, both inside and outside academe, continue to find their way to it, and find each other through it.”² They all have been finding the way to identify themselves by the term which itself is not identified at all. Annamarie Jagose writes in her book *Queer Theory: An introduction* that once the term was used as slang for homosexuals, once as a term for homophobic abuse. Nowadays it is mostly an umbrella term used for diverse types of sexual self-identification.³ But what is obvious, even from this short overview is that “queer is very much a category in the process of formation.”⁴

Queer as odd in the original meaning stressed the reputed unnaturalness of homosexuality. It should roof not only strictly homosexuals but all transgressive forms of sexuality.⁵ It is wrong then to see *queer* as strictly shorthand for lesbian and gay. In 1977 Jeffrey Weeks writes that these terms “are not just new labels for old realities: they point to a changing reality, both in the ways a hostile society labeled homosexuality, and in the way those stigmatized saw themselves.”⁶ This statement is later supported by Teresa de Lauretis, who writes in 1991 that *queer* can be seen as “another discursive horizon, another way of thinking the sexual.”⁷ Both, Weeks and de Lauretis points out that *queer* became for

¹ Quoted in Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press,

² Michael Warner, “Queer and Then?,” *The Chronicle of higher Education*, January 1, 2012, accessed January 15, 2014, <http://chronicle.com/article/QueerThen-/130161/>.

³ See Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 1.

⁴ See Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 1.

⁵ See Claude J. Summers, *glbtq: An Encyclopedia of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Culture*, (Chicago, IL: glbtq, 2014), [http://www.glbtq.com/glossary.php?word=queer&part=](http://www.glbtq.com/glossary.php?word=queer&part=,), s.v. “queer”

⁶ See Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming out: Homosexual Politics in Britain, from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (London: Quartet Books, 1977), 3.

⁷ Teresa de Lauretis, “Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities: An introduction,” *differences: A journal of Feminist Culture Studies* 3, no. 2 (1991): iii-xviii.

many people a term of freedom. People did not have to put themselves in the box anymore, meaning that if they labeled themselves as homosexuals, they immediately had a mark on their forehead. But in the case of queer, nobody actually knew what their sexual identity is, and that moved the meaning of sexual identity a way further.

There is no correct way how to define the term *queer*, but for the purpose of this work it is important to accept this theory as a “resisting model of stability,”⁸ where the heterosexuality is in the centre and all the forms of identities are around. The disagreement between these identities can be seen as a main subject of queer studies. This can be seen as a difference between gay and lesbian studies and queer studies. Whereas gay and lesbian studies often deals only with homosexual and lesbian identity, *queer* also deals with gender, sex and desire including topics as cross-dressing, hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery.⁹ The range of queer applicability is then extensive and I agree with Laurent Berlant and Michael Warner, when they argue that to summarize the term *queer* now would be violently partial. The reason is that almost everything that can be called queer has been basically preliminary, with the attempt to raise the knowledge and awareness among people.¹⁰ On the other hand, the difficult characterization of the term irritates many critics. One of them is James Davidson who asserts that queer “produces nothing but confusion.”¹¹ This opinion may be truthful but the elasticity of the term allows us to use it for other identity struggles, such as race issues, as is later proven in my work.

Queer theory can be seen as latest transformation of lesbian and gay studies. From the homosexual to gay or lesbian to queer, *queer* became the latest solution to modern statement about self-identification.¹² Nonetheless, this statement can be misleading because nowadays we can find theorists who move further and do not consider *queer* as the latest ideology. One of them is Martin C. Putna, who ends the development of the theories by developing the idea of *homocons*. *Homocons* or *homosexual conservatives* refuse the

⁸ See Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 3.

⁹ See Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 3.

¹⁰ See Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, “What does Queer Theory Teach Us About X?,” *PMLA* 110, no. 3 (1995): 343-349, accessed February 10, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.k.utb.cz/docview/214775632>.

¹¹ James Davidson, “It’s Only Fashion”, *London Review of Books* 16, no. 22 (1994): 12, accessed February 20, 2014, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v16/n22/james-davidson/its-only-fashion>.

¹² See Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 75.

umbrella term *queer* and they strive for integration in to the society on the basis of strong conservative values. According to Putna these considerations about *queer* and following alternatives of the theory call for necessity of demarcation of homosexuality.¹³ Putna also claims that the way of understanding the *queer* among critics is absolutely incompatible with real life and therefore applicability of the term can be used only in academe.¹⁴

We can see that there are two ways of approaching queer theory. But despite the fact that *queer* has never been accepted unanimously it has always been a controversial topic. As Jagose writes “the ‘queering’ of lesbian and gay studies has been the subject of violent debate.”¹⁵ Many periodicals bring out special issues on queer theory. Among the most popular ones we can add journals such as North American *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, first published in 1993, and the Australian *Critical InQueeries*, whose first issue came out in 1995. Many Universities have started to organize courses around ideas of queer.¹⁶ *Queer* indeed became plentifully discussed topic, some critics (Jagose) even assert that it totally disturbs the last marks of depressing gender coherence, but again others refuse this statement as untruthful and label queer as something, which pan-sexuality¹⁷ is highly reactionary.¹⁸

History of *queer* is mainly connected with Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and her *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (first published in 1985 and then reprinted in 1992 with a new preface). Despite the fact that the first critic who used the phrase queer theory for the first time is Teresa de Lauretis in her essay “Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities,” published in 1991, which has been already mentioned above, Sedgwick is considered as the breakthrough critic. According to the *Village Voice Literary Supplement* this book “turned queer theory from a latent to a manifest discipline.”¹⁹ Sedgwick in her book develops the idea of *homosociality*. This idea represents all bonds,

¹³ Martin C. Putna, “Úvod metodologický: Evropské a americké vědy o homosexualitě a kultuře,” *Homosexualita v dějinách české kultury* (Praha: Academia, 2011), 53. See also Roman Trušík, *Podoby Amerického homosexuálního románu po roce 1945* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2011), 21-22.

¹⁴ Martin C. Putna, “Veselá věda aneb Alternativy uvnitř alternativy (Kritický nástin soudobé vědecké rozpravy o homosexualitě),” *Souvislosti* 14, no. 4 (2004): 59-120.

¹⁵ See Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 2.

¹⁶ See Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 5.

¹⁷ *Pan-sexuality* is a term used for sexual orientation. This sexual orientation is towards any kind of person, no matter of race or gender.

¹⁸ See Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 2.

which are essential for men and which are necessary for their social life, including bonds between men and women (marriage, birth). These bonds are supposed to be contrary to homosexual bonds, which do not consider woman as mediating figure. Sedgwick in her book demonstrates how homosexuality and homosociality often crash into each other in practice.²⁰ Sedgwick visualized the way for gay and feminism studies to find a common perspective on straightness and masculinity.²¹

The other influential work in queer studies is undoubtedly Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990). Rosemary Hennessy writes in her article "Queer Theory: A Review of the *differences* Special Issue and Wittig's *The Straight Mind*" that Sedgwick has considered *Gender Trouble* as influential book for queer theory and that she even said that "anyone who was at the 1991 Rutgers conference on Gay and Lesbian Studies, and heard *Gender Trouble* appealed to in paper after paper, could not help being awed by the productive impact this dense and even imposing work has had on the recent development of queer theory and reading."²² Even though Butler's book mostly deals with terms of feminism, one of the biggest achievements is that she was able "to specify how gender operates as a regulatory construct that privileges heterosexuality and, furthermore, how the deconstruction of normative models of gender legitimates lesbian and gay subject-positions."²³ *Gender Trouble* is also well-known for arguments proving the importance of gender and it has also deeper impact if we consider that the genders are identical. Warner writes that "instead of starting with the nature of sex, [Judith Butler] urged us to analyze the normative frameworks by which gender and sexuality are constituted and inhabited in the first place."²⁴

Queer theory has its own language and usage of expressions, which are often difficult to understand and look up them in dictionaries, is often impossible. We can say that beyond all doubts queer theory belongs to difficult ideologies. Therefore, Judith Butler and Eve

¹⁹ Ewe Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosexual Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), back cover.

²⁰ See Craig Kaczorowski, "Gay, Lesbian, and Queer Studies," in *gbtq: An Encyclopedia of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Culture*, (Chicago, IL: gbttq, 2014), http://www.gbttq.com/social-sciences/gay_lesbian_queer_studies,2.html.

²¹ See Warner, "Queer and Then?"

²² Rosemary Hennessy, "Queer Theory: A Review of the *differences* Special Issue and Wittig's *The Straight Mind*", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 18, no. 4 (1993): 964-73, accessed February 20, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.k.utb.cz/stable/3174918?seq=1>.

²³ See Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 83.

Sedgwick “were both singled out for mockery by the self-appointed guardians of accessibility.”²⁵ I would like to point out the expression *self-appointed guardians*, which is in my opinion important. The right to express an opinion about any kind of issue has every single person. But we have to realize that a lot of people do not understand the discuss topic and they are just taking the right to express their opinion. In my opinion Butler and Sedgwick are highly difficult to understand and their works have to be analyzed very carefully. If this is a purpose of authors or coincidence because of professional academic language, is a question not relevant for purposes of this work. I would say that they were chosen for mockery not because of irrelevant information contained in their books but simply because it is hard to understand their expressions and language.

How the term *queer* have changed through the time meaningful shows Michael Warner in his article “Queer and Then?.” He writes that since the 1990s, when the term was highly provocative and even the informal talk about *queer* was “almost frisky as the cruising,”²⁶ nowadays it became mainstream synonym for gays, fashion expression of being different.²⁷ His opinion was supported by Teresa de Lauretis, who was complaining in 1994 that the term is becoming “a conceptually vacuous creature of the publishing industry.”²⁸ Whereas when de Lauretis and her colleagues were preparing the first queer theory conference in 1990, the term *queer* carried “high-voltage charge of insult and stigma.”²⁹ What is often forgotten, argues Michael Warner, is that the term actually first came from grass-roots politics before it became theory. AIDS activists from group Act Up, who already made politics directed against shame and normalization, founded an organization called Queer Nation (1990), which became a target of jokes at the beginning. Actually a lot of gays and lesbians hated the idea of *queer*. They were continuing to mock the theory and they also marked it as a joke of deceptive academy.³⁰ Warner refers to playwright Larry Kramer, when he writes that the way used by queer theory to analyze the history and complexity of

²⁴ See Warner, “Queer and Then?”

²⁵ See Warner, “Queer and Then?”

²⁶ See Warner, “Queer and Then?”

²⁷ See Warner, “Queer and Then?”

²⁸ Teresa de Lauretis, *The Practise of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 297.

²⁹ See Warner, “Queer and Then?”

³⁰ See Warner, “Queer and Then?”

sexual cultures is actually a treachery of gay people and also the healthy mental awareness.³¹ Nevertheless, the positive aspect about queer theory was that it opened up the differences from lesbian and gay studies, as well as the differences from political gay and lesbian movements. But as Warner points out everything happened ironically, at that time, when the field was coming into by its own.³²

The cerebral part of queer theory actually started a many years before, when Michel Foucault published his book *History of Sexuality* (1976) which became a new, fresh account of gay community. At that time Foucault brought up a totally different point of view of studying sexuality. Warner points out that he did not start with sexual identities but he went further, to the preceding structure of sexuality, using several techniques characteristic to modern societies.³³ Diana Fuss writes that Foucault's work on sexuality corresponds with "current disputes amongst gay theorists and activists over the meaning and applicability of such categories as 'gay', 'lesbian', and 'homosexual' in a post-structuralist climate which renders all such assertions of identity problematic."³⁴ To put it in other words, Fuss highlights the fact, that Foucault's ideas are applicable to today's struggles with defining and distinguishing the terms. The timelessness of Foucault's thoughts of identities made many critics (Fuss) to come back to his works and come out of his ideas. Also Warner refers to his work when he highlights Foucault's argument, which says that the way as sexuality is known for us, is the way of our secular expert knowledge and self-representation. Because of this, sexuality became visible for us as a field of regulation, therapy and liberation simultaneously.³⁵

Nowadays queer theory has many branches and disciplines. The good thing is that queer theory had always been something different and I agree with Warner when he claims that queer theory is also something what will always be left out of any purely intellectual history of the movement.³⁶

³¹ See Warner, "Queer and Then?"

³² See Warner, "Queer and Then?"

³³ See Warner, "Queer and Then?"

³⁴ Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1989), quoted in Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 79-80.

³⁵ See Warner, "Queer and Then?"

³⁶ See Warner, "Queer and Then?"

1.1 Black Queer Theory

For the purpose of this work it is essential to think about queer in a little bit different meaning. As we can deduce from above, *queer* is “a zone of possibilities.”³⁷ I mean by that expression that *queer* never meant to be a theory, which should be easily explained only by one definition. On the contrary the theory brings the possibilities to people, because labeling themselves as a queer should give them the freedom to be who they are, even if they do not know how exactly they should describe themselves. These are the possibilities, which *queer* brings to the people.

Through time many critics were defining *queer* as a means of self-identification, theoretical approach or political stance. But as Michael Popowich emphasizes it is somewhat “antithetical to the very essence of the term.”³⁸ We can find critics (Popowich) who offered broader range of identification of this term. This chapter will deal with queer meaning connected with racial issues.

First of all we can find a term *race-queer*, which has not broad usage but can be found and stands for description of a person who feels that his/her racial identity does not fit into social norms and is intended to be use as a humanizing alternative.³⁹ It is alternative used for example instead of a term *Oreo*, which is a term referring to a sweet chocolate biscuit with a white filling inside. This term is used for black people who behave as whites and want to assimilate in white society. And as the term is often considered as racist one, *race-queer* should replace it. There are other critics using *queer* with connection with race. One of the convincing thoughts about black queer can be found in Richard Thompson Ford’s “What’s Queer about Race?”:

I take it as almost axiomatic that queer theory embraces, even celebrates transgression; it seeks the sublime not in resistance—that’s too damn bristly and self-serious—but in blithe and gleeful disregard for social convention. While its matronly stepsister *gay rights* wants equal access to mainstream social conventions—however ramshackle and dilapidated or procrustean they may be—queer theory is interested in shaking them up so we can see which ones aren’t fit for human habitation.⁴⁰

³⁷ See Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 1.

³⁸ Michael Popowich, *Queer* (Calgary: University of Calgary, 2007), 10.

³⁹ See Urban Dictionary, “Race-queer,” accessed January 20, 2014.
<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Race-queer>.

⁴⁰ Richard Thomson Ford, “What’s Queer about Race?,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106, no. 3 (2007): 477-484, accessed March 3, 2014,

http://www2.law.columbia.edu/faculty_franke/Gay_Marriage/Ford%20What's%20Queer%20About%20Race%EF%80%A5.pdf.

Ford means by this that whereas the aim of gay and lesbian studies is to join the mainstream institutions and that it seems impossible to ever be any other way, queer theory on the other hand is here to ridicule the social customs and change them in the way, that is hard to imagine that the customs will ever be the same.⁴¹ For Ford “queer theory has always had a potentially broad applicability.”⁴² This statement makes queer theory applicable to other social contexts in a way that gay or lesbian studies would have never allowed us to do. Janet Halley writes in her work “‘Like Race’ Arguments” that “term ‘queer’ was adopted by some movement participants in part to frustrate identity formation around dissident sexualities.”⁴³ So we can say that queer theory indicates not only an identity but also the option. Option which allow us to decide whether we want to accept social norms or whether we want to live outside them. Ford writes that the anti-identitarianism of queer theory shifts the borders of the meaning and makes it more portable. Queer theory offers us an alternative way of acceptance of identity, but this way can be surely seen an antagonist one, when we are thinking about *queer* as racial identity.⁴⁴

The connection between racial and gender identities can be proved by several things. First of all, as Ford declares, racial identities same as gender identities are the product of the “real lived experience.”⁴⁵ Meaning, that to understand how gays or African Americans feel, people have to actually be gays or African Americans. People are not able to experience the identities if they are not holding them. The other connection is that they are both connected with social and political communities and therefore also with discrimination. Both identities come with set of norms attached. In both cases there are politically correct ways of how to exhibit black, same as they are ways for male and female gender.⁴⁶ I understand this Ford’s expression *politically correct ways* that it force us to cover-up the truth or the real meaning of the issue, because we need to be careful about what we are saying publicly. Sexual orientation same as color of the skin were subject not discussed in public and if they were, people established expressions, which they were using in public.

⁴¹ See Ford, “What’s Queer about Race?,” 478.

⁴² See Ford, “What’s Queer about Race?,” 478.

⁴³ Janet E. Halley, “‘Like Race’ Arguments,” in *What’s Left of Theory*, ed. Judith Butler, John Guilory, and Kendall Thomas (New York: Routledge, 2000), 41.

⁴⁴ See Ford, “What’s Queer about Race?,” 479.

⁴⁵ See Ford, “What’s Queer about Race?,” 480.

⁴⁶ See Ford, “What’s Queer about Race?,” 480.

Ford also emphasizes that strangers need easy sources of identification and isolated individuals hunger for belonging.⁴⁷ African Americans were for a long time on the margin of society. They searched for a roofing community and same case can be found with *lgbtq*.⁴⁸ They are all somehow strangers to society.

Under these facts we can say that queer theory is offering a way, which provides the understanding of the racial issue. Ford refers to Foucault's work, when he argues that racial power was not only a production of racial expressions and racial differences. Like Foucault he insists that this conception was incomplete and he argues that this racial culture approach was influenced by queer theory, which offered a new theoretic structure within we can understand and analyze several aspects of racial identity opinions.⁴⁹

1.1.1 Black Gay

Stefanie K. Dunning refers in her book *Queer in Black And White: Interraciality, Same Sex Desire, and Contemporary African American Culture* to Spike Lee's movie *Jungle Fever* (1991) where women are discussing black men dating white women. They are complaining that they are losing their men. White women are taking their men away from them and they are feeling like their black men are failing the nation.⁵⁰ They would never date a white guy because "their responsibility level is not the same as [theirs]."⁵¹ While they are complaining about their men failing the nation simultaneously they are refusing to leave them. The same case can be seen with gays. Because while the white women are taking their men away from them, the fact that they would be homosexuals make them also unavailable for them. Dunning writes that "the equation of interracial desire and gay identity connects queer identity to that which is outside."⁵² This moment shows us the mainstream thinking about black queer identity. People take it as indefensible with connection with black identity and connecting it to interracial desire and to whiteness.⁵³ So as far as *queer* was concerned only as an issue of white people, many

⁴⁷ See Ford, "What's Queer about Race?," 478.

⁴⁸ The abbreviation LGBTQ is used for overall label of alternative sexual identities where G stands for gay, L lesbian, B bisexual, T transgender, Q queer.

⁴⁹ See Ford, "What's Queer about Race?," 479-484.

⁵⁰ Stefanie K. Dunning, *Queer in Black And White: Interraciality, Same Sex Desire, and Contemporary African American Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 3.

⁵¹ Spike Lee, *Jungle Fever* (1991), quoted in Stefanie K. Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 3.

⁵² See Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 3.

⁵³ See Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 4.

analysis of works were incorrect and incomplete. James Baldwin is an example of often misleading interpretation of his texts but more about this can be found in following chapters.

If there exists such a thing as black queer canon, Dunning declares that one of the most important texts among black queer texts would be Marlon Riggs's *Tongues Untied* (1991).⁵⁴ This is one of the first movies, which deals with the gay male life. Marlon Riggs was a black director and also gay. This movie is autobiographical and shows us the homophobia of black community and at the same time the racism of the gay community.⁵⁵ The interesting fact to point out is that Marlon Riggs himself had a white long-life partner. With this fact I would like to stress the contradiction between what is pictured in the movie and what happened in his personal life. Dunning writes that the method, which is used by Riggs when he writes about interraciality, cross-racial romance and the authenticity of desire, is inconsistent because he at once accepts and rejects "the competing narratives which frame [the interraciality]"⁵⁶ through the conflict between his illustration of the black men's desire pictured in the movie and his personal life.⁵⁷ "The dynamic tension between text and subject of *Tongues Untied* indeed preserves multiple narratives about, and disallows the unequivocal repudiation of, interracial desire."⁵⁸ If we come back to the *Jungle Fever* we can see that the strategy around interracial desire in black queer texts opposes the logic of black nationalism. Therefore, the conversation in *Jungle Fever* mentioned above "should be read not so much as policing of desire but rather as a political structure of identification."⁵⁹

There are theorists, such as Amiri Baraka or Eldridge Cleaver who claims that the idea to be queer and black means to be outside the black community. On the other hand a lot of modern black queer texts represent the interracial desire. James Baldwin works are one of them. Even though Baldwin wasn't the first who wrote about black gay, his works belong among the most widely commented ones. James Baldwin's *Another Country* is one of the most famous texts in black queer studies, represents black gay (bisexual) man.

⁵⁴ See Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 4.

⁵⁵ See Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 5.

⁵⁶ Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 5.

⁵⁷ See Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 5.

⁵⁸ Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 5-6.

⁵⁹ Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 5.

According to the previous text, we can say that queer is also connected with race and it has their own black queer studies. I will deal with what is queer about James Baldwin's work in the following parts of my work.

1.1.2 Black Identity

There are many critics refusing negro homosexuals. One of them is Amiri Baraka. According to him black identity should not be connected with such a term as *queer*. Amiri Baraka is African American dramatist, novelist and poets. During the sixties he was an activist with the beginning of Black Civil Rights Movements. Baraka uses his writing as a weapon against racism.⁶⁰ He is also one of the critics who loudly proclaim that queer identity is not a black thing. Gregory Conerly writes in his essay "Are you Black First or Are You Queer?" that the title of his essay "embodies a central conflict many African American lesbians, bisexuals, and gays experience in dealing with two identities often at odds with each other."⁶¹ Dunning supports this statement when she writes that the intention to exclude black gays and lesbian from the African American community requires that black queer texts dedicate a huge amount of attention to a black nationalism and black community.⁶² The complicated relationship between black nationalist homophobia and racism is represented in James Baldwin's works. James Baldwin is dealing in his works, especially in *Another Country*, with a concern of black nation and representation of cross-racial and same-sex desire.

One way of reading the interraciality represented in black queer texts is to take the interraciality as a pattern which labels an acknowledgement of black subjectivity.⁶³ Meaning that the biases of African Americans often shadow the real essence of interraciality portrayed in the works and that can lead to incorrect perception of the works. Dunning claims that "in this way, black queer texts that represent interraciality historicize themselves along a continuum of African American literary representations of miscegenation."⁶⁴ The term *miscegenation*, which she uses, should stand for interracial relationships that can produce offspring. In many black queer texts we can find elements

⁶⁰ Amiriki Baraka Official Website, accessed February 20, 2014, <http://www.amiribaraka.com>.

⁶¹ Gregory Conerly, "Are Your Black First or Are You Queer?" *The Greatest Taboo: Homosexuality in Black Communities*, ed. Delroy Constantine-Simms (Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 2000), 7.

⁶² See Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 7.

⁶³ See Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 7.

⁶⁴ See Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 7.

which refer to *miscegenation*. Function of these texts from the point of view of using interracial is to “reframe and solidify blackness.”⁶⁵ The approach to the problem of blackness is different in the black queer texts. Earlier representations of interraciality seemed to define blackness against the larger context of American culture, but now black queer texts treat blackness at once as an opponent of the larger culture and at the same time as a follower to the black community. When we are using the interracial as a thing, which highlights blackness, we can suggest that blackness is not undermined by queerness in black queer texts. This idea criticizes the statement that to be queer means to be white.⁶⁶

I agree with Dunning, when she rejects the idea that queer identity is a “white disease”⁶⁷ and that to be *lgbtq* means to be outside the race. One of the arguments can be that black queer people are already black and never left the black community.⁶⁸ For many theorists it is impossible to separate or prioritize the identities that one has. Joy James in her book *Shadowboxing* writes that “verbal abstractions concerning linear struggles can and do prioritize ‘primary’ over ‘secondary’ oppressions, despite the fact that oppression is multivariied and integrated.”⁶⁹ Another theorist, a black queer feminist, Audre Lorde points out in her article “There is No Hierarchy of Oppressions” that “it is a standard of right-wing cynicism to encourage members of oppressed groups to act against each other, and so long as we are divided because of our identities we cannot join together in effective political action.”⁷⁰ The idea to separate these two identities is highly violent and can be tracked to the history. Renea Romesberg refers in her work “Black Queer Identity Politics” to Marlon Riggs when she emphasizes the fact that many Africans and African Americans believe that before European colonialism such a thing as homosexuality didn’t exist. She also writes that before the white men came, African men were strong warriors. Nobody was a feminist, homosexual, lesbian or gay.⁷¹ This is not relevant information as we are able to track to the history that the problem of same-sex desire between two or more people has happened around the world throughout history.

⁶⁵ See Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 7.

⁶⁶ See Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 8.

⁶⁷ Term used by many critics, such as Wahneema Lubiano, Rhonda Williams or Kendall Thomas, which represent the idea that homosexuality is strictly matter of white people.

⁶⁸ See Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 8.

⁶⁹ Joy James, *Shadowboxing: Representations of Black Feminist Politics* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 43.

⁷⁰ Audre Lorde, “There is No Hierarchy of Oppressions” In *Dangerous Liaisons: Black, Gays, and the Struggle for Equality*, ed. Eric Brandt (New York: The New York Press), 307.

If we come back to the analysis of the black queer texts, the way which can be used for understanding the black queer texts is to think about them as “counter-discourses that signify on the ideas embodied by the rhetoric they resist.”⁷² Michelle Wright writes in her book *Becoming Black* (2004) about counter-discursive arguments as a characterization of an inability to “wholly segregate Black and white intellectual traditions in the West from one another.”⁷³ She talks about counter-discourses as a part of formation of black identity. We can use this argument to provide the understanding of the aspect of black queerness connected with the interracial. If we apply same logic to the black queer texts, we can at one time accept the black nationalism and at the same time reject the interraciality. There is no surprise that some black queer artists use black nationalism to disrupt the statement about same-sex desire.⁷⁴

1.1.3 Black Queer Studies

In the introduction to the book *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*, called “Introduction: Queering Black Studies/’Quaring’ Queer Studies”, E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson write that they seek to bridge a gap and create a space of inquiry between black studies and queer studies.⁷⁵ They will do it through the idea of “sabotaging neither and enabling both.”⁷⁶ Firstly they are describing black studies, queer studies and at the end how they merge together. Like queer studies black studies were also result of an activist movement. During the sixties and seventies African Americans had a crucial time in relation to academia. The pressure from black students on white administrators of white institution led to formation of black studies. The central focus of black studies is connected with the context of Civil Right Movements. It is said that it was the black heterosexuals who powered black liberation movements. However, this information can seem to be irrelevant because no one can label someone as heterosexual for sure.

⁷¹ Renea Romesberg, “Black Queer Identity Politics” (Final Paper African American Philosophy, 2008), 5.

⁷² See Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 8.

⁷³ Michelle Wright, *Becoming Black* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), 3.

⁷⁴ See Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 8.

⁷⁵ E. Patrick Johnson, Mae G. Henderson, *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology* (Duke University Press, 2005), 1.

⁷⁶ See Johnson, Henderson, *Black Queer Studies*, 1.

Nevertheless, it brought homophobia among black community and homosexuality was labeled as a “white disease that had inflected the black community.”⁷⁷

Both queer and black studies stand for shaking people’s conservative long held ideas about identity. The inability to mark identities, especially the ones which are subordinate to already existing sexual identities, bring Johnson and Henderson to the idea that the dual examination of black studies and queer studies “will illuminate how intersecting identities manifest to both oppress and privilege.”⁷⁸ In their work they prove that individual rights in the interest of people should ensure social justice including sexual identity, which can be recognize only if people will be able to accept the coalition of identities, which cross each other.⁷⁹ To support these convictions I have chosen an eloquent argument about being queer and black posted on website of American newspaper *Huffington Post* by Charles Stephens:

When I returned back to Atlanta from NYAC Summit, I started identifying as queer. It felt like the best way to bring together my identities as someone who is black (what I would sometimes refer to as “anapologetically black” in another time), male but not conventionally masculine, desiring of other men but not exclusively, and working-class, and with an inclination toward the sexually transgressive.⁸⁰

On the basis of these facts I claim that it is essential to accept queer as a black issue. To understand your identity, you need to be able accept every single version of identity you can hold. To be black and to be queer means to hold two identities which are united. Trying to separate them can be for people partial violent and they can feel lost, as one of the main protagonists of James Baldwin’s book *Another Country*.

⁷⁷ See Johnson, Henderson, *Black Queer Studies*, 2.

⁷⁸ See Johnson, Henderson, *Black Queer Studies*, 2.

⁷⁹ See Johnson, Henderson, *Black Queer Studies*, 2.

⁸⁰ Charles Stephens, “On Blackness and Queerness,” *Huffington Post* Official website, June 10, 2013, accessed February 28, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/charles-stephens/on-blackness-and-queerness_b_3411863.html

2 JAMES BALDWIN AS A QUEER AUTHOR

At the age of 24 James Baldwin had moved to Paris to escape from American racism. Tiny, black and with big intelligent eyes he arrived to the place which as he believed, will make him a great writer. The inability to write among white American society made him to take the journey to the country, where as he assumed, will find an acceptance. By this act he followed a long line of talented African Americans, who same as him, hoped to experience life without “the terrible burden of racial prejudice and injustice.”⁸¹ Baldwin has been always suffering from black racism and segregation of blacks, which he had experienced in America and that, had impact on his writing. In the *Conversations with James Baldwin*, where most of his interviews are collected, he recalls that “all you are ever told in this country about being black is that it is a terrible, terrible thing to be. Now, in order to survive this, you have to really dig down into yourself and re-create yourself.”⁸² And Baldwin had started his lifetime journey as a writer when he was 14 years old. At that time he was spending all his time in the Harlem Library and as he read more and more his passion for writing was bigger and bigger.

James Baldwin was born as a grandson of a slave in Harlem in 1924. As an oldest child with nine siblings, he grew up in poverty dealing with a difficult relationship with his stepfather, who was a preacher. David Leeming, Baldwin’s friend and also an author of Baldwin’s biography called *James Baldwin: A Biography* writes that Baldwin was often bullied by his stepfather. “You are the ugliest boy I have ever seen,”⁸³ his stepfather used to say. Baldwin confirms this statement, when he expressed himself in a way that he truly hated his stepfather and this hatred was two-sided.⁸⁴ Despite the hatred his stepfather did influence him in certain way. Thanks to him, Baldwin spent a lot of time in a pulpit, where he was following his stepfather’s steps and that undoubtedly influenced him in his work. We can notice the influence of church and religion, just as the usage of “cadences and tones”⁸⁵ in his novels. His first novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain* was published in 1953

⁸¹ David Leeming, “David Leeming Essay” American Masters, July 31, 2013, accessed May 1, 2014, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/james-baldwin/david-leeming-essay/2666/>.

⁸² Fred L. Stanley and Louis H. Pratt, eds., *Conversations with James Baldwin* (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1989), 5-6.

⁸³ David Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1994), 10.

⁸⁴ See Stanley and Pratt, *Conversations with James Baldwin*, 90.

⁸⁵ “About the Author”, American Masters, November 29, 2006, accessed May 1, 2014, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/james-baldwin/about-the-author/59/>.

and is highly influenced by his childhood. We can consider it as a semi-autobiographical novel. Baldwin writes there about growing up in Harlem, strict education provided by his stepfather and the meaning of religion and God in his life. In his first novel, we can also see hints of homosexual themes, such as platonic relationship between main character John and Elisha. John questions himself, his sexuality and the meaning of the world. These hints are more developed in Baldwin's second novel *Giovanni's Room* (1956). We can notice that Baldwin was playing with his ideas and thoughts but from the beginning he aimed at *queer* themes. These themes were also corresponding with his personal life, when he admitted his homosexuality.

Despite the fact that Baldwin released his first novel in 1953, he was well known even before as a great essayist. He entered the literary world with a controversial essay "Everybody's Protest Novel" in 1949. This novel later became a part of essay collection *Notes of a Native Son* published in 1955. This book of essays caused him his friendship with his big supporter Richard Wright. Baldwin, in essays "Notes of Native Son" and "Everybody Protest Novel", alludes to Wright's novel *Native Son* and criticize it for lack of psychological complexity of main characters. Even though Baldwin in the interview with Julius Lester on May 27 in 1984 claimed that "[he] was not attacking [Wright], [he] was trying to clarify something for [himself],"⁸⁶ Wright took it very seriously and that led to the end of their friendship. Baldwin published 7 essay collections, six novels, two plays, poetry and short story collection and many articles and reviews during his life.⁸⁷

Apart from essays Baldwin is also well known for his novels. Among the most successful novels we can consider these three: *Go Tell it on the Mountain*, *Giovanni's Room* and *Another Country*. The three following novels, namely *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone*, *If Beale Street Could Talk* and *Just Above My Head* are often considered as failure by many critics. Eliot N. Long writes in his essay "The Song We Sing" that Baldwin ruins in the first three novels the well-established conventions and therefore becoming "a major writing force, but his later works were seen to be lacking or behind the times."⁸⁸ This opinion is supported by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., who said that

⁸⁶ See Stanley and Pratt, *Conversations with James Baldwin*, 253-254.

⁸⁷ Eliot N. Long, "'The Song We Sing': Negotiating Black Nationalism and Queerness in James Baldwin's Late Novels" (master's thesis, The University of Mississippi, 2013), 2, accessed March 2, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.k.utb.cz/docview/1444338213>.

⁸⁸ Eliot N. Long, "'The Song We Sing,'" 2.

“Baldwin, who once defined the cutting edge, was now a favorite target for the *new* cutting edge.”⁸⁹ The reason also can be that people got bored by Baldwin. When he released his first three novels, he brought up taboo themes, such as homosexuality and interracial relationships and that was something what attracted people. Baldwin was also able to portrayed real picture of life, without romance and happy endings. He wrote to his publisher that *Giovanni’s Room* is not only about tragic love, which leads to self-knowledge but that the novel is also about “saying yes to life.”⁹⁰ *Another Country* even brought more controversial topic such as description of racial tension and this description is “done with eloquence and unprecedented honesty.”⁹¹ By this image of life Baldwin created “socially relevant, psychologically penetrating literature...and readers responded”⁹²

Baldwin in his works discusses two difficult topics, such as queer sexuality and exploration of racial identity. Even though this thesis is proving that the two themes are merging into each other, many critics (Cleaver) saw it differently. Therefore, Baldwin’s queer novels became subjects of gay and lesbian studies and these one dealing with racial issues became main topic of African American Studies. Long writes that African American criticism often ignored usage of racial elements and on the other way around gay studies often ignored everything connected with queer. The latest Baldwin’s novels directly deal with a black queer identity and this may be the reason for untouched criticism provided by many theorists until recently.⁹³ Nowadays a lot of critics study Baldwin’s text with the two themes in relation to one another. But the division of two themes contained in Baldwin’s work also lead to the criticism of Baldwin’s black nationalism. Long points out that Baldwin was criticized for not being political enough and for dealing with homosexual topics.⁹⁴ Homophobia of black art writers led to many statements and works refusing Baldwin’s works.

⁸⁹ Henry Louis Gates, Jr., “The Welcome Table: James Baldwin in Exile” *Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward Glances*, ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 312.

⁹⁰ *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket for Black History Month*, directed by Karen Thorsen (Maysles Films and PBS/American Masters, 1990), accessed March 3, 2014, <http://www.thirteen.org/programs/american-masters/james-baldwin-the-price-of-the-ticket/>.

⁹¹ See “About the Author”

⁹² See “About the Author”

⁹³ See Long, “‘The Song We Sing’,” 3.

⁹⁴ See Long, “‘The Song We Sing’,” 4.

One of Baldwin's biggest critics was Eldridge Cleaver, who attacked Baldwin in his collection of essays *Soul on Ice*. Cleaver's criticism shows strong homophobia. When he summarize Baldwin's writing, Cleaver writes that Baldwin works are grueling and agonizing and he pictures "the most shameful, fanatical, fawning, sycophantic love of whites that one can find in the writings of any black American writer of note in our time."⁹⁵ Despite criticism Baldwin showed that his theme is not only homosexuality but also racial issue. In 1963 he released collection of essays called *The Fire Next Time*. This collection meant to educate white Americans on what it meant to be black. In the collection Baldwin brutally describes the struggle of racial relationships but he also shows some hope for improvement.⁹⁶ The collection became immediate success and in 1963 Baldwin's picture appeared on the cover of *Time* and that time everybody knew his name.

James Baldwin was writing the collection when he was travelling through the South during his participation on Civil Right Movement. Baldwin's works became essential for the movement and he, himself became one of the most important figures in the Civil Right Movement. By the side of his friends, Medgar Evers, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X, he was fighting for racial equality. After their assassinations, Baldwin returned back to France, where he was working on his works and also started to teach young people at University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Hampshire College, because he wanted to connect with young people. Baldwin died of stomach cancer in 1989. His legacy cannot be questioned. Leeming writes that the key to Baldwin's success was Baldwin's ability to take everything what happened to him, bad same as good things and transform it not only in to his works but also in to his personal life:

Rising out of Harlem, James Baldwin used the mystery of his parentage and his humble birth, and the ineffectualness of his stepfather, as starting points for a lifelong witnessing of the moral failure of the American nation—and of Western civilization in general—and the power of love to revive it.⁹⁷

This ability made Baldwin not only a great writer but also an inspirational person, to whom people were looking up to. Even Amiri Baraka, Baldwin's critic, said on Baldwin's funeral in New York in 1987 that he is undoubtedly "God's black revolutionary mouth."⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (McHenry, IL: Delta, 1999), 99.

⁹⁶ See "David Leeming Essay"

⁹⁷ See Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography*, 95.

3 GIOVANNI'S ROOM

In January 1954 Baldwin's publisher William Cole, from publishing house Alfred A. Knopf, got a letter from Baldwin regarding to his second novel with working title *Deep Secret: One for My Baby*. Baldwin there describes that the novel is not about Negroes but about love, tragic love when main character wants something, find something and loses it.⁹⁹ Eventually Baldwin's second novel was called *Giovanni's Room* and was published in 1956 by Dial Press. Despite the fact that Knopf released Baldwin's first work *Go Tell it on the Mountain*, they have been reluctant to publish the second one. The problem was, as Baldwin's publisher William Cole later recalls, the homosexuality portrayed in the novel. "I guess they were scared. Homosexuality was the theme and that was not on the books those days. There were very little written about homosexuality that time, certain very few novels and they turned it down,"¹⁰⁰ explains Cole. Knopf warned Baldwin that if he does not change the main theme he will ruin his reputation of a respected author. But Baldwin did not change anything about the homosexual content and in 1956 the novel was finally accepted and published by Dial Press.

The acceptance of the novel was full of contradictions. On one side it got good reviews, for example Nelson Algren's review called "Lost Man" was full of compliments about *Giovanni's Room*.¹⁰¹ On the other hand the acceptance of the book was cold and critiques complained not only about the homosexual content but also about the absence of black experience. However, we can find reviewers who argue that black themes are also presented in *Giovanni's Room*. One of them is Joseph M. Armengol, a Spanish scholar who wrote a study called "In the Dark Room: Homosexuality and/as Blackness in James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*." Armengol there argues that homosexuality is not the main theme, but there are also other major themes, such as race and whiteness. He discusses the symbolic meaning in *Giovanni's Room*, for example that the homosexuality in the novel is pictured as dirty, sinful, dark thing and on the contrary heterosexuality is connected with

⁹⁸ Quoted in "David Leeming Essay"

⁹⁹ See *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket for Black History Month*

¹⁰⁰ See *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket for Black History Month*

¹⁰¹ See *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket for Black History Month*

purity and most importantly with innocence.¹⁰² I agree with Armengol when he claims that blackness is presented in the novel and it will be proven on examples in the following text. This assertion can be supported by Baldwin himself, who once said, that “the sexual question and the racial question have always been entwined.”¹⁰³ In this statement we can see that Baldwin always considered sexual identity and racial identity as one unit, so to completely separate the blackness from the novel would be incorrect and also misleading.

The main protagonist of the novel is young, white American David, presented as a bisexual who came to France to find himself, “perhaps as we said in America, I wanted to find myself”¹⁰⁴ he informs on the beginning of the novel, but he also immediately adds that at the bottom of his heart he knew exactly who he was at the moment he was taking the boat for France. This is the first time, when David shows how torn apart he is about his true identity. The opening scene is situated in the South of France, where David is remembering his life through the past few months and his memories are interweaved with his previous life in America.

The main struggle for David is his inability to accept his homosexuality. His first relationship with another male was with a boy Joey and it happened when they both were in their teens – the time of people’s lives when the sexuality is usually developed and when people start to be attracted to sex. The fact that David’s first sexual relationship was with a boy, indicates us David’s real sexual orientation. “But Joey is *a boy*” (*GR*, 8, my italics) and that is a fact that David is not able to accept. With the sunrise he realizes Joey’s masculinity and that force him to question his. He is afraid of losing his manhood. The way David describes his feelings shows readers that he is mainly concern about other people’s opinions. He is afraid that he would be a disappointment for his father and he is thinking “how this could have happened in [him]” (*GR*, 8). Therefore, it led to David’s decision that he needs to end up this little affair. The interesting fact is that he decides not to tell Joey directly because that would break his will. He just leaves it to fade out. That indicates that he did not believe in this decision, he just did, what he thought was right.

¹⁰² Josep M. Armengol, “In the Dark Room: Homosexuality and/as Blackness in James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room*” *Chicago Journals* 37, no. 3 (2012), 671-693, accessed March 5, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.1086/662699?uid=3737856&uid=2&uid=4&sid=21104058066023>.

¹⁰³ See Stanley and Pratt, *Conversations with James Baldwin*, 50.

¹⁰⁴ James Baldwin, *Giovanni’s Room* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 18. Hereafter cited in text as *GR*.

By this story Baldwin points out two things. First of all Baldwin refers to illiberal society, who at that time, and in many places also nowadays, did not accept gays. By this behavior they discriminate them and therefore homosexuals are not able to gain proper social status, they can feel underestimated and uncomfortable in their own skins. All of this can lead to the suppression of their real sexual orientation. And that is what indeed happened to David. He was ashamed about his desires, so “[he] had decided to allow no room in the universe for something which shamed and frightened [him]” (*GR*, 18). The second thing Baldwin points out is insufficient education about homosexuality. That is why David is not sure about what is happening in him and he is unable to identify his feelings. Actually, David’s insecurity about his desires and needs is evident through the whole novel. Later in the book David describes that “sometimes when [Giovanni] was not near me, I thought, I will never let him touch me again. Then when he touched me, I thought it doesn’t matter, it is only the body, it will soon be over” (*GR*, 79). David describes the sexual act with Giovanni as something that needs to be done, something that is inescapable but deep inside David knows he wants that. He continues that after the sex is over, he is lying in the dark and all he wants is the Giovanni’s touch. This uncertainty David shows only indicates how much is he insecure about himself.

When David first meets with Giovanni, he does not allow himself to see him as a sexual object. He is introduced to him by his friend Jacques, an aging businessman who has a lot of money. Jacques is also interested in wild life and young boys. David despises him a little bit for this kind of life, but later he realizes that the contempt he had for him was connected with his self-contempt. The hatred David has for his own desires reflected in his hatred for Jacques. Therefore, when he meets Giovanni he denies that he would be attracted to him. But eventually he did yield to his desires and started to have relationship with Giovanni. Apparently, during the whole relationship David was in the denial. Considering the sexual act, always when David and Giovanni have had sex David told himself that it is for the last time, but eventually he always have come back. The other thing is that David took his relationship with Giovanni only as a short-term thing, which will end up in the moment when Hella comes back from Spain. From the beginning he did not see future in the relationship in case he has always expected the end of it.

However, we can track moments in the novel when David allows himself to think about the future with Giovanni. The one evening when they were walking around the boulevard Montparnasse, David realized the happy moment they were having together and

“for that moment [he] really loved Giovanni, who had never seemed more beautiful than he was that afternoon” (*GR*, 74). David compared the feelings Giovanni awakened in him to the beast which will rise if he will not stop feeling them and that made him to feel hatred for Giovanni “which was as powerful as [his] love and which was nourished by the same roots” (*GR*, 75). And that leads us to my opinion that David was in the denial and that he suppressed the love in the result to have a *normal* life. What is normal is of course questionable, but for David this idea of normal life is to get married with Hella and have children with her. We can see how David was fighting with this in one scene, where he went for a walk and met his old friend Sue. To prove to himself that he is still *normal* he had sex with her. He wanted to know if he still can be sexually attracted to the woman, if he can fall for a woman. He realizes that he is able to be renewed and that is what he wants. “I wanted to be inside again, with the light and safety, with my manhood unquestioned, watching my woman put my children in to bed” (*GR*, 93), he confesses and he adds that it will cause that he will become himself again.

That is interesting choice of words Baldwin is using – Giovanni will become himself again but the paradox is that he will bury everything in him for becoming a person who he is not but the given conditions require him to be. This opinion can be supported by Yasmin Y. DeGout who also claims that “Giovanni is a victim of psychological and socio-economic factors.”¹⁰⁵ And that is proven at the end of the book where David comes to the realization that even though he wanted to start new life with Hella he is unable to do it. He dragged Hella to the South of the France, but he started a sexual relationship with a sailor. Despite the fact that David tried to fight against it, he did fell in love with Giovanni and that changed him in a way that he is not able to come back to his previous life. At the end of the novel David is really unsecure about his next steps. Baldwin said that the book is about to “say yes to life”¹⁰⁶ and David’s inability to do that makes from a love story, tragic epic story.

To the idea that *Giovanni’s Room* is not strictly about homosexual themes but also about race themes incline many critics, namely Matthew Aiello or Joseph M. Armengol, who was

¹⁰⁵ Yasmin Y. DeGout, “Dividing Mind: Contradictory Portraits of Homoerotic Love in Giovanni’s Room,” *African American Review* 26, no. 3 (1992), 425, accessed March 15, 2014, http://www.jstor.org.proxy.k.utb.cz/stable/3041915?__redirected.

already mentioned before. Their works will be taken into account in this chapter, which will analyze blackness portrayed in the novel.

From the first page, Baldwin points out David's physical appearance. He describes him as "tall, perhaps rather like an arrow with [his] blond hair gleams" (*GR*, 3) and an ordinary face you could see many times. He also refers to his ancestors who "conquered a continent, pushing across death-laden plains until they came to an ocean which faced away from Europe into a darker past" (*GR*, 3). Baldwin refers to white European colonizers, and this can indicate as Mathew Aiello writes in his work "A Black and White Affair: An Examination of Homosexuality in Giovanni's Room" that he wanted to point out that David is from long line of white people, who repressed black people in the past.¹⁰⁷ It is important to mention for David that he comes from this line, so we should not be surprised that he sees homosexuality as darkness further more in the text. Nevertheless, his white appearance does not correspond with his sexuality and that is why he tries to suppress it. If we look again at David's first sexual relationship, Joey is described as a dark boy with dark eyes and dark skin. If we read further more in the novel, we can see that all homosexual characters are described with connection to darkness. Guillaume and his friend Jacques are described as "dirty old men" (*GR*, 15) and also Guillaume's bar is very dark place always filled up with homosexuals.

When David woke up after the night he spent with Joey, he describes that Joey's hair are darkening the pillow. Maybe this can be seen as metaphor for darkening David's life. Joey awakened his desires and that will take him to the dark place.

The only exception among the dark descriptions of homosexuals is Giovanni. He is not described as a typical Italian dark guy. David refers about Giovanni that he is "dark and leonine" (*GR*, 28). Giovanni also, unlike other homosexual characters pictured in the novel, wears white clothes. These observations about Giovanni can be explained that Giovanni is a statue of hope for David. David sees the possibility in Giovanni, maybe he can change him or he can admit who he is. Giovanni is pictured as some kind of turning point, which can be crucial for David. On one side Giovanni is dark because he is homosexual but on the other he is innocent because he can bring relief of self-discovery to David.

¹⁰⁶ See *James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket for Black History Month*

¹⁰⁷ Matthew Aiello, "A Black and White Affair: An Examination of Homosexuality in Giovanni's Room" (final paper, Stanford University, 2013), 7.

Giovanni's room, where David and Giovanni are having their affair is also described as contradictory one. From the beginning David sees it as small, stinking and dirty place with only two windows, which was all the time kept closed. They had no curtains, so Giovanni painted the windows on white with a white cleaning polish. The choice of the color can be seen as the chance or opportunity that should be brought into their relationship. David had all the time intention to clean the room, to put the room in the order. But he realizes that the room disorder was not the main issue, he realizes that if one starts to search for the key of the disorder, one can realize that it is not to be found in any of the usual places. He understands why Giovanni wanted him to come to his room; "I was to destroy this room and give to Giovanni a new and better life. This life could only be my own, which, in order to transform Giovanni's, must first become a part of Giovanni's room" (GR, 78). To become part of Giovanni's room, which was situated outside of the center, meant to become a part of secret life they were having together. For Giovanni their relationship meant the hope of better life, "[h]ow wonderful it was to have [David] there, how [he] stood, with [his] love and integrity between [me] and dark" (GR, 78-79).

David stood between him and dark, he has seen in David the opportunity of better life. On the other hand, David saw Giovanni as the one person who could take him in the dark place. At the very last pages of the novel, David imagines in his mind that he meets with Giovanni in the room with a big mirror. He is standing before the mirror, naked white and pale and Giovanni's face is looking at him "like an unexpected lantern on a dark, dark night" (GR, 148). Aiello writes that David puts his innocence in reflection with David's darkness.¹⁰⁸ At the end of the novel we got to know that Giovanni did take David to the different place, to put it in other words, he made David to realize what he wants.

The important fact we have to realize is that David came from an environment which influenced him. He grew up in society, which did not accept homosexuals, "it is a crime – in my country, and, after all I didn't grow up here, I grew up *there*" (GR, 80, Baldwin's italics). By here he means France, country where he went to find his identity and by *there* he means America, place from where he escaped. Aiello also claims that despite the fact that David is not technically a black man, the problems he faces would fit to problems of a

¹⁰⁸ See Aiello, "A Black and White Affair," 7.

black male, “for no place, except closeted, confined spaces, exist for him to be his true self.”¹⁰⁹ These spaces can be explained not only as Giovanni’s room but also America, itself, because it suppressed David’s true sexuality. James Baldwin writes in his essay “The Black Boy Looks as the White Boy” that the world “has prepared no place for [Blacks], and if the world had its way, no place would ever exist for them.”¹¹⁰ Therefore, there is no place for David, where he can hide or find himself. The process of finding his own identity is not depended on place but on his own personality. The place cannot change who he already is, same as it cannot change who he wants to be.

¹⁰⁹ See Aiello, “A Black and White Affair,” 7.

¹¹⁰ James Baldwin, “The Black Boy Looks as the White Boy” in *Nobody Knows My Name* (New York: Dial Press, 1992), 289.

4 ANOTHER COUNTRY

Giovanni's Room was undoubtedly a controversial and influential novel from the perspective of using the homosexual themes but James Baldwin is going with *Another Country* little bit further. He is not dealing there only with the issue of homosexuality and sexual identity in general but also with racial identity. Even though my work deals with *Another Country* from a queer perspective, this book is much more. The connection of sexuality, identity, racial questions and relationships puts the novel among difficult texts. That is also reason why this thesis uses the term *queer*. Baldwin pictures many themes and these themes were often analyzed individually. However, this thesis puts them under one term in order to get the complex analysis.

Even though I will not analyze all relationships pictured in the book, it is important to be aware of them. Therefore, I would like to start with a short overview of relationships pictured in the book and for this purpose I will use Mark Lilly's division, which he is providing in his book *Gay Men's Literature in the Twentieth Century*:

Rufus – Eric (short-term gay relationship)

Eric – Yves (long-term idyllic gay relationship)

Eric – Cass (experimental short-term straight relationship)

Eric – Vivaldo (one day experimental gay relationship, otherwise friends)

Cass – Richard (straight marriage with 2 kids)

Ida – Vivaldo (straight long-term relationship full of jealousy and mistrust)

Ida – Ellis (Ida cheats on Vivaldo with Ellis because she sees an opportunity in it)

Vivaldo – Jane (a quick ending of this relationship after Jane's racist note about Rufus)

Rufus – Leona (relationship marked with physical violence, ends in Rufus suicide)¹¹¹

Even from this short overview we can see that a huge variety of sexual relationships is portrayed in the novel. Readers can observe in the novel a group of people, which are linked together. This link is represented as sexual relationship or as friendship. But all kinds of relationships have similar features which can be noticed, such as pain, uncertainty or fragility. They also can seem to be highly unexpected to readers or queer, if we consider

that to be queer means to be odd. Lilly argues that such characterization cannot be applied separately only on one relationship¹¹² and I agree with his statement, because we have to look at all relationships altogether. Then we can get picture which is, I would say, highly improbable. Because every single character is involved with another character, usually sexually involved, and when readers think that there is no way that these two characters could be together Baldwin proves it differently and pairs them together. No matter how portrait of relationships can appear to readers, in my opinion Baldwin uses these relationships to represent the variety of any kind of love.

I agree with Lilly when he writes that Baldwin describes love as comprehensive and sometimes very tiring.¹¹³ How Baldwin pictured love in *Another Country* can seem to be negative. He links love to jealousy, hate, racism, sexism, failure, mistrust, desire. And of course the fragility of love is one of the major themes. When we first meet with Eric and Yves, they are enjoying their time at the seaside in the France. Their relationship seems to be very idyllic. But as we are reading further we come to know that Eric and Yves need to separate for a while, because Eric got a job offer in New York. Their relationship has to be tested if it can last through given obstacle. They cannot know if they love each other if the course of their relationship is not tough. Lilly writes that Baldwin always points out the doubt, the possibility of desertion and the fragility of relationship. He refers to Karl Popper's principle of falsifiability,¹¹⁴ when he states that the relationship cannot be real enough or intense enough if people do not meet the barriers of the real life.¹¹⁵

Real lived experiences are at this point confusing and Baldwin in certain scenes shows this confusion. For example, when Vivaldo starts to date Ida he becomes very jealous and possessive, he cannot bear the idea that Ida would cheat on him with old and unattractive Ellis. Baldwin puts Vivaldo into antagonist position because he is not able to trust his *faithful* girlfriend Ida. However, eventually Baldwin reveals the truth which is that the whole time Ida was cheating on Vivaldo with Ellis. Baldwin plays with reader's minds and

¹¹¹ Mark Lilly, *Gay Men's Literature in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 149.

¹¹² See Lilly, *Gay Men's Literature in the Twentieth Century*, 149-150.

¹¹³ See Lilly, *Gay Men's Literature in the Twentieth Century*, 149.

¹¹⁴ Term used by Karl Popper stands for a logical possibility that an assertion could be shown false by a particular observation or physical experiment
(<http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Falsifiability.html>)

¹¹⁵ See Lilly, *Gay Men's Literature in the Twentieth Century*, 152.

Lilly writes that they are placed in Vivaldo position, their shock is his shock,¹¹⁶ because the truth is revealed at that time when Vivaldo finds out the truth.

Every single relationship pictured in the book is contradictory and we can analyze it from many points of views. The most contradictory character in the book is Rufus and I would like to start with his analysis. I will take Rufus as a main item and I will progressively disentangle the relationships he had and he influenced after his death. In my queer reading of the novel I will not analyse all the relationships mention above, but I have chosen only few of them. The important fact to mention is that the narrative situation in the novel is changing. Therefore, we are able to assume what the characters think and what is their point of view on situation.

The opening scene of *Another Country* shows Rufus's tragic life. He is pictured as a dirty, depressed, lost man without any friends except one, Vivaldo. "He had been thinking of going downtown and waking up Vivaldo – the only friend he had left in the city, or maybe in the world."¹¹⁷ Rufus is wandering around Times Square in New York, where the plot of the novel is mainly situated, and he is remembering his previous life. His memories show that he was successful musician known by people and now he is afraid that they would recognize him. Through his memories we are slowly getting to know, why he ended up in such situation. He starts how he met with Leona. He met her in the Harlem spot, where he was playing and immediately he points out that she was white, pale Southerner. We can immediately see that question of race is essential for Rufus, when he realized that Leona would be the only white person left in the pub: "this made him uneasy and his uneasiness made him angry" (AC, 15). He is concerned about the fact that Leona is white but on the other hand the fact that he is concerned makes him angry because he does not want to worry about it. This is actually the first hint of confusing duality which Rufus is carrying in his mind and his inability to differentiate the desires he has. This hint is more developed in the following parts of the novel.

Rufus and Vivaldo are introduced as best friends, but as Stefanie K. Dunning argues they are indeed connected by sex.¹¹⁸ In one scene Vivaldo recalls that "they had slept

¹¹⁶ See Lilly, *Gay Men's Literature in the Twentieth Century*, 149-150.

¹¹⁷ James Baldwin, *Another Country* (New York: The Dial Press, 1978), 9. Hereafter cited in text as AC.

¹¹⁸ See Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 55.

together, got drunk together, balled chicks together, cursed each other out, and loaned each other money” (AC, 132). But he later realizes that when they went out to *ball the chicks*, it has actually a very little to do with *the chicks*. He comes to the realization that their meetings with sexual subtext were not about women but about them when they shared sexual experiences including one woman. He thinks to himself: “but neither could it be said that they had been trying to attract each other – they would never, certainly, have dreamed of doing it that way” (AC, 134). So he realizes the sexual tension between him and Rufus but he is not ready to accept it, because thinking about Rufus in that way never occurred in his mind before. Rufus’s thoughts about this problem are apparent right after Rufus and Leona have had sex for the first time. Vivaldo comes to Rufus’s place and Rufus is immediately thinking about Vivaldo’s thoughts. He is observing how Vivaldo looks at Leona and what he thinks about her:

Perhaps Vivaldo was contemptuous of her because she was so plain – which meant that Vivaldo was contemptuous of *him*. Or perhaps he was flirting with her because she seemed so simple and available: the proof of her availability being her presence in Rufus’ house. (AC, 18, Baldwin’s italics)

The fact that Rufus is thinking about Vivaldo’s opinion about him shows us Rufus’s inability to differentiate between his sexual desires. He is wondering about Vivaldo’s opinion but on the other hand he is denying it.

Rufus shows also his lack of self-confidence, which is caused by the *problem* that he is black. Leona is in his house only because she is simple and available. By this, he questions his sexual value and compares it to Vivaldo’s ones. He wonders if Vivaldo considers him as a sufficient sexual partner comparing to himself. To put it in other words, he wonders if Vivaldo thinks that Leona is available because she is with a black man and that would make him as an effortless target, because he is black. These questions running through Rufus’s mind can be considered more as a subject of racial identity than subject of sexual identity. The fact is that Vivaldo and Rufus actually never have had a sexual relationship and Dunning sees it as a competition between two masculinities. The competition is about who will hold the power, who will be the bigger man.¹¹⁹ I see it as an inability to recognize their sexual desires and needs. After Rufus’s death, Vivaldo is thinking that perhaps if they

¹¹⁹ See Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 56.

looked closely into each other eyes they would be afraid what would they see. He knew that “somewhere in his heart the black boy hated the white boy because he was white. Somewhere in his heart Vivaldo hated and feared Rufus because he was black” (AC, 9). Vivaldo realizes this after Rufus’s death, when he is trying to figure it out his own relationship with Rufus’s sister Ida and also he is trying to get the meaning of Rufus’s suicide.

Despite the fact that Rufus considered Vivaldo as a best friend, he always knew that the question of race is between them. He always felt on the margin of society. When Leona, Rufus and Vivaldo went into streets for the first time, Rufus immediately realizes that he did not see the consequences which will occur because of his relationship with Leona. In his own words he underestimated “the world power to hate and destroy” (AC, 29). He is thinking about what Ida’s opinion about Leona would look like and he knew that she would hate her. She always expected something more from him and Leona is not enough for him, because she is white. Ida would ask him, if he is ashamed of being black that he picked a white girl. We can see in such a question that not even that they (Rufus and Ida) feel discriminated but they also discriminate whites. They question Leona’s value as a girlfriend just because she is white. So what Baldwin portrays in this scene is the fact that many times the biases were double-sided. That Rufus chose Leona as his girlfriend made him ashamed of his own race and made him to betray his own nation.

He also has the persecution complex that everybody is looking at them and analyzing them. Rufus, himself, gives too much attention to other people’s opinions. He refers to an Italian boy who is looking at them, Rufus calls him “cock sucker” (AC, 31) and by this expression he puts him down. As Lilly writes in his book, there is certain hierarchy which keeps something like psychic order. He refers to Nazi concentration camps, where Jewish prisoners were discriminating gays. Such a hierarchy shows that race was always above the sexuality. So when Rufus named the Italian boy a cock sucker he defended himself and it has more conviction than the boy’s look saying nigger. In other words, the homophobia puts down the racism.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ See Lilly, *Gay Men’s Literature in the Twentieth Century*, 161.

Rufus's inability to identify his real desires is the reason why I consider *Another Country* as a matter of queer reading. His identity is scattered and he is not able to put it together. Rufus is destroying everybody around him, because deep inside, he is destroyed. When Rufus starts to beat Leona, he is realizing that it is wrong but he cannot help himself. He is putting everything on her – his anger, frustration, unhappiness and also his feeling of injustice. Leona bears his beating and the question is if she is helpless, naive or simply masochistic. When she speaks to Vivaldo she points out that Rufus just cannot help himself and that he was not like this when they met; "he's really not like this at all. I know he's not. Something got all twisted up in his mind and he can't help it" (AC, 55).

Leona does not understand why Rufus is concerned about the color so much and she wants to convince him that it does not matter at all. She often told him that "there was nothing wrong in being colored" (AC, 49). In my opinion what bothers Rufus the most is the fact that Leona is able to accept his blackness but he is not. The other point is that she can do it despite the fact that she is from the South and Baldwin pictured the South as highly racist place. If we look at Rufus's and Eric's relationship, we can see similarity in that. Eric was from Alabama and Rufus despised him for that. Lilly writes that Alabama was the place where Rufus could be discriminated because of race, so he discriminated Eric because of his sexuality.¹²¹

Rufus was indeed homophobic. "Perhaps he had allowed Eric to make love to him in order to despise him more completely" (AC, 43). The question is how somebody so homophobic can even make love with another man. My interpretation of this is that Rufus was actually a bisexual, but he was ashamed for that, so he rather despised all gays and became homophobic. If he would admit that he is gay or attracted to men, he would become a black gay and that would get him on the margin of black community. He would let the black community down. It was a question of ethnicity. Cleaver writes in his essay "Notes on Native Son" that to be black and gay is to express the racial hatred for blackness through the death-wish. To put in other words, to be black means to be feminized and to be gay means to be castrated. Gays are not able to father a child so homosexuality, then, is threatening the one important thing – being a man.¹²² Cleaver assumes that in case of interracial relationship white man is always in the top position and that puts down the black

¹²¹ See Lilly, *Gay Men's Literature in the Twentieth Century*, 153.

men and the whole black nation. I do not agree with this statement because we cannot say who will or will not be in the top position in the relationship. To support my opinion, if we look in to the history, African Americans were those who were described as strong, powerful and animal men, so to assume that white men are above the black men would be incorrect.

Rufus's sister Ida was also not able to accept homosexuals. She said about Eric that he is "some poor-white faggot from Alabama" (AC, 272). She despised him for being gay and being from the South. The fact that Baldwin pictures black people as highly homophobic can be interpreted that a person is able to accept only one identity. By this I mean that Rufus is already black and to accept that he is also having same-sex desires is impossible for him. To be black and also homosexual would put him on the lowest position in the social ladder and he already has troubles with accepting his racial identity. Therefore, he suppressed his sexual identity in order to have at least some social status. As I mentioned above, I argue that the separation of two identities can lead to people's inability of acceptance of themselves as whole and this can lead to serious psychological issues. And that is what happened to Rufus, this inability of acceptance led to his suicide. If we come back to Cleaver, Rufus's suicide is according to his notion of death-wish, which Rufus shows by committing the suicide.¹²³ Killing Rufus at the beginning of the novel can be also seen as sacrifice, which Baldwin wanted to point out. Rufus could not see any other way of escaping from the racist society. Dunning writes that Baldwin shows to readers that there is no black utopia, no place where black people can escape or hide.¹²⁴

Rufus's suicide indeed influenced other relationships mentioned in the book. Rufus's sister Ida starts to spend her time more with Rufus's friends, mainly with Vivaldo. Ida's and Vivaldo's relationship is from the beginning very circumstantial. Again, Ida is holding herself back, because she is afraid of white men, who destroyed her life. Vivaldo is trying to prove her that he is different and that he does not mind the skin color. He complains to Eric that Ida never let him forget that she is colored, she never let him forget he is white, and he asks him if Rufus did that to him, if he tried to make him pay. Eric answers: "Ah. He didn't try. I paid" (AC, 287). The interesting fact is that the most concerned people

¹²² See Cleaver, "Notes on Native Son" in *Soul on Ice*, 55.

¹²³ See Cleaver, "Notes on Native Son" in *Soul on Ice*, 56.

¹²⁴ See Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 60.

about the skin color are the colored ones. Baldwin pictures white people as very liberal and despite the fact that they are able to accept the black people, black people are not able to accept this acceptance. The same case can be seen with homosexuals, in the past or even nowadays, they still feel discriminated even that people do not care about them anymore. These struggles have of course roots in the history, where the oppression was present. In my opinion homosexual, same as African Americans still have the feeling that they need to prove themselves. They have to believe in themselves and accept themselves in order to accept the acceptance from others.

Ida's and Vivaldo's love is affected by the history of American racism. Mainly Ida's previous experience influences the course of their relationship. The fact, that she starts to cheat on Vivaldo, can be seen as her protection against her pain. She expects from the beginning that Vivaldo will eventually hurt her, so she will hurt him first. The paradox is that at the end she realizes that the only one, who is hurt, is she.

The title of the book can be interpreted as an imaginary place, where all people can live in harmony. No matter of the skin color or sexual desire, people are always welcome in this place. Also all relationships pictured in the book are in some way revolutionary and unusual, but in the place called *Another Country* they can become common and tolerable. Laura Quinn in her essay "What's Going on Here?" points out that *Another Country* starts with heterosexual, interracial relationship marked with act of violence (Rufus and Leona) and ends with homosexual, monoracial and idyllic one (Eric and Yves). However, she argues, that there is nothing from which we can suggest that this particular relationship will work better than the others in the novel.¹²⁵ I agree with this statement because Baldwin taught us that nothing is perfect and everybody needs to get through a test. However, Yves is arriving to New York as optimistic, full of hopes guy. He moves from one country, which was marked by insecurity to another one, which is for him a promise of certainty. He believes that their relationship with Eric will work and that is what gives the readers hope. Dunning point out that Eric is described as the hopeful chance of another life¹²⁶, he is

¹²⁵ See Laura Quinn, "What's Going on Here?' Baldwin's *Another Country*," *Journal of Homosexuality* 34, no.3 (1998): 52.

¹²⁶ See Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 60.

standing there, waiting for Yves with his “spinning and flaming hair” (AC, 364), which can be explained as a link to Statue of Liberty¹²⁷ which gives the hope to all immigrants.

Nevertheless, as I mention above, Baldwin pictures love as some kind of trial, which need to be tested. We can assume then, that something wrong will happen to Yves and Eric. If not and their relationship will be fortunate, to put it in Baldwin’s words they would achieve “a maximum of relief with minimum of hostility” (AC, 134). That shows us, that despite the idyllic homogenous base of their relationship, we still need to count on differences. And as Dunning writes this ending “sets up considerations that rearrange the black/white, male/female paradigms of difference.”¹²⁸

¹²⁷ See Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 60.

¹²⁸ See Dunning, *Queer in Black And White*, 60.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to analyze Baldwin's early novels from the queer perspective. To be able to do that firstly we had to connect the term *queer* with racial issues, such as racial identity and racial discrimination. The reason is that James Baldwin is an author who deals in his works not only with problems connected to sexuality but also with problems of race. Therefore, the first part of this thesis is dedicated to clarification of the term *queer* and as follows the connection between queer and race is provided. This part concludes that the struggles people have with finding their true sexual identity are equal to the problems of finding the racial identity. People face the same problems of acceptance, because first of all they have to accept themselves in order to be accepted by others. These identities are interconnected and therefore this thesis puts them under one term.

The novels that were chosen for this analysis are *Giovanni's Room* (1956) and *Another Country* (1962). The reason is that we can see how Baldwin developed his author's skills in these two novels. The *Another Country* was published six years after the *Giovanni's Room* and Baldwin walked a long journey in these 6 years. *Giovanni's Room* has certain qualities. Baldwin described there the struggle of finding the identity and how this journey can change or even destroy person's life. Even though he showed certain courage, we can see that he did not develop all his ideas. The characters are not so detailed and the main plot can seem to be flat. He did picture a homosexual couple, but he did not make them exclusively homosexuals. They were still able to have sex with women, so the option of having a heterosexual relationship was still there. Baldwin also did not interconnect and develop all the motifs, such as Hella's feelings about Giovanni. However, he did develop all the relationships in his following novel *Another Country*. We can see there more developed characters and also the description of character from different angles. He also went further and created a central black character, who struggles both with racial and sexual issues.

There is something what these two novels have similar – the form of the love. Baldwin continuously refuses to allow readers believe in happy ending. "Nobody can stay in the Garden of Eden" (*GR*, 22), because there always have to be the barrier which will be in the way of reaching the peaceful relationship. Also the main characters in both novels are similar. Both, David and Rufus are leaving their partners and hurting them on the way. Rufus firstly has left Eric and then Leona, leaving them damaged with broken heart. David betrayed Joey, than Giovanni and then Hella. Both of them did it during their way for self-

knowledge. This can be seen as a very selfish. Perhaps, Baldwin wanted to point out that during the difficult journey there is no way you would not hurt the others. The price of finding yourself is the destruction of people you love. Lilly writes that *Giovanni's Room* is somehow “embarrassed by the full implications of its subject matter. It enters bravely, but then shrinks away. It is, most significantly, informed by a collaborator’s shame.”¹²⁹ However, it has developed the journey, which led to masterpiece.

From the historic point of view, in the 1960’s queer studies were not as developed as they are nowadays. The term *queer* was used as an offense and the current notion around queer was emerging. Nevertheless, James Baldwin uses elements which are subjects of queer studies nowadays, such as same-sex desire, scattered identity or interracial relationship. This thesis clarifies the ferment that happened before the queer studies came into being and shows that James Baldwin was in certain way a pathfinder for queer studies. Therefore, queer analysis is applicable on James Baldwin creation and this thesis uses this term to provide complex analysis of Baldwin’s novels without omitting any theme.

¹²⁹ See Lilly, *Gay Men’s Literature in the Twentieth Century*, 167.

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