

Racism And Homosexuality: A Scrutiny Of James Baldwin's Select Novels**Author 1:**

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Abstract

James Baldwin was a novelist and social critic from the United States of America. He was an illegitimate black child. With his works, however, he became a well-known writer in bisexual and LGBT African American literature. *Go Tell It on the Mountain, Another Country, Giovanni's Room, Tell Me How Long the Train Been Gone, Just Above My Head, and If Beale Street Could Talk* are among Baldwin's best-known works. This research article aims to demonstrate how homosexuality is shown in James Baldwin's works. In the first novel, Baldwin carefully investigated and camouflaged the homosexual issue through John, who was searching for his identity, whereas homosexuality was clearly presented in *Giovanni's Room*. Because of the success of *Giovanni's Room* as a gay and white novel, Baldwin decided to make homosexuality the central focus of his succeeding works. As a result, Baldwin paved the way for the next generation of homosexual authors to research and discusses LGBT themes in his writings.

Keywords: African American, Black, White, Homosexuality, LGBT, and Identity

Baldwin had some trouble as a child. He had no idea who his biological father was. His relationship with his stepfather was complicated and hostile. His father behaved strictly and violently. He ruined his son's sense of self-worth. Baldwin was a product of the Harlem Renaissance. Literature plays an important role in gays' lives. It advocated and encouraged procedures that improve literary quality. The unusual relationship between gays in the community was encouraged in literature. Because he experienced oppression and injustice in his life, Baldwin saw writing and art as a weapon for social change. In his neighbourhood, he felt alone and afraid.

Because of his odd sex and colour, Baldwin was subjected to prejudice and had a poor social attitude. Racism is one of his community's social negatives. Racism, according to Pinderhughes, is "the total social system in which policies and institutions interlock and reinforce one another in their capacity to deprive and cripple many racial minorities while offering preparation, support, and opportunity to white people." (36) Religious beliefs have an impact on gays' lives as well. The majority of African Americans who are LGBT have religious backgrounds. It resulted in a tremendous amount of suffering and perplexity. The sexuality of African Americans was fostered and enlarged by the black church. According to Ron Simmons, who traced the rise of homophobia in African American literature to religious sets of ideas from the traditional black church. "Homophobia is not much fear of homosexuals, but a fear that homosexuality will become pervasive in the community."(128) As a result, the vast majority of gay people kept their queer relationships hidden.

One of Baldwin's major themes in his novels was homosexuality. It was openly displayed in his works. Baldwin defined homophobia and racism in his novels as a result of heterosexual and white fear. He embraced homosexuality as a weapon for social transformation while criticizing his contemporaries' sexism. In America, Baldwin fought the labels of gay and homosexual. His emancipation mission propelled him to the forefront of discussions and analyses about the meaning of American citizenship and democracy.

Baldwin's first novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* depicts John Grimes' accomplishments and life. It accepts John's African American cultural heritage as well as his homosexuality. His sexual desire has grown. John is lonely and is drawn to Elisha, his teacher:

Yet it is also significant that he turns to Elisha after he finds himself unable to establish a single genuine relationship between himself and the other characters in the novels. Only Elisha can function as a fathersurrogate for John because Elisha, unlike Gabriel, is attuned to the young boy's needs as John searches for his own identity. (*GTM* 69)

Baldwin's protagonist, on the other hand, is depicted as adoring Elisha, "John admiring the timbre of Elisha's voice, much deeper and manlier than his own, admiring the leanness and grace, the strength, the darkness of Elisha in his Sunday suit." (*GTM* 94) Also, Elisha's dance in a state of deep religious reverence piques John's interest, "Muscles leaping and swelling in his long, dark neck, and his thighs were more terrible against the cloth of his suit." (*GTM* 13) John trembles as he touches Elisha's arm. John tries to communicate with him but finds it difficult to say anything. Elisha gives John a "Holy Kiss." It's like a "forever

ineffaceable seal." Baldwin attempts to bring insight into adolescent gay sexuality in *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. It also incorporates the character's motivation into America's sexual, social, and racial context.

Giovanni's Room (1956) depicts David and Giovanni's homosexual relationship. Giovanni is a gorgeous Italian boy. While his fiancée, Hella, is in Spain, David explores his sexuality. David and Giovanni became friends after only one day. Their bond grows stronger after they meet in a homosexual bar. They spent months together. David is caught in a bind. He is unable to sever the psychological tie that binds him, and he is unable to leave Giovanni alone. He is in an unpleasant and unfavourable circumstance. According to John Shawcross, David's predicament is:

One's bondage to a sexual being in a tarn temper one's sensitivity to love and hate, one's reasoning power and philosophic needs. The crisis in *Giovanni's room* is the opposition between human bondage resulting from sexual make-up and the bondage of the marketplace. There is also the bondage of care: those inner aspects of one's self, which first must be recognized and acknowledged and somehow either suppressed or accommodated. (256)

According to Shawcross, religion and the environment are the primary causes of homosexuality. David's enslavement makes it hard to love or be loved by him. A son of a father. To depict and make things genuine regarding David's sexuality, Baldwin employs high stylistic and linguistic standards. David describes his homosexuality as:

To remember it so clearly, so painfully tonight tells me that I have never for an instant truly forgotten it. I feel in myself now a faint, dreadful stirring of what so overwhelmingly stirred in me then. great thirsty heat, and trembling, and tenderness so painful I thought my heart would burst. But out of this astounding intolerable pain came joy. We gave each other joy that night. (*GR* 81)

Another incident involving David's enslavement concerns his relationship with Joey. "Joey is a boy. I saw suddenly the power in his thighs, in his arms, and his loosely curled fists. The power and the promise and the mystery of that body made me suddenly afraid. That body suddenly seemed like the black opening of a cavern in which I would be tortured till madness came." (*GR* 127)

David is in an unpleasant and challenging circumstance. Baldwin's use of images such as the body, mirrors, windows, and Giovanni's room itself depicts his circumstances. Giovanni's room and David's homosexuality are described as "What kind of life can we have in this room?this filthy little room. What kind of life can two men have together, anyway?" (*GR* 71). The scene in Giovanni's chamber takes place in Paris. It offers a homosexual alternative to heterosexual romances in the West. The novel is described by Horace Porter as:

Giovanni's Room is as significant among Baldwin's works as it is in Afro-American reasserts itself throughout James's career, so Giovanni's Room has played a similar part in the complex continuing drama of Baldwin's life and work. The novel primarily distinguishes Baldwin from among his influential literary forebears. (96)

Although the novel was rejected for publication, it became a key work for gay and lesbian studies in the United States.

Another Country is a short story about reconciliation from 1962. It's set in the village during Baldwin's bohemian years. In America, it has a multiethnic cast of eight people. It epitomizes their existence. Each of the eight people is in a bisexual and interracial relationship. They try to bring people of different ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations together.

Another Country eloquently expresses Baldwin's fury. It is Eric who gives and endows homosexuality with the potential to cure in Baldwin's narrative. Eric is the gay character in the story. From race to sex, he transmits the power of love. He had intercourse with the majority of the people in the narrative, including Vivaldo, Yves, and Cass. They are content with their sexual relationship. Rosenblatt Roger refers to Eric's sex as "Homosexuality in the person." Eric becomes the main liberating force of the novel and thinks the novel is about sins of mission and a modern inferno that contains them. Eric had sex with Vivaldo. He reclaims what he has been denied. Like Eric, Vivaldo describes himself and his body. He is comfortable and receives what he desires from Eric. Their homosexual relationship is described by Baldwin as:

he murmured at last, in a strange voice, as he now heard himself murmur, Oh, Eric. Eric. What was that fury like? Eric. He pulled Eric towards him through the ruined sheets and held him tight. And, thank you, Vivaldo whispered, thank you, Eric, thank you. Eric curled up against him as a child and salt from his forehead dripped onto Vivaldo's chest. (AC 51)

In the novel, homosexuality is a cause of guilt and anxiety. Eric, on the other hand, resolves many of the issues that the novel's other protagonists face. Eric learns to love and heal others, but he is unable to do it for himself. James Baldwin became a civil rights activist's spokesperson. The rise in violence against black people has prompted Baldwin to speak out more forcefully against white supremacy in the United States. Baldwin also established himself as one of the most brilliant intellectuals of his era. As a gay black man, channels and the media began to give and focus on him.

Tell Me How Long The Train Has Been Gone (1968) is a rebuttal to black critics of Baldwin's role in the civil rights struggle due to his homosexuality. Eldridge Cleaver characterized Baldwin's homosexuality as a form of race hatred, dismissing all-black homosexuals.

They are outraged and frustrated because in their sickness they are unable to have a baby with a white man. The cross they have to bear is that they are already touching their toes to the white man. The fruit of their miscegenation is not the little half-white offspring of their dream. (79)

Baldwin reacts to critics' attacks on *The Train* by presenting Leo and Christopher's relationship. *Another Country* explores the notion of salvation via homosexuality, which Christopher is reminded of. He argues that gay sexuality and black militancy are mutually exclusive.

Baldwin's final work, *Just Above My Head*, was published in 1979. It is a fictionalized account of Arthur Montana's life. The novel's protagonist is Arthur. He is a gay gospel singer

of African heritage. Arthur passed away at the age of 39. In London, he had a heart attack. Arthur's sister is Halle. She begins her search for information about her brother's past. She believes that homosexuality was one of the causes of his death. Homosexuality is a recurring theme in the novel. It is the root of Arthur's emotional estrangement from his family. The contrast between the events that follow Arthur's breakup with the church and Halle's divorce from Julia reveals homosexuality.

However, in this novel, James Baldwin handles homosexuality differently than in other novels. Obviously, homosexuality does not capture the reader's interest even more than in Baldwin's previous works. It smoothly moved into Arthur's life to assist him in his quest for survival in his community.

Conclusion

Baldwin is a significant figure in American and African American literature. His work questions white tyranny and compulsive heterosexuality in his community, which is dominated by white rules. In his novels, he openly and directly discusses homosexual and bisexual themes. Straight white men who want to have sex with him refer to him as a queer, and white women who want to have a negro experience refer to him as a black stud and wish to save him from homosexuality refer to him as a black stud. Baldwin emerges as a significant character in the lives of African American homosexual men, and he becomes a symbol for an entire generation of black gay authors.

Baldwin explores homosexuality and considers sex between two guys as a powerful instrument and revelation for emancipating people from social categorizing restrictions. The

implications of racism and homosexuality are definitely evident in Baldwin's writings. In his early novels, homosexuality takes on a powerful political dimension, while in later works, his perspective on sexuality improves and a new place for intelligent African-American gay writers is created.

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