

5-26-2018

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[10.15760/honors.629](https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/honors/629)

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James Baldwin's *Another Country* (1962) as Representation
Of Queer Identity Formation in Accordance to Space

by

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An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Arts

in

University Honors

and

English Literature

Thesis Adviser

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2018

Abstract

James Baldwin's *Another Country* (1962) offers a unique stance of how identity formation occurs as queer individuals interact with heteronormative spaces they inhabit. In this Honor's Thesis, I am to detail how Baldwin's novel bridges the interdisciplinary gap between Literature and Queer Theory when concerned with queer identity. (Heteronormative culture aims to suppress queer ideology to maintain its own superiority, ultimately exhibiting how spaces created with a strict alliance to norms positions a barrier that queer individuals must encounter and resist, functioning as the entrance of queer space. While interacting with the boundaries of normative culture and space, the implications of how queer space functions not only within the confines of a novel but also within social categorizations complicates the notion of how queerness functions to subvert ordinariness. *Another Country* positions individuals struggling to create unique individualized spaces, in which normative culture can be challenged and forced to exhibit an elasticity that is contradictory to its assumed rigidity.

The Mutability of Space and Identity

To accept one's queerness is to accept that heteronormative culture has rejected the notion of one's existence. Queer people have been relegated to the sidelines of a normative culture that insists on its own superiority, on an ideology that places itself in a unique position—that should be sufficient and best for all, though rarely adhering to this guideline—making all opposition not only unnecessary, but grotesque. To come to terms with one's queerness is to actively subvert and deny the influence of a superior normativity, thereby intensifying and complicating the method by which an individual's identity is formed. With a rise in awareness of how the normative culture's rigidity disallows challenge, the formation of one's perception of the space they inhabit becomes labyrinthine, as the individual must navigate instilled social hierarchies in hopes of finding a place of relative safety and belonging to inhabit.

Demonstrated in James Baldwin's novel *Another Country* (1962), by combining the disciplines of English Literature and Queer Theory, there is a new methodology that

can be introduced into how a queer individual forms their identity in accordance to the culture of the space they exist within. This essay presents *Another Country* as an exhibition of how individuals interact with internal and external forces to sustain a multi-faceted yet singular individuality (identity) separate from the regulations placed upon the individual by normativity. Characters within the novel are presented with the ability to parse the boundaries against queerness that have been preserved through generations of deference to cultural expectations.

Heteronormativity therefore seeks to establish a guise of how to properly function as a citizen within loosely defined, but nevertheless rigid, societal boundaries. To be a quality citizen then is to not question and instead submit, to assimilate willingly and accept ordinariness. However, there are those whose actuality inherently allows for instances of subversion—creating a sense of elasticity in the framework that composes a hegemonic normative. It is the “functioning of a continuing social process that is so widespread and ordinary as to be humdrum” (Harper 643) that has allowed a normative culture to arise and permeate the very threads that weave together the identity of a culture, consisting of individuals interacting with one another in accordance to social and cultural expectations to continue the momentum needed for a superior form of culture to be presented and ingrained in the network of interpersonal relations between individuals. Against a normative culture that seeks to extinguish it, queerness must resist by creating space for itself. Queer spaces can be physical, such as Giovanni’s eponymous “room,” or take the form of an ideology that can be carried and transmitted with an individual through different spaces—such as Vivaldo’s refusal to write for profit thereby changing his art form to accommodate normative taste.

It is no accident that Baldwin places the majority of *Another Country* in New York City, a place in which queer culture began to emerge between the nineteen-fifties and nineteen-seventies. The emergence of queer culture necessitated a negotiation of what heteronormativity represents and the method by which it thrives within the popular culture. Under the heteronormative eye, queerness became a spectacle that had to be contained so as not to present any notion of opposition to the domination of the normative. It was revolutionary for queerness to present an alternate notion of how the world can be perceived, specifically for individuals who were oppressed for living alternative lifestyles that did not adhere to the regulations of normative culture. Citizens within American culture were raised to aspire to a place of pureness, “imagined as a sanitized space of sentimental dealing and immaculate behavior” (Berlant and Warner 549); this goal being utilized as the mechanism by which national heteronormativity maintains ascendancy. However, although the ideal of queerness is desirable in contrast to acquiescing normativity’s control, the realization of the complications that arise when faced with forming a non-normative identity contests the very fabric of their worldview.

Commencing action to understand how queer spaces are established within the geographical space of the nation—while maintaining a sense of relative safety (comfort) from normative culture. In molding one’s identity to idealizations of queerness, performance of normativity must be accomplished by assuming a fluidity that undermines stereotypes based on race, sexuality, gender, and class status. Intersectionality—as Kimberle Crenshaw dictates—describes how these different social categorizations merge together to influence the perception of one’s reality. Artists tend to assume the position of being emotionally receptive to changes in their identities,

influencing an evolution in their presentation of work. Expatriate artists, such as Baldwin, left the U.S. to gain an alternative perspective on culture and normativity. In determining that other cultures could provide answers to the question of how to form the boundaries of a non-normative space, the justification of movement from one country to another indicated a “profound sense of shame in U.S. culture and society” (Harper 63), shame that ultimately characterizes the plight of those pursuing lifestyles that do not align with normative guidelines.

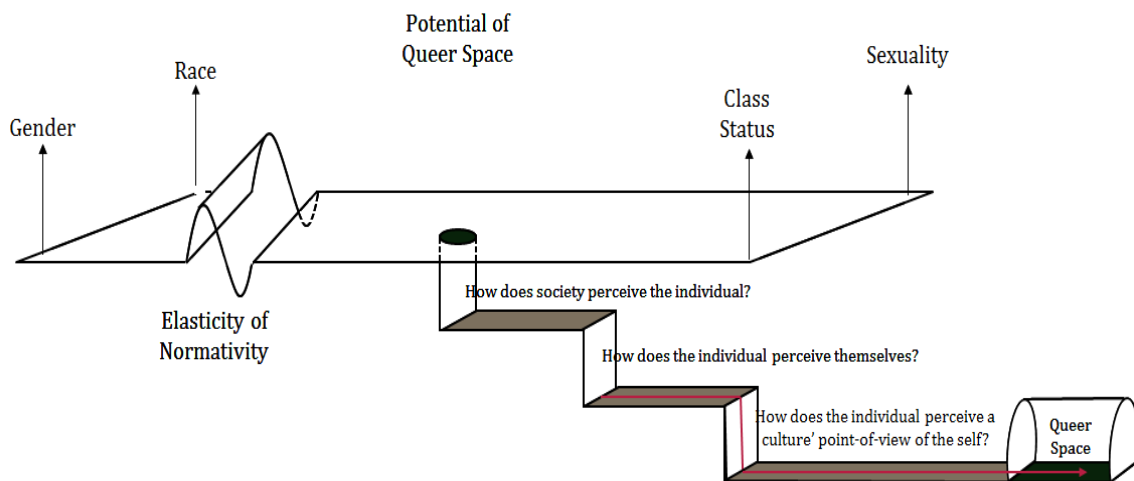
Shame, when introduced as an opposition to nationalistic pride, presented an alternative method of contemplating the importance of rigidity to normative culture. By experiencing how another culture functions, the normative culture of the U.S. has the potential to be seen as flawed, or at least as elastic. As the expatriates returned, an awareness of their positionality in relation to their external environments increased in necessity. Postulation of one’s performance and presentation of themselves within the view of the heteronormative eye resulted in agitation of the presupposed and unrelenting pressures enacted by normalcy. When these expatriates physically moved from one space (country) to another, they were actively subverting the rigidity of the space that tried to contain and mold them to its specificities. As the movement developed, there were cultural ties that still attached them to the American aesthetic, though the ties were proven to have less influence on the individuals when the distance from normative space was increased.

Another Country details the influence of normative culture on individuals who do not have the opportunity to physically remove themselves from the space which holds their systemic oppression so tightly. The characters who reside in New York City are

ensnared and manipulated by their experiences, thereby determining that there is fluidity within a culture represented by its functioning of interpersonal relationships of its citizens. The novel's characters, though unable to leave the confines of the city—and furthermore unable to escape the confines of the narrative structure of the novel—navigate the multitude of neighborhoods and come in contact with one another. The novel raises the question of how individuals, when confined to a space with physical boundaries such as a city, and desiring mutability of their identity, attempt to decipher the boundaries of a normative culture that aims to sustain their place as subordinate. The novel also serves to study how the ties to one's culture through intersectionality affect their perception of not only their own identity but of their particular place in society. This second point is what connects Eric to the remainder of the characters living in New York, as his return presents how elastic normative culture can be. *Another Country* presents an alternate idea as to how individuals form their identity according to the space they inhabit, and this novel will be argued as Baldwin's amalgamation of queer theory and the genre of fiction.

Normativity's conservancy functions by maintaining that it is rigid, unable to be altered, and operates by subjecting popular culture to its constraints and regulations. The extent of anything arising in opposition to its perpetuation, and thereby self-preservation, must assume the position of fugitivity to not attract attention from the dominant hegemonic normative. Queerness must remain in this fugitive position to gradually define the boundaries of its own space. To explain the fundamental necessity for queer ideology's aims to remain hidden, it must not exist outside the realm of the normative. Instead, queerness inherently—by existing in the confines of a culture based in

heteronormativity—exemplifies how “hegemonies are nothing if not elastic reliances, involving dispersed and contradicting strategies for self-maintenance and reproduction” (Berlant and Warner 553), their rigidity is a facade. To retain this facade of superiority, heteronormativity has boxed in culture, the four corners seeming to be “exits” based in the stereotypes that allow its presence to be perpetuated in this culture: race, gender, sexuality, and class status. By breaking these social categorizations apart, normativity functions to offer false ways out of its reach, when in reality if the individual attempts to leave normative culture by taking one of these four routes, the return to the confines of normative culture acquires a systemic embedding of cyclical supremacy.



The above diagram presents the riddle of wading through normative culture with the goal of rejecting the predisposition of dominance stemming from an ideal conceptualization of normalcy. To effectively construct the diagram, scholars and theorists (Marta Alquijay, Lauren Berlant, Samuel Delaney, David Halperin, Michael Warner, and Phillip Brian Warner) were analyzed and compiled in attempts of theorizing the indeterminable action of locating the boundaries of heteronormativity that allow for a permeating and perpetuation of a culture.

The question is then posed as to how the queer individual is able to exist within the fabric of normative culture, instead of outside normative boundaries. Subversion and fugitivity work in tandem to influence the fabric of normativity to unravel at a localized point, embedding itself in the weaving of normative culture. For queerness to embed itself however, it must be a queerness based in intersectionality, acceptance of oneself as a conglomeration of experiences influenced by the four social categorizations that impress themselves upon the individual—effectively creating a unique cognizance of one’s place within a physical space.

However, existence as fugitive once in the elastic mesh of normativity is only temporary, as the superior normative culture has one goal, to maintain its position as dominant within contemporary culture. Queerness, therefore, will never be able to relieve itself of its fugitivity, and instead, must become ingrained within an individual’s identity by contemplating a series of perceptions: what society thinks of the individual, how the individual recognizes their Self, and finally how the individual thinks of how society’s desire for normalcy affects their perception of themselves. By determining one’s place within societal boundaries, there is the presence of a fleeting queer space in which individuality and queerness can thrive. This model in particular delineates that in order for queerness to be presented within the dominant culture, it must perform through subversion, because of the inherent fugitivity queerness experiences comparatively to the control of heteronormativity. To assume the position of fugitive is a commonplace reaction when attempting subordination of a hegemonic cultural control. As Berlant and Warner determine, “to be against heteronormativity is not to be against norms” and “to be against the processes of normalization is not to be afraid of ordinariness” (557); that is to

say, the model presented above is not concerned with finding a place for queerness in the dominant culture. It is instead concentrated in the subordination of how much control is given over to heteronormativity as a cultural standard. Furthermore, it is not to present queerness in such a way as to combat heteronormativity directly, but instead presenting queerness as differentiated based on the foundation of norms as controlling of a culture.

Turning to the end of Baldwin's novel, Yves's initial arrival to the U.S. presents the perspective of an individual encountering a new cultural heteronormativity that was not present in the cultural space he was moving from. The journey between the two differing physical spaces with separate and differentiated structures of normativity presents the initial reaction to experiencing a new systemic form of cultural formation of identity. As the plane is landing, the hostess addresses the passengers, "congratulating them on their journey, and hoping to see them soon again," (Baldwin 433) almost undermining the nature of Yves's decision to uproot his life and move across the Atlantic to live with someone that is unsure of the possibility of continuing the relationship. Acclimating to a new space allows for a new perception of the world to form for the individual, and in the case of Yves, his presence in the novel is representative of an outsider with no physical experience of the space in which he is about to enter, only having the knowledge of the possibilities. His impressions and expectations of American culture are fantastical and naive compared to those of the other characters living in New York. However, his childish wonder at the possibilities of what the new space and opportunity can provide are only mentioned in relation to Eric, "he knew that Eric was there, somewhere in that faceless crowd, waiting for him, and he was filled, all at once, with an extraordinary peace and happiness" (433), exhibiting his reliance on relationships

with others to form his identity, specifically his reliance on Eric's presence. There is uncertainty surrounding the end of the novel, idealizing the potential of possibilities that present themselves to an individual when a new culture is available to experience.

Baldwin discusses the importance that space has on the actions and presupposed identity of an individual, demonstrating the significance that not only social hierarchies have on an individual, but also the effect of the social categorizations that are perpetuated by the boundaries and limitations of a space have on the actions and reactions of characters. As characters exist within specific spaces, the ideal of accessibility is confronted as the main limitation to an individual experiencing the stimuli a particular space has to offer in that moment. The level of accessibility challenges the perceptions that an individual has of themselves as a functioning citizen within the space, effectively altering their identity and character development. The disparity in spaces signifies the effect that social categories and aspects of intersectionality have on the environment as well as on the individual. Spaces either serve to preserve a specific aesthetic that only pertains to certain individuals, or offer a perspective typically not observed by the individual--thereby complicating the notion of existence of the corporeal within such spaces.

Queerness serves to further grapple with the inexorably complex social distinctions and interactions offered for specific individuals. In the creation of a specifically queer space, there is a "development of intimacy that bears no necessary relation to domestic space, to kinship, to the couple form, to property, or to the nation" (Berlant and Warner 558) as the function of queerness within a superior heteronormative culture necessitates a change in perception of ideals of importance and the susceptibility

one has when being acted upon by a space. To sever the ties between the individual and the space they exist within brings about a perception that is atypical. For an individual to be challenged by the boundaries of space, or more realistically to challenge the boundaries that a space has assumed through repetition of societal norms and relationships, realization and self-actualization of one's agency becomes pertinent to survival.

The potential for queerness to flourish within a space is dictated by the physicality of the particular space. In the instance of Yves travelling to the States, discovering the boundaries and accessibility of the American space to his body exhibits how one's identity is impressed upon and must morph to create a sense of comfort within the space. Comfort is brought about by familiarity, small connections made to objects within spaces that have meaning attached previously. From the smaller objects, larger connections can be made as one explores and broadens the range of perception of the physicality of a space. For Yves, the transmigration into the American space begins with his searching for Eric within the crowded airport,

“[b]ut people were too far away, they were faceless still. He watched them move, but there was no movement which reminded him of Eric. Still, he knew that Eric was there, somewhere in the faceless crowd, waiting for him, and he was filled, all at once, with an extraordinary peace and happiness,” (Baldwin 433)

the continued seeking of familiarity within the new space the primary goal of his perception. In this instance, Eric represents a connection, a bridge, between France and the United States. Eric becomes a body that can travel willingly between spaces and find comfort and continued experience with a larger amount of ease than others. Yves desiring to locate Eric's corporeal form demonstrates the reliance that he has on another

individual, an aspect of his identity that cannot be disconnected from another body's existence for fear of not being able to make impact on the realities of others.

Eric's relation to physical space, and furthermore, normative space, becomes strained for the audience in determining his positionality and the type of effect he can have on his surroundings and individuals that interact with his being. Is Eric a person able to successfully move between spaces in the role of a hermit, not creating a home? Or does Eric's identity represent a separation between identity and the effect that space has on the individual, such as a *flaneur*? His relation to both American and French normative spaces suggests the former, never finding a reinforced construction of a home, of comfort in either space, but allowing himself to be a conduit of the ways that normative culture dictates the manner in which an individual must act to escape the superior gaze of heteronormativity. By allying oneself with the culture's pervasion of spaces, even the most personal (mental and emotional resonances), his presence creates discomfort in the perception of others.

Eric's first inclination of developing the ideal of a homespace is in the gaze he has of the home that he has created with Yves in France, his career and personality allowing for the home to exist in the same way as Giovanni's room. Both homes are contained apart from the permeation of normative culture within a cityscape with their physical boundaries (walls, doors, etc.), that not only control corporeal movement in and out of the space, but also controlling visibility of one's actions when living within the space. The first introduction of Eric confirms his observatory position, sitting "naked in his rented garden" and overlooking the "thunderous blue of the Mediterranean," (183) until he sees Yves disappear underneath the waterline of the ocean, causing momentary panic in Eric's

mind. Only when his homespace becomes threatened with change (the possibility of Yves drowning or disappearing in this case) does Eric become unsettled. The dipping below the water's surface also hearkens back to the diagram earlier, Yves finding a route to successfully subvert the confines of the space at hand and escaping temporarily, until having to resurface. The temporary subversion furthermore dictates that though Eric may be exerting a sense of control, anxiety and the unsettling of comfort is possible.

The calm that Eric had established within his French home is set in contrast later in the novel with a turn towards his personal past, the foundation of his queerness and what defines his existence outside of the normative culture, in either setting (American or French). The moment is quick, the flashback reminiscent of how rare and momentous it is to realize how much one has experienced within the span of a lifetime. His homosexuality is presented as the love for another male within the normative space of the South, known for its religious and specifically anti-queer rhetoric. In the South, Eric develops wandering emotions towards an individual referred to only as LeRoy, "seventeen, a year older than Eric, [who...] worked as a porter in the courthouse" (201). LeRoy's presence is held in the regard of being completely forbidden, not only because of his being male, but also because Eric describes him as "colored" (201). At the time of Baldwin's writing, and with the further back in time of Eric's childhood, not only is the relationship in jeopardy because of its alliance to homosexuality, but also because of it being interracial, being forced further into degradation because of the history of racism not only within American culture, but also the extremist tensions that racial discrimination and inequality within the South. Eric recounts the relationship as "an impossible connection, [...that was not only] suspect, [but] it was indecent, that a white

boy, especially from Eric's class and difficult reputation, should 'run,' as Eric incontestably did, after one of his inferiors" (202). The dichotomy of inferior and superior beings within the same space—power prescribed by hegemonies—complicates the boundaries of the relationship and the amount of agency that either person are allowed to present, making the relationship one of intense strain and confusion for the two young boys. The boundaries of the Southern space tangle the possibility of the relationship non-existent, forcing the individuals into a heightened awareness of the consequences that could follow.

Baldwin, with this flashback, exposes how not only a space can change over the course of time, but also how a queer person begins to understand the fine-tuning of moving between spaces. Eric's character illustrates how one's identity is put under strain even when being able to pass as normative. White privilege in this instance allows Eric to move between spaces and not be questioned based on his physical appearance as to the accessibility within spaces that typically perpetuate normative culture. Marta Alquijay comments on this availability of moving between spaces with relative comfort by presenting a contrast to those who look like Eric, stating that people of color choose "to participate in multiple identities--outwardly, inwardly, emotionally, and intellectually" (Alquijay 267-8), determining that for even the most basic amount of comfort to be felt, understanding how a normative culture places restrictions upon individuals forces identities to change, in hopes of becoming comfortable in a space that rejects one's existence. For one's place within a normative space to be dramatically altered, based on "becoming aware of one's racialized status in the world--a moment in which [one's] understanding of [themselves] is fundamentally altered," (Bulhan 463) the temptation to

maintain individuality further increases the difficulty of establishing a unique perspective that subverts the superiority of normative culture.

To move from a place of privilege into something that normative culture presents as inferior determines how accessibility comes into play within the identity formation of the individual. Accessibility and comfort are allowed in greater capacity to individuals that the culture deems to not be as dangerous to the continuity of the culture. Furthermore, it is the presence of existing further outside of the normative ideal that increases the hostility presented by the culture's perpetuation upon the individual. Race, sexuality, gender, and class status accumulate to represent the opportunity and potential for comfort, determining that one's identity is formed in relation to the pressures combined from the four aspects. In the diagram previously displayed, with an acceptance of one's intersectional values, the individual is able to form a greater understanding of the boundaries of normative spaces and determine the options or routes available to be pursued with the least amount of resistance.

Eric's existence stemming from a place of privilege, a pedestal of superiority, confounds and complicates the actions and reactions of those within his presence. For instance, as Vivaldo, a bisexual character within the novel, is exploring homosexual tendencies with Eric, there is a lack of comfort based solely on the amount of confidence that Eric has assumed with his identity in comparison to Vivaldo. A scene in which the two men are in the same bed with one another, Vivaldo comes to remark on Eric's figure in relation to his own, "the red-black silhouette of Eric's head against the dim glow of the Venetian blinds," Eric's body seeming cloaked in "darkness," (Baldwin 341) representative of the unknown gazing upon another person of the same gender. In this

moment, the perception of Eric's physicality is presented with equal anxiety and mystery, Vivaldo's identity reacting in relation to the proximity of emotional tension and bonding that occurred when the men were having sex. By allowing confusion into the understanding of the situation at hand, Vivaldo's sight changes to allow his presupposed heterosexuality to come into question, epitomizing the moment that an individual notices their identity's shift from the safety of normativity into the realm of queerness.

Vivaldo's character in particular grapples with the question of place within the larger cycle of normative culture in its permeation of daily routine and lifestyle. His relationship with Ida Scott, a singer in the New York bar scene and sister to Rufus Scott, in his contemplation of how precisely to understand one's experience in relation to that of another person. A conversation between the two takes place around the subject of sameness. Ida delineates that Vivaldo will never understand the world from the perspective of a person of color, and though his reasoning of the two of them both experiencing hardship and difficulty within their daily lives is reason enough to understand the meaning and effect of struggle, his description of struggle eliminates the function of how race affects an individual's existence.

Though his relationship with struggle is not as complicated as Ida's—momentarily based and focused from a standpoint analyzing the concept of race as indicative of a person's accessibility within the American heteronormative culture—Vivaldo does have moments in which he contemplates the notion of sameness and the complexities that it presents when two individuals converse about their assumed place within the culture dictating their actions and reactions. There are two moments in *Another Country* in which there is a noticeable change in his perspective of the physical space of

New York. From at first commenting on how the “city [is] without oases, run entirely, insofar, at least, as human perception could tell, for money” (317). In contrast, and with a greater amount of attention on the area of Harlem, though occurring earlier in the novel, he indicates that “Harlem was a battlefield and that a war was being waged there day and night—but of the war aims he knew nothing,” offering an insight into the not necessarily a neglect of “the war” (133), but shifting his perspective to thinking of the external pressures that affect a person’s routine and lifestyle. Vivaldo does not come to understand the extent to which race has shaped the cityscape of New York, neighborhoods sectioned off with people like one another, these groups having similarities that decrease the amount of social pressure on the individual—creating comfort in and around the space of the home. However, noting that even an individual coming from a greater place of privilege—in the normative culture’s boundaries, that is—can identify difference in the strain of existing allows insight into the formation of queerness by questioning the reasons of how an precept such as culture manipulates identity for communities and individuals living within said communities.

Baldwin brings to light the ramifications of collectives of individuals allowing the pursuit of separate identities, based on their intersectional differences, in an attempt to create a network of safety and comfort. Lou Rosenberg states that the individual—“the subject” in this insistence—unconsciously defines their identity based on communal likeness is, in reality, a “cultural construct” that becomes “challenged, destabilized, and questioned” (Rosenberg 99) at the moment of determining individual placement and function within a community. Grasping the present, when compared to one’s past, advances persistently in accordance with past methods of metamorphosing to find place

in past environments. Baldwin implies that his characters—all pursuing careers in the arts—expose the reality of identity formation when historically, the “arts continued to be a danger-ridden activity” (Winter 203). A profession in the arts, as previously mentioned, inherently allows an individual to present alternative viewpoints against a superior status quo, confronting the boundaries and defying the rigidity of a normative culture. The danger Winter alludes to is the foundation of Kimberle Crenshaw’s identification of the urgency of intersectionality, in determining the framework of how a culture continues its perpetuation over time. Crenshaw guides individuals to render how intersectionality travel[s] into spaces and discourses that are themselves constituted by power relations that are far from transparent” (Crenshaw 789), and thereby challenging the extent of influence that normativity has been allowed to have over individuals as they form communities.

Rufus Scott, though only being physically present for the first approximately one hundred pages of the novel, signals furthermore the danger involved in attempting to use reason to decipher the network that controls the individual. He is introduced as an individual constantly combatting the methods of marginalization and discrimination placed upon his physical form, desiring to be free and released from these particular pressures, seeing himself as a wanderer, insisting that feeling confined by normativity’s endlessness. His awareness of his physicality becomes uninterrupted; emphasizing how one’s identity is conceptualized in the amount of influence the corporeal has on its surroundings. Rufus’s recognition of his subjectivity is validated in a scene where Vivaldo’s presence cultivates the need to acknowledge differences between people when each are deliberating their identity in relation to one another:

“[... Rufus] was aware, perhaps for the first time in his life, that nothing would stop it, nothing: this was himself. Rufus was aware of every inch of Rufus. He was flesh: flesh, bone, muscle, fluid, orifices, hair, and skin. His body was controlled by laws he did not understand. Nor did he understand what force this body had driven him into such a desolate place. The most impenetrable of mysteries moved in this darkness for less than a second, hinting of reconciliation. And still the music continued, Bessie [Smith] was saying that she wouldn't mind being in jail but she had to stay there so long.” (Baldwin 54)

The queer individual, again referring to the diagram presented earlier, must exhibit introspection to pursue the constitution of their uniqueness. In the quote above, Rufus's determination that his body is a contained entity that, though influenced by the surrounding environment, has agency that is protected by personal perception of the world that impresses itself in hope of changing the functionality and purpose—some would refer to their individualized purpose perhaps as destiny, or a matter of circumstances insisting on a set notion of acceptable function within a dominant culture. While still reluctant to conform, acquiescence of identity to the compliant boundaries that he must navigate, Rufus's approval of separation between his body and others allows for a greater understanding of the arduousness of desiring to exist outside the boundaries of a specific culture. With the indication that “a culture is not the same thing as a collection of individuals” (Halperin 63), revealing how one's identity is first questioned not by the individual determining their relation to the larger culture, but instead to the numerous bodies that one interacts with while conducting a daily routine. Those who a person—willingly or not—interact with on more than one occasion, resulting in the formation of interpersonal bonds, allows an increase in amount of discernable influence one has affected in their lifetime. As if by measuring one's influence is compounded over time, by constructing an identity in the minds of others, influencing their perception of the individual, people are able to metaphysically present based on these interactions.

Rufus destabilizes the stereotypical notion of the function of his role as a protagonist, the character that the audience comes to understand the most in comparison to others. Though an intimacy is composed within the first part of the novel, his suicide epitomizes one method of controlling the perception of oneself through the lens of others. The scene of his suicide partially fleshes out a reasoning of jumping from the bridge, “[h]e was black and the water was black” (Baldwin 87), framing similarity and a lean towards accepting similarity between the self and one’s environment. Following this assertion, Baldwin reveals the experience of the act, “he felt himself going over, head down, the wind, the stars, the lights, the water, all rolled together,” repeating the phrase “*all right*” twice and then proceeding to distort the attempt at comfort by adding to the phrase, “*all right, you motherfucking Godalmighty bastard, I’m coming to you*” (88), laying bare the emotional turmoil from a short glimpse into his thoughts. Rufus’s presence however remains, though sparsely, throughout the novel, represented in the memories and perceptions that he created within the realities of those whom he formed intimate relationships with. Though McCaffrey states the following in relation to the reality of homosexuals, he states that when a person is “[i]ncapable of breaking the chains that culture [wields...] the provincial and omnipresent temptation to suicide that creates havoc in the castrated ‘self’” (McCaffrey 141) that is the marginalized individual. Gazing upon one’s existence as the conglomeration of fastidiously perpetuated norms, all working against one’s comfort and accessibility, the ultimatum of ending the existence based in distress appears.

Suicide has unfortunately become a common plan of action for marginalized individuals that feel what can only be described as a constant despair when contemplating

their safety in a culture that bases itself on permeating one's perception with self-doubt and tribulation. After Baldwin published *Another Country*, writer and political activist Eldridge Cleaver, published an article demonizing how Baldwin presents Rufus, specifically in the displaying of vulnerability that contradicts the then-stereotypically considered notion bolstering the dichotomy of black rage and white guilt. Baldwin's response to the article affirms "that racism and sexuality are inextricably linked and that the African-American man has often been the double subject of violence because of his color and how it interacts with representations of his sexuality" that further constitutes a "fear of confrontation with himself and a fear of touch from others" (Wardrop 173-4). Baldwin's insistence that the stereotypes that sustain inequality amongst those within the same space maintains that without change, the continuation of unchallenged superiority of normative culture will consequently impact future generations, eternalizing the reality of queer individuals characterized by friction and animosity from those that prescribe to a culture's definition of normalcy.

The particular scope of such a method of understanding identity politics then comes into question. With the fabrication of intersectionality as method to understand the pressures working against the individual, it becomes apparent that "intersectional identity is not ready-made—as could be said of all identities—and thus opens possibilities for forging connections among these fragments in myriad ways" (Crenshaw 802), detailing how one's identity becomes seen as separate parts constituting a whole. Ida Scott's development illustrates the complexity of navigating spaces that confuses any attempt to parse the normative boundaries of a space. Two spaces in particular illuminate how

gender and race are indistinguishably linked, especially at the time Baldwin published this novel.

Both Ida and Rufus are connected to jazz clubs, allowing a space for live music to be presented to a large group of people, though their roles differ greatly in the amount of recognition and attention each is given during a performance. Ida's singing, when compared to Rufus's performance as drummer, gains notoriety and attention from the audience, increasing visibility. The potential to control the mood of the audience with the combination of lyrics and rhythm offers a moment in which subversion occurs of "white society's failure to recognize the multiplicity of black women's arduous difficulties: the twofold quandary of being sexually and racially discriminated against;" exposing the "social, familial, and economic oppression;" and consequently bolstering "their portrayal in society as having low morals and values" (Lucky 96). The ability to perform is seen as a gift, a change offered from her previous job, "a waitress in a chain restaurant on the east edge of the Village," a specific place in which she accepted a reality representative of "the way the world treated girls with bad reputations, and every colored girl had been born with one" (Baldwin 143-4), an insight into a predisposition of treatment within the dominant culture. The persistence of desiring to be freed, or allowed a temporary escape from the marginalization that she experiences in the Village, there is solace in Harlem, supporting the effectiveness of community in providing space for comfort and support.

Her persistence in forming an identity that is based solely on claiming subjectivity begins with the acknowledging of her relation to Rufus once discovered that he has committed suicide. Ida's speech at his funeral evokes a sense of letting go of the ties or support that Rufus offered her as they grew up together,

“He had to go his way. He had his trouble, and he’s gone. He was young, he was bright, he was beautiful, we expected great things from him—but he’s gone away from us now and it’s us will have to make great things happen.” (Baldwin 121)

The ending to her speech partially serves to extricate herself from the bond between older brother and younger sister, the release allowing for a greater amount of agency compared to earlier flashbacks within the novel. The death of her brother propels her artistry in that her performances become emotive, presenting audience members with a sense of self and confidence that deviates from the normative behavior of women at the time the novel was published. Ida’s persistence towards recognition and influence within her community and for the benefit of herself demonstrates how to subvert the gendering of spaces—specifically the space of jazz clubs.

Moreover, though Ida’s focus shifts to that of individuality not tethered to a man, she and Vivaldo become more intimately involved with one another, presenting an interracial relationship that would have been considered existing outside the realm of normativity. Heterosexual culture is allowed to continue in its superiority because the act of sexual intercourse can produce offspring when occurring between male and female. Race complicates the relationship between Ida and Vivaldo because though it would be able to create another human—which it does not in the novel—the child would exist in contrast to American normative culture’s persistence of whiteness as superior. Yet, the relationship is under strain often, how race affects their experience within the relationship is presented by Ida to Vivaldo, though more often than not, resulting in a conflict based on Vivaldo’s lack of comprehension in how these intersectional fragments fabricate alternate realities and methods of experience. Another stemming of tension is the dichotomy of stress between the two, Ida’s career as a singer developing quickly and with

success, while Vivaldo's writing remains stagnant. His determination to write a novel that is based on his interests, his viewpoints, and not for the audience that will receive it has slowed the progress of his novel, whereas Ida's assurance that her craft is succeeding, no matter the response from others has allowed for opportunities to present themselves more often to continue an upward trajectory.

The culmination of pressures upon the characters in the novel confounds the creation and maintenance of interpersonal relationships along with their own formation of identity. Their identities, as per the diagram presented earlier, become fragmented before compiling to perpetuate a form of character development that either submits or contends with the superiority of normative culture. A multi-faceted identity of a person pursuing non-normative lifestyles in contrast of normalcy elucidates further that normative values discredit or marginalize. It is queerness that is the result of parsing the boundaries of normative spaces to effectively create an identity based on individuality and remaining in contrast to a status quo.

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