

GRADUATE STUDENT ESSAY AWARD WINNER

“In the Name of Love”: Black Queer Feminism and the Sexual Politics of *Another Country*

Matty Hemming University of Pennsylvania

Abstract

This essay explores Black queer feminist readings of the sexual politics of James Baldwin’s *Another Country*. Recent work at the intersection of queer of color critique and Black feminism allows us to newly appreciate Baldwin’s prescient theorization of the workings of racialized and gendered power within the erotic. Previous interpretations of *Another Country* have focused on what is perceived as a liberal idealization of white gay male intimacy. I argue that this approach requires a selective reading of the novel that occludes its more complex portrayal of a web of racially fraught, power-stricken, and often violent sexual relationships. When we de-prioritize white gay male eroticism and pursue analyses of a broader range of erotic scenes, a different vision of Baldwin’s sexual imaginary emerges. I argue that far from idealizing, *Another Country* presents sex within a racist, homophobic, and sexist world to be a messy terrain of pleasure, pain, and political urgency. An unsettling vision, to be sure, but one that, if we as readers are to seek more equitable erotic imaginaries, must be reckoned with.

Keywords: Black queer feminism, James Baldwin, *Another Country*, the erotic, sexual politics

“They tear you limb from limb, in the name of love,” muses Ida Scott, the Black female character at the center of James Baldwin’s third novel, *Another Country* (1962).¹ Ida’s diagnosis of desire’s selfish and destructive potential illuminates this novel’s ambivalence about the capacity of romantic bonds to overcome political strife. Describing how her deceased brother was exploited by lovers under the guise of this grand emotion, Ida offers a theory of specifically romantic and erotic love that is borne out by the novel. Love, *Another Country* posits, is no panacea for the imbalances of power. Indeed, love can itself host the very antagonisms we trust it to resolve. At times shockingly violent and consistently tense with the navigation of gender- and race-based power dynamics, the novel details to visceral effect the psychic impact of anti-Black racism upon gay and straight interracial couples in Jim Crow era Manhattan. With its plot structured around a series of fraught erotic couplings, *Another Country* depicts a network of romantic and sexual relationships riven by the workings of power. But while the imbrication of racial and gendered hierarches in erotic “love” leaves no one untouched, the novel considers the heightened burden of emotional labor shouldered by its sole Black female character.

This description of Baldwin’s attention to the uneven effects of gendered and racial power on all romantic and erotic dynamics cuts against the grain of the novel’s critical reception. Indeed, this reassessment of the novel’s formal structure challenges readings that position *Another Country* as a liberal progress narrative. Written for a largely white readership and mostly narrated from the perspective of white middle-class characters, the novel seems to leave little room for imagining the interior lives of its Black characters, and its sole Black female character in particular. Regarding Baldwin as himself reproducing a liberal vision of political change at the level of the white individual, critics such as Matt Brim, William Cohen, and Robert Reid-Pharr have analyzed the link between *Another Country*’s lack of Black representation and its seeming fascination with white male homoeroticism. Centering their analyses around a single scene of erotic encounter between two characters, Eric Jones and Vivaldo Moore, these critics claim that the novel presents a disturbingly liberal vision of gay sex as a source of idealized transcendent self-revelation for its white male protagonists.

In this essay, I argue that *Another Country* does not confidently promote a vision of the erotic as the autonomous site of transcendent and politically utopian “love.” Departing from critiques of Baldwin’s rose-tinted representation of white gay male sexuality, I explore the possibilities for Black queer feminist and queer of color critique readings of sex in *Another Country*. In particular, I suggest that the work of Kadji Amin, Sharon Patricia Holland, and Jennifer Nash presents generative tools for reassessing Baldwin’s unsettling novel. These scholars offer useful critical frameworks for analyzing the political implications of *Another Country*’s web of erotic relationships. They also allow us to reconsider certain assumptions at work within the novel’s critical reception. As I will discuss below, queer critics have focused on Baldwin’s supposed idealization of white gay male eroticism, exposing a potentially disturbing element of the novel. But this focus itself occludes

the novel's depiction of other sexual arrangements, and risks reproducing the very overrepresentation of white male subjects in queer theorizing that such scholars rightly decry.

I pursue instead a more expansive reading of *Another Country* that accentuates its portrayal of a web of racially fraught, power-stricken, and often violent sexual relationships. In order to appreciate how *Another Country* theorizes sexual intimacy, we need to look beyond its depiction of supposedly redemptive white gay male sex. When we focus instead on the novel's web of interconnected erotic experiences and prioritize among these, we can perceive how its structure formally approximates this expansive racial imaginary, complicating a reading of *Another Country* as a white male *Bildungsroman*. In turning to the descriptive language of the little-addressed interracial relationship between Ida and Vivaldo, I suggest that the novel's web of messy relations culminates not in interracial harmony but in an image of the exhaustion wrought by the emotional labor expected of Black women in white spaces.

This reassessment of the sexual politics of *Another Country* enriches our understanding of Baldwin as a prescient queer theorist. Claiming Baldwin's novels as key texts of queer theory, and not just queer fiction, has been part of the long-standing project of challenging and surpassing the whiteness of queer theory's concepts, assumed subjects, and authorized genealogies.² Indeed, the twenty-first-century resurgence of scholarship appraising Baldwin's radical political voice affirms that his corpus contributes rich material to a Black and queer of color centered queer studies. Yet while much attention has been paid to the racial politics of *Giovanni's Room* (1956), and the Black male homoeroticism of *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953) and *Just Above My Head* (1979), less recognized is the extent to which *Another Country* offers foundational insights into the inseparability of racial and gendered hierarchies from erotic desire.³

Another Country would seem to offer little to Black queer studies and queer of color critique committed to Black queer feminist scholarship. As E. Patrick Johnson and Sharon Holland note, much recent work in these fields hails Black queer feminists' longstanding attention to Black female sexual subjectivities.⁴ Turning to Baldwin's novels as a potential site for such feminist theorizing might seem counterintuitive at best and counterproductive at worst. Baldwin's career-wide portrayal of Black women's eroticism would not seem to sit easily with the political sensibilities of Black queer feminist theory. And this is especially true of his contentious third novel. As the critiques of *Another Country's* depiction of white gay male sex would suggest, the novel seems to reproduce an understanding of the queer, and even the erotic, subject as white and male. However, this essay proposes that the novel's sexual politics are precisely best read through a Black queer feminist lens. Utilizing key thinkers in and adjacent to this field, I posit that what is theoretically significant about the novel is its imperfect and unsettling depiction of Black female eroticism within an anti-Black environment.

In the opening pages of *The Erotic Life of Racism* (2012), Holland argues that, overall, queer studies has not lived up to its intent to theorize the place of racism

in the erotic. Holland asks the deceptively simple questions: "Can work on 'desire' be antiracist work? Can antiracist work *think* 'desire'?"⁵ These questions are simple in the sense that the inextricability of pleasure, sexuality, and sexual choice from the workings of racial ideologies has long been articulated by Black feminist theorists. And yet they are deceptively simple because, for Holland, queer studies' investment in uncovering the politics of desire has, over the years, made desire "autonomous," a realm of individual experience and even a form of asocial escape.⁶ In dominant and conceptually white strains of queer theorizing, the erotic is imagined to transport one outside of the constraints of the racist ordinary. As I will outline, this is precisely what critics who have analyzed *Another Country* accuse Baldwin of doing in his depiction of white gay male sex. However, I argue that Holland asks us to read the novel differently. Her key claim, that "there is no raceless course of desire," animates my essay.⁷ Holland's observation that erotic relations cannot be free of racial power compels us to approach *Another Country* as a text that inhabits rather than escapes from the uncomfortable workings of racialized desire. Furthermore, Holland is particularly critical of a tendency in queer studies to unwittingly imagine that, in the US context, Black women's sexuality is singularly and overly determined by the nation's racist past.⁸ While arguing for an overdue engagement with the complexity of Black queer feminist discourses about Black female sexuality, Holland also underscores how *all* forms of sexuality are impacted by the history of slavery. I consider *Another Country* as a text that stages these dynamics. It firmly positions each erotic encounter within an anti-Black environment. But, in highlighting the white desire for Black female transparency, it poses productive challenges for the reader who seeks to affirm, without further burdening, Ida's sexual subjectivity.

Recent work in queer of color critique has taken up Holland's articulation of the place of racial and gendered power in all things erotic to reapproach key queer theoretical depictions of sexual practice. Kadji Amin builds upon Holland's thought to question why, how, and to what effect queer theory continues to idealize its objects. Also locating an uneasy idealization of queer sexual practice in certain "dominant strains" of queer theory, Amin calls upon the field to more carefully locate the place of damage, racialization, and power within the queer histories and cultural objects from which it draws energy.⁹ Amin's methodological approach informs my reading of *Another Country*. He seeks to resist the polarizing tendencies of queer reading practices, which, when faced with problematic queer objects, tend either to reject through critique, or to idealize to obfuscating effect. Amin offers a model for exploring Baldwin's imperfect vision of sexual politics: one that neither idealizes his work—which would involve ignoring the difficult-to-read depictions of violent sexual encounters—nor simply critiques it, as has been the tendency, for its failure to adhere to readers' political sensibilities. Rather, we might see the novel as anticipating Amin's reminder that queer desire, like all desire, is always shot through with racial power. Thinking with Holland, he writes, "racialized erotic life foils the queer theoretical desire to equate queer sexuality with liberation, political resistance, or a movement

beyond the social order all together.”¹⁰ This assertion invites a reframing of *Another Country* as a text which attempts to grapple with this reality, even while it has formerly been regarded as a partially escapist text that sets white queer sex on a liberatory pedestal.

The tendency to read the novel’s depiction of romantic relationships as an ideological commentary on twentieth-century American social politics is due in no small part to the fact that *Another Country* was published a year before *The Fire Next Time* (1963). In this widely read collection of two essays, Baldwin argues for the importance of self-reckoning, writing of the imbrication of white American racism with a fantasy of innocence. Speaking directly to his nephew James in “My Dungeon Shook,” Baldwin declares, “we, with love, shall force our brothers to see themselves as they are, to cease fleeing from reality and begin to change it,” a theory of love that seems to offer a secular alternative to the nonviolent concept of “agape” forwarded by Martin Luther King, Jr.¹¹ Reading these two books together, it is hard to imagine their simultaneous generation. One eloquently theorizes both a state of Black disenfranchisement and the potentiality of integrationist politics. The other fictionally depicts the messy internal violence of racism’s effects, portraying a world in which “love” is imagined not through the communal politics of the essays, but through the turbulent form of the eroticized couple. If *The Fire Next Time* holds out for the antiracist potential of interracial—and not necessarily romantic—relationships, then, as Dagmawi Woubshet has suggested, *Another Country* seems to virulently assert the difficulty of achieving such intimacy within a world of quotidian, psychic, and materially impactful racism.¹²

With its fraught relationships and unlikeable or unknowable characters, *Another Country* has inspired strong responses, to say the least. As one contemporaneous critic noted, it offers “something for everyone—in this instance, something offensive for everyone.”¹³ Famously, Black Panther leader Eldridge Cleaver described the novel as exemplifying the “Negro homosexual’s ... racial death-wish” to “have a baby by a white man.”¹⁴ Cleaver’s framing of characters’ sexual choices as irreducibly political might seem a reductive reading of this capacious literary text, but this cannot be chalked up to an overemphasis on the place of sex in the novel. Indeed, while much of the queer scholarship addressing the novel’s social vision repudiates Cleaver’s homophobic conclusions, this scholarship nonetheless shares his sense that gay male sex is central to the politics of *Another Country*. William A. Cohen critiques what he sees as Baldwin’s “liberal faith” in the power of the individual to overcome social inequality. Cohen detects this belief in Baldwin’s portrayal of gay male eroticism, and especially in Vivaldo’s achievement of “a heightened consciousness” which “enters him through the sexual act” with Eric.¹⁵ Central to Cohen’s argument is the claim that Baldwin’s liberal agenda of “love” is strategically funneled through the site of “sexuality” rather than “race.” Cohen writes that during the Black Power moment it would have seemed “disingenuous for Baldwin to claim that individual love could conquer racial discord,” whereas pre-Stonewall, “love” could more easily be imagined through the “more readily privatized terms of sexuality.”¹⁶ For Cohen then, “love”

finds expression as romantic love, a suturing of Baldwin's language of self-reflexivity with homoerotic sexual connection that runs throughout the scholarship. My own reading of *Another Country* through Black queer feminism addresses the limitation of Cohen's analytic categories. I argue that "sexuality," "race," and "love" in fact coalesce; that the novel problematizes a public/private divide; and that Baldwin engages in political theorizing through his depiction of *interracial and heterosexual* sex.

A more recent strain of queer criticism looks beyond the novel's investment in white gay male sexuality and attends more fully to *Another Country's* related limited depiction of Black interior life. Matt Brim frames this lack as a failure of Baldwin's "queer imagination," one limited by the historical constraints of homophobia and racism.¹⁷ What is absent for Brim from *Another Country* is, in particular, an ability to imagine Black queer male experience—let alone that of Black queer women—as anything other than a "specter," narratively important only to the extent that intimacy between Black and white men facilitates the "straight" Vivaldo's achievement of self-revelatory enlightenment through a sexual encounter with the white Eric.¹⁸ I agree with Brim that "Baldwin gives queer thinkers a lot of work to do."¹⁹ With its language of "love," "transformation," and "revelation" mired in the violence of structural racism and white liberalism, this difficult novel calls for further treatment of these uneasy entanglements. But while Brim's book is dedicated to occupying "the space of Baldwin's own absent critique," and imagines correcting the "underlying immobility" of social relations in the novel, my own approach is to attend to *how* Baldwin produces this sense of immobility through his descriptive language.²⁰ Indeed, I consider Baldwin's "incoherent" and "unsettling" depiction of relationships as a site generative for scholarship, not as something to be hypothetically resolved within the world of the novel, but as a difficulty which the novel genre can productively, though perhaps not optimistically, explore.²¹ Indeed, thinking with Amin and Holland suggests that to embrace Baldwin as a key figure of queer theory is to grapple with *all* of him, potential idealization of white gay sex *alongside* an impoverished depiction of Black female interiority, as a way of reckoning with the field's own internal tensions. A task of current queer theorizing might then be to attend to what Baldwin's fictional worlds can continue to teach, and to consider what resonances with current queer and feminist frameworks might emerge when we sit with, rather than imagine that we have moved past, what is "disturbing" about those worlds.

Before turning to the descriptive passages that will take up the majority of this analysis, it is worth asking, what kind of world are we in when reading *Another Country*? What are its structuring principles, its dominant affects? *Another Country* depicts a 1950s Manhattan not unlike Manhattan today: it is both laced with white liberal sentiment and shaped by structural racism. The novel's ambient ambivalence and anxiety appear in its iconic opening section, which establishes many of the tonal and thematic elements that will be developed throughout. *Another Country* commences with a long section narrated from the point of view

of Rufus Scott, a young Black musician whose turbulent relationship with the white southerner Leona is one of many factors leading to his suicide, an act that haunts the rest of the novel, permeating the relationships between his sister Ida, friend Vivaldo, and ex-lover Eric. Depicting the “disintegration of a black boy,” this section underlines in often piercing terms the extent to which race- and gender-based power structures Rufus’s everyday life, and, in particular, his erotic encounters.²²

Indeed, the first sex act of the novel is shaped both by a misogynist disregard for consent and, simultaneously, by Rufus’s experience of the psychic effects of racism, specifically interracial intimacy. During the consummation of Leona and Rufus’s relationship, sex is described as the “violence of the deep,” with Leona’s face “transfigured with agony,” and Rufus’s penis a “weapon,” his semen “venom,” “enough for a hundred black-white babies.”²³ In imagining Rufus through such racist terms, we might see Baldwin writing through what W. E. B. Du Bois called “double consciousness.” This awareness of the white gaze is later scaled up in Rufus’s perception of the response to his and Leona’s relationship in their home in the West Village. Walking alone with Leona, Rufus is painfully aware of their subjection to racist interpellation: “Villagers, both bound and free, looked them over as though where they stood were an auction block or a stud farm.”²⁴ We might imagine this encounter as a metonym for those taking place in the city at large, for this pre-Civil Rights Act novel presents a city infused with the social, if not the legal, effects of the Jim Crow era.

Within this hostile environment, the presence of queer desire is far from redemptive. In addition to the vitriol directed outward toward implicitly lesbian figures, and the depiction of coerced gay male sex work in a moment of desperation, I note an ambivalence to Rufus’s memories of Eric, the white southerner with whom he had a relationship.²⁵ Though looking back from a place of regret, wishing he had been kinder to Eric, Rufus’s recollection of his own experiences of desire and affection are textured with a simultaneous antagonism. This affective disposition registers the entanglement of imbalanced racial power with the mechanics of queer shame: “Rufus had despised him because he came from Alabama; perhaps he allowed Eric to make love to him in order to despise him more completely.”²⁶ The conflicting sensations are uneasily enmeshed: “affection, power and curiosity all knotted together in him—with a hidden unforeseen violence which frightened him a little.”²⁷ With desire and violence bound together and embodied as an “intolerable pressure in his chest,” the experience of male–male intimacy in the novel, much less of politically redemptive love, is ambivalent from the start.²⁸

Rufus’s section establishes the inextricability of racialization, the effects of structural racism, and erotic drive. Here, Baldwin anticipates Holland’s claim that there “is no raceless course of desire.”²⁹ This attention to structural racism also appears in the novel’s formal structure: We move next to the point of view of the white middle-class Cass Silenski, the novel’s events never again filtered through the perspective of a character of color. Despite both this prioritization of white

voices, and the haunting presence of Rufus throughout *Another Country*, it is Ida who appears to have been, for Baldwin, the figure at the center of the novel.³⁰ This, despite the fact that among the text's other main characters—Rufus, Vivaldo, Eric, and Cass—Ida is the only one without a section narrated from her point of view. As Trudier Harris wrote in 1985, and as a reading of more recent engagements with the novel would support, "[f]ew critics have considered Ida worthy of extensive commentary in her own right; they usually comment on her only passingly in relation to other characters' development and fulfillment."³¹ Considering what it would mean to take seriously Ida's importance to what critics have regarded as the novel's political messaging, Harris points to the difficulty of definitively accessing Ida's point of view, writing that "she is just as elusive narrationally as she is personally to the white protagonists in the novel."³² For Harris, Ida's relative opacity—we only see her through "several cloudy lenses"—speaks to the burden she bears, representing "Black woman" for the white characters.³³

Wary of further burdening Ida with the weight of representing Black female sexuality in a novel easily reduced to a depiction of social types, my choice to focus primarily on the sex scenes limits what can be said of Ida in a manner that a longer treatment would complicate. But to take seriously the project of analyzing both Baldwin's persistent and often disturbing descriptions of sexual acts, as well as their reception in queer theoretical readings of the novel, requires carefully addressing the depiction of Ida's sexual relationship with Vivaldo. Ida is first introduced to readers as Rufus's concerned younger sister, who comes looking for him at Cass and Richard's apartment. Soon becoming romantically involved with Rufus's friend Vivaldo, it is his narrative perspective through which we not only meet Ida, but which also shapes our perception of her eroticization. Vivaldo's attraction to Ida, Baldwin seems to warn readers, is inextricable from a history of heterosexist and racist conditions shaping romantic and economic bonds between Black women and white men in the mid-twentieth century. Previous to their relationship Vivaldo would travel to Harlem in the pursuit of his own virility. He believed that with Black sex workers he was "snatching his manhood from the lukewarm waters of mediocrity and testing it in the fire."³⁴ We see how Vivaldo's perception of Ida is shaped by internalized racist and heterosexist logics in his language of "violation," his fantasy of Ida as "virgin" awaiting a loss of innocence, and also by his desire for full transparency.³⁵

In Vivaldo's apartment after a night spent together, the two are presented as tentatively unsure of one another. Simultaneously recognizing Ida's right to privacy and wanting to "strike deeper into that incredible country in which ... she paced her secret round of secret days," the language of penetration is never far from Vivaldo's narrative vocabulary.³⁶ This is a problematic toward which the novel's title might call our attention. Is Ida's "incredible country" the "another" alluded to, a clue to her significance in the novel? Ida's own behavior in this scene is perceived by Vivaldo as similarly conflicted. She at once looks like a "virgin," and speaks in a "tone that mixed hostility with wonder."³⁷ After Ida asks him if he has

slept with other Black women, Vivaldo replies in the affirmative, stating silently to himself: "*I paid them.*"³⁸ Notably, this italicized internal second declaration is available to readers and not to Ida, a reminder of Vivaldo's narratorial control.

Vivaldo's desire for psychic penetration is visualized metaphorically as well as bodily. With Ida's "surrendering" sigh in the next sentence, we move into the erotic scene described below and framed tellingly with the words, "the struggle began":³⁹

She opened up before him, yet fell back before him, too, he felt that he was travelling up a savage, jungle river, looking for the source which remained hidden just beyond the black, dangerous, dripping foliage. Then, for a moment, they seemed to be breaking through. Her hands broke free, her thighs inexorably loosened, their bellies ground cruelly together, and a curious, low whistle forced itself up through her throat, past her bared teeth ... He had never been so patient, so determined, so cruel before.⁴⁰

It is hard not to read the eventual "breaking through" of orgasm that comes moments after this section as a penetration of the "incredible country" discussed above, one that is highly racialized with the language of the "jungle" and its "black, dangerous, dripping foliage." The rhythmic language of falling, opening, and grinding might not be unusual to descriptions of bodies in the throes of desire. But what is striking about Baldwin's language is the combination of affects in this quote and in the passage more broadly. In Baldwin's descriptive world, sex emerges as a fraught process: a "struggle," "dangerous," and seeming to require patience, determination, but also cruelty. When the exchange of fluids releases emotions, the language of love enters Vivaldo's consciousness: "all the love in him rushed down, rushed down, and poured itself into her."⁴¹ Fern Marja Eckman described the sex scenes in *Another Country* as "sentimentalized," its interracial couplings "glorified as the apotheosis of love."⁴² But what are we to do with this "love" couched in the section's broader language of power? Vivaldo's sense that Ida's body now "belonged" to him emphasizes that, though the scene might lead to a form of emotional transformation, this transformation is most immediately available through white male eyes.⁴³ Vivaldo's gender- and race-based power manifest in his narrative dominance: he controls what we can know of Ida's "incredible country."

In Robert Reid-Pharr's reading of *Another Country*, the queer of color critic suggests that Baldwin has "worked" to tell us "what white men, particularly white queer men, think when they fuck."⁴⁴ While describing Vivaldo's relationship with Eric, Reid-Pharr's words can also be applied to his experiences with Ida. Indeed, Reid-Pharr writes that Ida and Vivaldo are presented as being most concretely racialized during sex: "The two are most sealed in their whiteness and blackness ... at precisely the moment of their 'joining.'"⁴⁵ But if Vivaldo's point of view allows Baldwin to effectively theorize white masculinity, how do we attend to the politics of Ida's absent narration? Is Ida's presence wholly determined by Vivaldo's perspective, by the racial scripts that Reid-Pharr sees their sexual relationship as only exacerbating? Is it possible to locate a reading of Ida's own experience of desire in a passage so easily reducible to a racist sexual fantasy? Or should we take Vivaldo's

pursuit of Black women, and later his pleasurable submission to the white gay Eric, as a kind of sexual tourism from which nothing of critical value can be extracted? What are the frameworks available for reading this scene that do not simply involve wishing Baldwin had written a different novel, one more carefully attentive to the experiences of its female characters?

I might go some way toward addressing these questions by turning to the work of Black feminist thinker Jennifer Nash, who explores potential methods for reading Black women's pleasure within problematic texts. She provocatively challenges readers to see desire and agency in the most unlikely of places, namely, in racialized hardcore pornography. Nash's project is deeply indebted to Black feminist interpretations of the visual. As she puts it, given dominant representations of Black women as a site of historically ongoing injury, pornography is an extreme, but not singular, example of violent objectification. However, in a potentially counterintuitive departure from this framework, Nash proposes a re-engagement with the visual, asking, "What would it mean to read racialized pornography not for evidence of the wounds it inflicts on black women's flesh, but for moments of racialized excitement, for instances of surprising pleasures in racialization, and for hyperbolic performances of race that poke fun at the very project of race?"⁴⁶ Nash's analysis performs an "aggressive counter-reading" of pornographic iconography, namely, of the *performances* of Black female characters within racially stereotypical films.⁴⁷ To the viewer who cannot see the possibility of locating any politically viable sources of pleasure in these images, Nash introduces an alternative framework, one that "contains a utopian wish for black feminist theory" to make space for the presence of a Black female ecstasy that, though messy and contradictory, is irreducible to woundedness.⁴⁸ Importantly, Nash's is not a redemptive framework, one that would suppress or even decentralize the imbalances of power within the representations analyzed. Hers is a project that, like Amin's, problematizes critical approaches to troubling objects that entail either wholesale rejection or idealizing recuperation. Indeed, in imagining the erotic as a site of both potentiality and harm for racialized subjects, Nash's work resonates with that of both Amin and Holland, offering another framework for tracing "the intimate connections between sexual subjectivity and racial subjectivity" as they emerge in less than perfect but potentially generative cultural objects.⁴⁹

Of course, *Another Country* is not pornography, and neither is the novel committed to producing a pleasurable experience on the part of the reader. Indeed, Baldwin's intention seems to have been to produce the opposite effect, what Ernesto Javier Martínez calls an "unsettling" reading experience, in particular for readers resistant to having a Black female character's sexuality reduced to the role of facilitating a white man's sexual and emotional transformation. Baldwin is certainly not best known for his depictions of Black women's experiences of pleasure and pain. While the lack of complexity ascribed to Black female characters in this novel might be somewhat redressed in the characterization of Julia in *Just Above My Head* or the protagonist Tish in *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1973), we could conclude that the simple fact of a lack of narrative perspective overly curtails Ida's

presence. Nash's framework allows us to see this as an overdetermination of the power of both author and narrator. Indeed, the authority that free indirect discourse lends Vivaldo's perspective in this erotic passage can be tempered by focusing on the few moments in which Ida's own point of view seems to break through to the reader. One such instance is Ida's coital utterance "*Vivaldo, Vivaldo, Vivaldo,*" given in the italicized text that often denotes interior thought rather than speech, a textual anomaly that seems to trouble Vivaldo's hold on the descriptive language of sex.⁵⁰ Internally vocalized in the throes of desire, could we think of this utterance as an expression of interior ecstasy?

For Nash, Black female ecstasy is specifically articulated when female characters in pornographic films actively perform and therefore expose racial fictions. Here we only see such racial fictions figured through Vivaldo's perception of Ida. Her own response to this fetishization is opaque to readers, and perhaps strategically so. What is clear, though, is that Ida too experiences the encounter as one of heightened pleasure and self-transformation. Furthermore, in a rare departure from Vivaldo's point of view, Baldwin turns to Ida's perspective for a single sentence as they are about to have sex: "She touched him for the first time with wonder and terror, realizing that she did not know how to caress him."⁵¹ In spotlighting Ida's sense of "wonder and terror," as well as her unexpected realization, Baldwin seems to suggest that Vivaldo is as much a mystery to her as she is to him. He signals the complexity of her own interiority, one that has been present all along, even if it has been withheld from the reader. Finally, with the audible expressions of pleasure depicted through sound—Ida emits a "curious, low whistle" and says "It never happened to me before—not like this, never"—an intensity of erotic experience is established.⁵² Employing a diversity of forms such as interior thought, speech, and nonverbal utterance, Baldwin seems to undermine Vivaldo's narrative hold, asserting that Ida is not simply a victim of Vivaldo's fetishization, but actively desirous of his touch.

I read this compromised scene for Ida's pleasure by drawing on Black queer feminist understandings of pleasure's involvement in the social. Although she recognizes that "hierarchy often wears the guise of pleasure," Nash also cautions that the inevitable existence of hierarchy within all sexual dynamics can overdetermine our ability to read pleasure within the supposedly subordinated subject-position.⁵³ While we cannot speak to how Ida's desire is experienced in relation to the power dynamics explicitly presented through Vivaldo's racializing gaze, to focus solely on the language of his pleasure and not hers would be to run roughshod over these moments of Ida's self-expression. To misrecognize or pity Ida's desire risks demanding that pleasure only count as such when it is free of, or legibly subverting, the uncomfortable language of power.

Baldwin's short-lived insistence on giving voice to Ida's perspective is vital to the novel's broader political vision. Though Ida does not have her own section of free indirect discourse, this interjection of her point of view exposes the limitations of the white male narrative voice. Thinking with Nash's practice of reading agency into the performances of Black female actors within

spaces that are seemingly inhospitable to their self-expression reveals that Ida—no less than the men whose formal and narrative prominence nearly crowd her out—is a fully conscious actor within the world of the novel. As explored in my opening paragraph, her wariness of romantic love impedes a too-easy critical alignment of that term with Baldwin's so-called liberal vision. Baldwin may withhold from Ida a full section of narration, perhaps doing so to thwart his white characters', and readers', desire for Black interior transparency. Through moments of dialogue and narrative interruption, he necessitates her place in any analysis of the novel's sexual politics. Baldwin thereby also reminds us that we must listen to Ida without demanding that she speak with full transparency.

Before arriving at the scene of homoeroticism most associated with Baldwin's vision of sexual politics, then, we have encountered a depiction of the ostensibly private sphere of "sexuality" that complicates a reading of the novel's liberal and utopian sexual politics. If Vivaldo and Ida's erotic relationship has prompted few critical readings, the opposite can be said for the single and seemingly revelatory encounter between Vivaldo and Eric. And while the fraught intimacies between Rufus, Leona, Vivaldo, and Ida would suggest that romance is hardly a source of political optimism in the world of *Another Country*, readings of this scene of homoeroticism suggest otherwise. It is striking, indeed, that within a novel so cognizant of power's imbrication in eroticism, Eric and Vivaldo's night together is presented through a seemingly easeful and yet jarring use of the language of love and revelation. Their bond is forged during a late-night conversation in which Eric is open about both his attraction to men, and the "torment" that confusion about his sexuality has caused, while Vivaldo confesses the intimate and almost sexual encounter he had with Rufus the last time they saw each other.⁵⁴ After thus opening up to one another, the two men fall asleep, and upon waking, begin what Vivaldo experiences as the "monstrous endeavor" of having sex.⁵⁵ The four-page passage that this erotic scene takes up offers an at times bewildering array of descriptive terms, significantly hard to pin down to a single meaning. In certain moments Vivaldo experiences his own "lust" as "unaccustomedly arrogant and cruel and irresponsible."⁵⁶ This language of cruelty recalls his experience with Ida, and the repetition of terms compels us to ask whether this sadism is unusual for Vivaldo. In other moments, Vivaldo sees sex with Eric as somehow both wholly new and comfortingly familiar, "far removed from the necessary war one underwent with women."⁵⁷ The potential implications of this encounter for his own sexuality arise only to be rejected when Vivaldo wonders "What was it like to be a man, condemned to men? He could not imagine it and he felt a quick revulsion, quickly banished for it threatened his ease."⁵⁸ And significantly, while being penetrated by Eric, Vivaldo thinks of Rufus. Baldwin records Vivaldo's longing in italics that strikingly recall Ida's "*Vivaldo, Vivaldo, Vivaldo*": "*Rufus. Rufus. Had it been like this for him? ... Had he murmured at last, in a strange voice, as he now heard himself murmur. Oh Eric. Eric.*"⁵⁹ This moment recalls Ida's utterances. The visual and syntactic echo stretches the limits not only of Vivaldo's perspective but

also, more broadly, of any critical practice that assumes that Baldwin uniformly privileges the white male voice.

The scene ends with the two declaring their mutual love, a feeling that for Vivaldo constitutes a “great revelation,” making him feel “fantastically protected, liberated.”⁶⁰ It is this language of sexual transcendence, and specifically its placement in the plot of the novel, coming as it does before much of the building tension reaches its climax, that has elicited so many critiques. Arguing that Baldwin constructs a fantasy of “homosexual sacrifice disguised as revolutionary love,” Brim goes so far as to call Baldwin a “gay trader,” since, for the “straight” Vivaldo, the “loving transformation” offered by sex with Eric “prepares him to confront what is represented as the related yet more impenetrable border of interracial desire.”⁶¹ What is most disturbing about this narrative trope is the way in which white homoerotic potentiality seems to rely on the spectral role of Black gay male friends and lovers, exemplified by the haunting absences of Rufus and Eric’s childhood friend, LeRoy.⁶²

The prioritization of white and usually male narratives within the ensemble structure of *Another Country* clearly limits the extent to which this novel can be said to share the investment of Baldwin’s wider corpus in depicting Black queer interiority and historical experience. However, the casual claim that Rufus’s and LeRoy’s haunting absences facilitate a healing experience for Eric and Vivaldo, which in turn solves the conflicts of the heterosexual interracial couple, heuristically centers white, male eroticism at the cost of a more sustained analysis of the novel’s broader range of erotic encounters. This is what reading the novel as an *idealizing* text entails. But what might regarding *Another Country* as a novel that precisely challenges the idealization of gay male sex allow us to see about its plot structure and narratorial choices? I have been suggesting that we can begin to answer this question by centering Ida’s racist sexualization by Vivaldo, as well as the fraught textual glimmers of her own pleasure. Once we see the narrative of *Another Country* as a recursive web with Ida at its center, rather than a progressive line culminating in white male redemption, we can begin to reassess its vision of sexual politics, and, in particular, its resonances with Black queer feminism.

We might therefore reconsider Baldwin’s depiction of the interconnectedness of differently power-riven couplings as critically descriptive rather than only complicit. For just as Vivaldo’s racialization of Ida during sex resonates with his previous encounters with Black female sex workers, so do previous encounters with men inform the ways in which we read the experience of male–male desire for both Vivaldo and Eric. Two events precede Vivaldo’s experience of “revelation” with Eric: his youthful participation in a violent group attack on a gay man, and his highly racialized homoerotic display of masculine virility with a fellow soldier while in service. The memory of such incidents textures the reader’s understanding of the present-day scene. For Eric, who more recognizably inhabits a gay identity position, sexual awakening comes at a young age, when, in a much-analyzed scene, an attraction to his friend LeRoy develops into a formative sexual encounter with life-changing effects. Throughout *Another Country*, Baldwin explicitly

and implicitly suggests that sexual acts in the present are sutured to those of the past. This entanglement of past and present foregrounds the embeddedness of memory, shame, and the fungibility of Black bodies for his white characters. Notably, Black queer male figures are written out of the text almost as soon as they appear, with Rufus's and LeRoy's haunting absences implying an agency limited to their effect upon white memory. But rather than simply critiquing this as a failure of Baldwin's queer imagination, we can read *Another Country* as deliberately illuminating on a formal level—through its own over-representation of white male interiority—a political and social landscape in which some lives are consistently prioritized over others. This is a risky claim to make, though. In suggesting that what is disturbing may also be what is most revealing of historical experience, I might skirt too close to a recuperation of aspects of the text that are deeply troubling and hard to read.

An alternative approach to reading *Another Country* as a meditation on, rather than a condoning of, the imbrication of racism, power, and eroticism might reorient focus toward those characters whose presence has been read as facilitating white male self-knowledge. This would involve reading LeRoy as one figure in a constellation made up of Eric, Ida, Vivaldo, Rufus, Leone, and many others: a character in his own right, and not simply part of a causal chain. What might this reframing reveal about the supposed queer optimism of the encounter between LeRoy and Eric? As with Vivaldo's perception of Ida, the narratorial privilege held by Eric in this moment of remembering means that LeRoy's own experience of the act is, at least in terms of his lack of access to free indirect discourse, markedly absent. Perhaps one way to read against this troubling effect of the novel is to give LeRoy's words greater significance than their proportional word count might imply, therefore giving less airtime to the causal narrative within which his relationship with Eric has been read. For while Baldwin does not record LeRoy's perspective, he does incorporate his verbal reminders of the more urgent dangers of exposure for himself, compared to the risks for Eric, whose “Daddy *owns* half the folks in this town.”⁶³ Here, the patronymic accentuates the specifically gendered as well as racialized nature of the patriarchal context in which LeRoy, Rufus, and Ida all interact with white men. When LeRoy, looking “exasperated,” urges Eric with the words “you got to stop coming to see me,” Baldwin asserts the uneasy place of racial power within eroticism.⁶⁴ Even if they go unmarked by the novel's white characters, such moments are powerful reminders that race and gender are *central to*, and not lacking from, *Another Country's* vision of queer desire.

Finally, in addition to focusing on LeRoy's own words, further attention to the language of this scene invites a rethinking of the extent to which the sexual act actually can be read as transformative. On the one hand, Eric's memory of LeRoy's touch does seem to suggest a transporting experience: “He was frightened and in pain and the boy who held him so relentlessly was suddenly a stranger; and yet this stranger worked in Eric an eternal, a healing transformation.”⁶⁵ And yet, moments later, when the language of revelation enters Eric's description of the

experience, the future implications of this word are left strikingly uncertain: "For the meaning of revelation is that what is revealed is true and must be borne," Eric thinks to himself from the vantage point of adult hindsight, but he wonders without an answer, "how to bear it?"⁶⁶ With this open question, one that might describe the self-questioning experienced by the novel's characters more broadly, Baldwin seems to imagine that understanding one's position within a regime of sexuality-based knowledge does not necessarily lead to a more livable, or more ethical, life.⁶⁷ What emerges from this scene, then, is a far from an idealizing vision of homoeroticism. Rather, the risks of queerness are unevenly dealt, and the attainment of self-awareness is constrained within a landscape of shame and uncertainty.

Foregrounding a web of sexual bonds between Leone, Rufus, Ida, Vivaldo, Eric, and LeRoy, I do not seek to downplay the striking difference in tone between the seeming ease of white gay male sex and the fraught language of every other erotic dynamic in *Another Country*. This difference is exemplified in the passages contrasting depictions of that most Baldwinian of terms, innocence. While Vivaldo's intimacy with Eric brings him "back to his innocence," suggesting an escape from the realities of the present, Ida is later described as "stroking the innocence out of him" in their scene of vulnerable reconciliation.⁶⁸ It is in this moment, arguably the climax of the novel, that Brim reads Vivaldo and Ida's relationship finally beginning the "long and painful endeavor" of "racial intersubjectivity."⁶⁹ For Brim, importantly, it is the liberatory skin-shedding experience of intimacy with Eric that makes possible for Vivaldo the self-reflexive "love" imagined in *The Fire Next Time*, a love for which in its final moments the novel seems to hold out hope.

A linear narrative of progression, however, is not the only framework through which to read this scene. Instead, we can shift the focus away from the couple's potential futurity, looking backward instead to the unsettling complexity of sexual connection established by Rufus's point of view in the novel's first pages, and developed in Ida's and LeRoy's encounters with white men. By decentering the relationship between Eric and Vivaldo and looking to a broader range of sexual encounters presented through often racist and sexist descriptive language, I challenge a uniformly optimistic reading of the novel's conclusion. Moments before her allegorical act of stroking, Ida is the object of Vivaldo's suspicion and contempt. Learning of her affair with television producer Steve Ellis mere sentences before he will re-declare his love for her, Vivaldo thinks, "She too, was a whore; how bitterly he had been betrayed."⁷⁰ This charge raises the question, how much has Vivaldo really learnt? With mutual anger meeting tenderness, the pair cling together: "There was nothing erotic about it; they were like two weary children."⁷¹ In a scene in which exhaustion, rather than hope, seems to be the dominant affect, Ida and Vivaldo's "love" is hardly transformed by, as Brim would have it, the "love of a good gay man."⁷² It is rather a messy, unresolved culmination of the "straight" woman's vulnerable outpouring of her interior "secret round of secret days" that Vivaldo has longed for.⁷³ If Vivaldo has indeed reached a state of political self-awareness, ready for the shedding of innocence

that Baldwin considers to be central to white America's ability truly to be free of racism and the fiction of white supremacy, then it is not Eric, but Ida, who facilitates his growth. By centering Ida, we are compelled to see that it is—all too predictably—the Black woman whose emotional labor raises the political consciousness of the white man.

As I have sought to demonstrate, reading *Another Country* alongside queer of color critique and Black queer feminist theorizing allows for the emergence of new interpretations of a text whose troubling vision of sexual politics would seem to be at odds with celebrations of Baldwin's queer theoretical prescience. In its uneasy depiction of the psychic hold of oppressive regimes upon a range of characters, *Another Country* demands that theorists problematize the subject-positions through which sexual knowledge is produced. As my focus on the connections between differently power-inflected erotic scenes suggests, the politics of Baldwin's depiction of white gay male sex is necessarily informed not only by the under-narrated depiction of Black gay figures, but also by that of heterosexual interracial sex. Far from idealizing gay male sex, Baldwin situates even intimacy between two white men as actively imbricated within a racist, homophobic, and sexist world. In staging an unlikely dialogue between Nash's Black feminist theories of pleasure and Baldwin's depiction of Black female eroticization *and* erotic interiority, I have argued that a fuller understanding of the novel's sexual imaginary can be achieved when we listen for Ida's compromised but meaningful presence. In fact, the novel's theory of sexual politics responds to Ida's observation of desire's destructive potential: it can leave you torn, at least psychically, "limb from limb." Rather than a balm to resolve conflict, acting "in the name of love" leads Baldwin's characters into a messy terrain of pleasure, pain, and political urgency. An unsettling vision, to be sure, but one that, if we as readers are to seek more equitable erotic imaginaries, must be reckoned with.

A potential fallout of this essay is that its engagement with *Another Country* might run the risk of an overly optimistic recuperation of the text, even if it does so by attending to Baldwin's pessimism. Could my choice to center the novel's most violent moments lead to a counterintuitive valuing of those elements above others? I hope, instead, that in framing *Another Country* as unflinchingly and imperfectly exploring the lived psychic conditions of race, gender, and sexuality in the American mid-century, we might sit with the lessons the novel offers to sexuality studies in the present. As such, *Another Country* might be considered a reminder from the past that attending to the political potentialities of non-normative sexuality must go hand in hand with a recognition of the place of racial power in even the queerest—or indeed straightest—of relations.

Acknowledgment

I would like to thank Melissa Sanchez and Dagmawi Woubshet for their useful and generous feedback on various drafts of this essay.

Notes

- 1 James Baldwin, *Another Country* (1962) (New York, Vintage, 1993), p. 265.
- 2 For some key critiques of the whiteness of queer theory, see José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York, New York University Press, 2009); Roderick Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis, MN, University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Amber Jamilla Musser, *Sensual Excess: Queer Femininity and Brown Jouissance* (New York, New York University Press, 2018). For the positioning of Baldwin as a queer theorist, see Michael Hames-García, “Can Queer Theory Be Critical Theory?,” in Jeffrey Paris and William S. Wilkerson (eds.), *New Critical Theory: Essays on Liberation* (Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), p. 180.
- 3 See Margo Crawford, “The Reclamation of the Homoerotic as Spiritual in *Go Tell It on the Mountain*,” in Carol E. Henderson (ed.) *James Baldwin’s Go Tell It on the Mountain: Historical and Critical Essays* (New York, Lang, 2006), pp. 75–86; Mae G. Henderson, “James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room*: Expatriation, ‘Racial Drag,’ and Homosexual Panic,” in Mae G. Henderson and E. Patrick Johnson (eds.), *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 298–322; Justin A. Joyce and Dwight A. McBride, “James Baldwin and Sexuality: *Lieux de Mémoire* and a Usable Past,” in Douglas Field (ed.), *A Historical Guide to James Baldwin* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 111–39; Dwight A. McBride, “Straight Black Studies: On African American Studies, James Baldwin, and Black Queer Studies,” in Henderson and Johnson (eds.), *Black Queer Studies*, pp. 68–89.
- 4 Sharon Holland argues that while queer of color critique and Black queer studies gesture toward the foundational insights of Black feminism, and often figure Black women at the “vanguard of sexual liberation,” this positioning is rarely reflected in the citational engagement with the diversity of Black feminist thought. She asks, “Now that S.H.E is in the center, will the landscape of queer theorizing shift to acknowledge her presence?” See Sharon Holland, *The Erotic Life of Racism* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2012), p. 77. Four years later, E. Patrick Johnson describes the increase in Black queer feminist scholarship considering Black women’s sexuality, narrated as a response to Hortense Spillers’ call for the theorization of Black women’s symbolic position as a “different social subject.” See E. Patrick Johnson, “Introduction,” in E. Patrick Johnson (ed.), *No Tea No Shade: New Writings in Black Queer Studies* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2016), pp. 11–14; Hortense Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” *Diacritics*, 17:1 (1987), p. 80.
- 5 Holland, *Erotic Life*, p. 3.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 47.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 43.
- 8 Holland writes that all scholars of sexuality have “an *intellectual* responsibility to take seriously how the transatlantic trade altered the very shape of sexuality in the Americas for *everyone*.” *Ibid.*, p. 56.
- 9 Kadji Amin, *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2017), p. 79.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 106.
- 11 James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (1963), in *Collected Essays*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York, Library of America, 1998), p. 294. Outlining his theory of nonviolence, King writes, “When we speak of loving those who oppose us, we refer neither to *eros* nor

- philia*; we speak of a love which is expressed in the Greek word *agape*. *Agape* means understanding, redeeming good will for all men." See Martin Luther King, Jr., "An Experiment in Love," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington (San Francisco, Harper San Francisco, 1986), p. 19.
- 12 Woubshet writes that in *The Fire Next Time*, "Baldwin conjured up interracial love as a national ideal," and suggests that in *Another Country*, the author fictionalizes the difficulties entailed for those in interracial *romantic* partnerships in particular. See Dagmawi Woubshet, "How James Baldwin's Writings About Love Evolved," *The Atlantic*, 9 January 2019, www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2019/01/james-baldwin-idea-of-love-fire-next-time-if-beale-street-could-talk/579829/ (accessed 1 October 2020).
 - 13 Qtd. in Matt Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination* (Ann Arbor, MI, University of Michigan Press, 2014), p. 118.
 - 14 Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1968), p. 102. The problem with this citation is that its popularity within scholarship on the novel (including my own) risks seeming to assume a blanket homophobia within the Black Power movement, an issue addressed by Matt Brim, who calls attention to Huey P. Newton's essay "The Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements" (1970) which "argues for the necessary linkages among those fighting race, gender, and sexual oppression." I choose to cite Cleaver, however, to call attention to the central place ascribed to Baldwin's depiction of sexual desire within readings of the novel across divergent sites of political investment. See Brim, *Queer Imagination*, p. 187.
 - 15 William A. Cohen, "Liberalism, Libido, Liberation: Baldwin's *Another Country*," in Patricia Juliana Smith (ed.), *The Queer Sixties* (Abingdon, Routledge, 1999), p. 212.
 - 16 *Ibid.*, p. 216.
 - 17 Brim, *Queer Imagination*, p. 97.
 - 18 *Ibid.*, pp. 94, 98.
 - 19 *Ibid.*, p. 15
 - 20 *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 122.
 - 21 Ernesto Javier Martínez, *On Making Sense: Queer Race Narratives of Intelligibility* (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2013), p. 45.
 - 22 Baldwin once described *Another Country* as a depiction of the "disintegration of a black boy" that, like much of his own experience, had "never been seen in the English language before." See Magdalena J. Zaborowska, *James Baldwin's Turkish Decade: Erotics of Exile* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2009), p. 11.
 - 23 Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 22.
 - 24 *Ibid.*, p. 29.
 - 25 I read as implicitly lesbian the "shapeless filthy women" in the bar to which Jane takes Vivaldo and Rufus. I note, also, Rufus's description of Jane, who "dresses like a goddam bull dagger," and who herself directs a racist remark toward Rufus. Later, on the brink of starvation, Rufus accepts a meal from an older white man who expects sexual favors in return, an exchange-based interaction which I read as one of many contributing to the novel's multifaceted portrayal of sexual dynamics. *Ibid.*, pp. 31–2, 41–5.
 - 26 *Ibid.*, p. 45.
 - 27 *Ibid.*, p. 46.
 - 28 *Ibid.*
 - 29 Holland, *Erotic Life*, p. 2.

- 30 Trudier Harris, *Black Women in the Fiction of James Baldwin* (Knoxville, TN, University of Tennessee Press, 1985), p. 100.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 99.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 108.
- 33 *Ibid.*, pp. 108, 206.
- 34 Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 132.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 175.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 173.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 175.
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 176.
- 40 *Ibid.*, p. 177.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 178.
- 42 Qtd., in Harris, *Black Women*, p. 127.
- 43 Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 179.
- 44 Robert F. Reid-Pharr, *Black Gay Man: Essays* (New York, New York University Press, 2001), p. 91.
- 45 *Ibid.*, p. 94.
- 46 Jennifer C. Nash, *The Black Body in Ecstasy: Reading Race, Reading Pornography* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2014), p. 1.
- 47 *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- 48 *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- 49 *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- 50 Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 178.
- 51 *Ibid.*, p. 176.
- 52 *Ibid.*, pp. 177–8.
- 53 Nash, *The Black Body in Ecstasy*, p. 14.
- 54 Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 336.
- 55 *Ibid.*, p. 383.
- 56 *Ibid.*, p. 384.
- 57 *Ibid.*, p. 389.
- 58 *Ibid.*, p. 385.
- 59 *Ibid.*, p. 386.
- 60 *Ibid.*, p. 387.
- 61 Brim, *Queer Imagination*, pp. 97, 93.
- 62 *Ibid.*, pp. 97, 121.
- 63 Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 206.
- 64 *Ibid.*, p. 205.
- 65 *Ibid.*, p. 206.
- 66 *Ibid.*
- 67 For further discussion of this moment, see Brim, *Queer Imagination*, pp. 107–8. See also Kevin Ohi, “I’m Not the Boy You Want: Sexuality, ‘Race,’ and Thwarted Revelation in James Baldwin’s *Another Country*,” *African American Review*, 33:2 (1999), pp. 273–6.
- 68 Baldwin, *Another Country*, pp. 387, 342.
- 69 Brim, *Queer Imagination*, p. 103.
- 70 Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 430.
- 71 *Ibid.*, p. 431.

- 72 Brim, *Queer Imagination*, p. 94.
 73 Baldwin, *Another Country*, p. 173.

Works Cited

- Amin, Kadji, *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2017).
- Baldwin, James, *Another Country* (1962) (New York, Vintage, 1993).
- _____. *The Fire Next Time* (1963), in *Collected Essays*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York, Library of America, 1998), pp. 291–348.
- Brim, Matt, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination* (Ann Arbor, MI, University of Michigan Press, 2014).
- Cleaver, Eldridge, *Soul on Ice* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1968).
- Cohen, William A., "Liberalism, Libido, Liberation: Baldwin's *Another Country*," in Patricia Juliana Smith (ed.), *The Queer Sixties* (Abingdon, Routledge, 1999), pp. 201–22.
- Crawford, Margo, "The Reclamation of the Homoerotic as Spiritual in *Go Tell It on the Mountain*," in Carol E. Henderson (ed.), *James Baldwin's Go Tell It on the Mountain: Historical and Critical Essays* (New York, Lang, 2006), pp. 75–86.
- Ferguson, Roderick, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis, MN, University of Minnesota Press, 2004).
- Hames-García, Michael, "Can Queer Theory Be Critical Theory?," in Jeffrey Paris and William S. Wilkerson (eds.), *New Critical Theory: Essays on Liberation* (Lanham, MD, Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), pp. 171–87.
- Harris, Trudier, *Black Women in the Fiction of James Baldwin* (Knoxville, TN, University of Tennessee Press, 1985).
- Henderson, Mae G., "James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*: Expatriation, 'Racial Drag,' and Homosexual Panic," in Mae G. Henderson and E. Patrick Johnson (eds.), *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 298–322.
- Holland, Sharon Patricia, *The Erotic Life of Racism* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2012).
- Johnson, E. Patrick, "Introduction," in E. Patrick Johnson (ed.), *No Tea No Shade: New Writings in Black Queer Studies* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2016), pp. 1–26.
- Joyce, Justin A., and Dwight A. McBride, "James Baldwin and Sexuality: *Lieux de Mémoire* and a Usable Past," in Douglas Field (ed.), *A Historical Guide to James Baldwin* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 111–39.
- King, Jr., Martin Luther, "An Experiment in Love," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James Melvin Washington (San Francisco, Harper San Francisco, 1986) pp. 16–20.
- Martínez, Ernesto Javier, *On Making Sense: Queer Race Narratives of Intelligibility* (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2013).
- McBride, Dwight A, "Straight Black Studies: On African American Studies, James Baldwin, and Black Queer Studies," in Mae G. Henderson and E. Patrick Johnson (eds.), *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 68–89.
- Muñoz, José Esteban, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York, New York University Press, 2009).

- Musser, Amber Jamilla, *Sensual Excess: Queer Femininity and Brown Jouissance* (New York, New York University Press, 2018).
- Nash, Jennifer C., *The Black Body in Ecstasy: Reading Race, Reading Pornography*. (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2014).
- Ohi, Kevin, "I'm Not the Boy You Want: Sexuality, 'Race,' and Thwarted Revelation in James Baldwin's *Another Country*," *African American Review*, 33:2 (1999), pp. 261–81.
- Perry, Imani, *Vexy Thing: On Gender and Liberation* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2018).
- Reid-Pharr, Robert F., *Black Gay Man: Essays* (New York, New York University Press, 2001).
- Spillers, Hortense, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics*, 17:1 (1987), pp. 64–81.
- Woubshet, Dagmawi, "How James Baldwin's Writings About Love Evolved," *The Atlantic*, 9 January 2019, www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2019/01/james-baldwin-idea-of-love-fire-next-time-if-beale-street-could-talk/579829/ (accessed 1 October 2020).
- Zaborowska, Magdalena J., *James Baldwin's Turkish Decade: Erotics of Exile* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2009).

Contributor's Biography

Matty Hemming is a PhD Student in the Department of English at the University of Pennsylvania. She holds a BA in English Literature from Goldsmiths College, University of London, and an MA in Cultural Analysis from the University of Amsterdam. Her research traces connections between twentieth-century US counternarratives to the domestic novel, Black and woman of color feminisms, and the narration of queer and feminist genealogies.