

**Tribhuvan University**

**Racial Consciousness in James Baldwin's *Another Country***

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This thesis entitled "Racial Consciousness in James Baldwin's *Another Country*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mr. Indra Upadhaya has been approved by the undersigned members of the thesis committee.

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### **Abstract**

James Baldwin's *Another Country* reveals that there is no black utopia, no place where an Afro-American can escape the iniquities of racism. Rufus Scott Commits suicide which in fact is a "racial murder", enacted upon him by the effects of racism. More importantly, *Another Country* suggests that the Afro-American have not yet found a model for thinking and speaking outside the frame of racist ideology. So, the wish for an 'another country', a place where relationships are not fractured by racial difference, remains an imaginary and mythic one.

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## I. James Baldwin as a Visionary Writer

James Baldwin, a post-war African-American novelist is a kind of prophet, a man who has been able to give a public issue all its deeper moral, historical and personal significance. He appears as the writer who is most beset with a vision, his vision being the great urgency and revolutionary implications of the race issue. It is a vision, despite the seeming narrowness of the starting point, because Baldwin has shown how the issue itself is connected with nearly every area of American life and belief. Ideas change. An experience can be told and forgotten. But a vision, such as Baldwin's, mercilessly grows and deepens and it has affected, in some way, almost everything he has written. Certainly, whatever deeper comprehension of the race issue Americans now possess has been in some way shaped by him. And this is to have shaped their comprehension of themselves as well. Kay Boyle, a friend and fellow-writer of James Baldwin says, "In fact James Baldwin long ago made his own introduction when he said that at the root of the American Negro problem is the necessity of the American white man to find a way of living with the Negro in order to be able to live with himself" (155).

Baldwin was not merely writing and speaking about what it meant to be a Negro, but more about what it means to be a man. His insights into the issues of black identity are inextricable part of his larger vision of an American society where black and white individuals will share the responsibility of seeking to accept and understand a past that continues to vitiate the present instead of letting it more closer to its cherished goals. He says, "whatever white people do not know about Negroes reveals, precisely and inexorably, what they do not know about themselves" (*The Fire* 43). Baldwin himself has stated that the artist's struggle for integrity must be considered as a kind of metaphor for the struggle which is universal and daily in the lives of all

human beings on the face of the globe to become and remain human beings, "The largeness of purpose and gentleness of intention which Baldwin voices have brought a new climate, a new element, a new season, to our country in our time" (Boyle 156). The season, the climate, the element which are James Baldwin, they are now in the foreground of America's awareness.

James Baldwin was born in Harlem, New York City, Aug. 2, 1924 and died on Nov. 30, 1987. He offered a vital literary voice during the era of civil rights activism in the 1950s and '60s. The eldest of nine children, his stepfather was a minister. At the age of 14, Baldwin became a preacher at the small Fireside Pentecostal Church in Harlem. After he graduated from high school, he moved to Greenwich Village. In the early 1940s, he transferred his faith from religion to literature. He met Richard Wright, who encouraged him to be a writer and helped him win a Eugene Saxton Fellowship. Soon afterward Baldwin moved to France to escape the stifling racial oppression he found in the United States. Although France was his more or less permanent residence until his death from cancer, Baldwin regarded himself as a "commuter" rather than an expatriate.

Baldwin began his career by publishing novels and short stories. Initially, he did not get any success and started reviewing books about the Negro problems. By the time he was twenty-four he had decided to stop reviewing books and went to France. For him, the world in which he was born was nothing less than a conspiracy against the cultivation of the talent. He admitted that "the most difficult thing in my life has been the fact that I was born a Negro and was forced, therefore, to effect some kind of truce" (*Notes* 5).

After ten sporadic years of work, he wrote his first novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), which is a partially autobiographical account of his youth. It

concerns with the formation of a boy's character, a sensitive Negro boy who has to find his way toward some liberating sense of his own human possibilities in the repressive atmosphere of a primitive religion of Jesus and Satan which is fervently celebrated in his Harlem Storefront Church and fiercely administered in his family. His essay collections *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), *Nobody Knows My Name* (1961) and *The Fire Next Time* (1963) were influential in informing a large white audience. The two most striking features of these works have been the re-introduction of personal experience into what has become a mainly impersonal form and secondly, the presentation of a great deal of hatred and despair in a very elegant, graceful style. His novels include *Giovanni's Room* (1956), about a white American expatriate who must come to terms with his homosexuality. Baldwin's third and well known novel *Another Country* (1962) explores the intra-racial heterosexual love in which the major characters are bitterly hated by the people in their society. *Going to Meet the Man* (1965) and *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* (1968) provided powerful descriptions of American racism. In *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1974), Baldwin again tries to transcend the hostility of urban life, through a story of young lover, but his effort is vitiated by sentimentality and problems of fictional technique. His successful play *The Amen Corner* (1954) is laden with black spirituals and biblical allusions.

In his novels and short fictions, Baldwin employs evangelical hyperbole, Jamesian Stream of consciousness and Hemingwayesque understatement to portray the different ways in which individuals react to cultural oppression. Stasis is even more overwhelming in his fiction. His characters do not develop; the action serves to dramatize their willful, sometimes desperate determination not to see the world any differently. The prose, more supple, less mannered than in his nonfiction, exhibits Baldwin's effortless synthesis of the two dominant stylistic influences on twentieth



century American fiction, Henry James and Ernest Hemingway. He combined intricate renderings of society and consciousness with pungent visceral imagery; at his best, Baldwin could present a character through his senses and in his society, be it Harlem in the '30s, post-war demimonde Paris or Greenwich Village and the Upper West Side in the '50s.

Sensibility, not intellectual rigor, dominates the essays. Like Henry James, Baldwin thought with his feelings. His great strength as an essayist is the dialectic contained in his style, which serves at the same time as a supple means of expression of the movement of his thought, and as an effective rhetoric, drawing the reader into new territories which might not have been entered had warning been posted in advance. As he became more committed to the movement of the oppressed, more *Political* in the broad sense, Baldwin felt he faced a fundamental problem of form. The formal qualities of the novels and essays he had written, their shapes and means of movement, the repertoire of language and its cadences, were derived from white culture. They represented the language of the oppressor. According to Baldwin, the language and forms used by the committed literary artist must spring from the experience and culture of the subjugated. In his own case, he would look to jazz and the blues. But he was never able to develop the sort of forms he sought.

As the civil rights struggle moved to the forefront of the country's consciousness during the two decades following world war II, its anguish and aspiration found eloquent expression in Baldwin's novels and essays. He commanded a full spectrum of tone: Pathos, politics, polemic, prophecy. For a nation ever more disjointed by the sudden, relentless assertiveness of the grandchildren of former slaves, Baldwin could 'articulate the inarticulable.' He mostly explores the theme of

human suffering and solitude, dread and despair, anguish and alienation, self hatred and salvation, tears and tenderness, identity and community through his novels.

Baldwin left an important legacy not only of works and accomplishment but also of struggle and quest. The most important aspects of his life and work is his unrelenting attack upon some of the more crucial and perennial problems of human social life, basic questions which revolve around dichotomies like politics and morality, love and power, the personal and the political. He wrestled also with the contradictions between art and politics and between the particular demands imposed by his identity as a black man and more general ones imposed by simply being human. Perhaps he broke himself on these rocks and achieved no final synthesis, but his profound and honest struggle is exemplary and full of lessons in these days of debates and dilemmas concerning multiculturalism, identity politics, the possibilities of social change and the role of artists and intellectuals.

Bloated, plotless, *Another Country* nevertheless, contains Baldwin's finest extended fiction, the opening section depicting the decline and suicide of Rufus Scott. This section, about 20 percent of a nearly 400 page book, renders the rest anticlimactic. It is set in New York City and focuses mainly on Harlem society. The main character, Rufus Scott, an unhappy black Jazz musician becomes frustrated and angry because of the treatment individuals receive in an environment which is essentially hostile toward black Americans and which erects barriers to their desire for love. He even realizes that he "had not thought at all about this world and its power to hate and destroy" (*Another Country* 27). In despair and desolate situation he disappears from his friends and family and finally commits suicide, "His body was controlled by laws he did not understand. Nor did he understand what force within this body had driven him into such a desolate place" (*Another country* 54). The 'force'

which has destroyed Rufus Scott is none other than racial injustice. Even the characters in the novel, specifically Vivaldo, Rufus' white friend, speculate that Rufus' death was caused by their and society's shortcomings. To sum up, we can say that Rufus' death suggests that there is no place where he can escape the iniquities of racism.

Therefore, the present research will be based on the emergence of racial consciousness in Rufus Scott and his sister Ida, the two main black characters in the novel. Racial consciousness, for Balfour, is an attention to "the underlying complex of associations that shape American's sense of identity, influence everyday encounters, and frame responses to questions about racial injustice" (6-7). Race consciousness implies not a bridge, but a mirror, and it demands analysis not only of the professed principles of U.S. democracy, but also of the very terms in which political inquiry into those principles is conducted. So to prove the thesis and hypothesis the researcher will be using racism as a critical tool. It is a broader term which encompasses the elements of history, culture and ethnicity. It involves the superiority of one group, ethnicity or its cultural practices over the other because the entitled inferior group lacks the set of criteria as prescribed by the privileged group. American history is, in fact, the history of slavery and race relations. Blacks in the United States have been affected by racial oppression throughout history, and it still influences their daily lives.

### **Critics on *Another Country***

The publication of Baldwin's novel *Another Country* spurred widespread criticism. Most of the critics have shown their concerns on the issues like, thwarted revelation, racial death-wish, black nationalism, bohemianism, moral confusion, homoeroticism and so on.

According to Nathan A. Scot, Jr, who appreciates Baldwin for his role as a Barrister for the Black multitudes at the bar of the American conscience, the novel *Another Country* "wants to summon us into the uncolonized world of 'another country,' of *agape* and *philia* – but which is yet more filled with the passions of hatred and contempt..." (300). He wants to say that the sense of hatred and contempt for other is a universal phenomena which is very much pervasive in our society. And this novel has aptly described it " than perhaps any other memorable American novel of our time" (300). In *American Literature Since 1900*, Arnold Goldman says, "*Another Country* is a novel whose theme is panoramic-nothing less than the soul of America expressed through an anatomy of love relationships [...]. The pairs of relationships run to both the inter-racial and the homosexual, in one case combined" (306). As mentioned above, 'love' is the only means to bind together people of different race, colour, creed and culture. And it is, as Goldman notes, implicit in the novel through the intraracial love relationships among the major characters who are bitterly hated by the people in their society.

About the grandeur and greatness of the book, Robert F. Sayre observes and opines that "love and death are the real subjects of *Another Country*, [...] but in the profound ways that they are also the subjects of a poem like *The Waste Land* " (167). He compares the 'waste land' of the poem *The Waste Land* with the New York City. For him "it was a city without oases, run entirely, [...] for money; and its citizens seemed to have lost entirely any sense of their right to renew themselves " (*Another Country* 316). The greatest sources of renewal, Baldwin reminds us, are love and death, but the people in *Another Country* run away from them.

Kevin Ohi's "Sexuality, Race and Thwarted Revelation" focuses on the thwarted revelation of secrets whose content is nowhere specified. He says:

*Another Country* speaks repeatedly of "revelation" and of the revelation of secrets, but the content of the secrets revealed is nowhere specified; the secret seems to occupy a purely structural place in the novel, one which gives the characters, like the novel itself, their coherence, and marks their unutterable sadness. (26)

It shows that for Ohi, revelation appears only in the guise of its failure. That the characters taken to be revealing themselves to themselves and to others can in fact reveal only the fact of having an incommunicable secret attest to a traumatic opacity, as incommensurable as it is inconsolable and as incomprehensible as it is essential, at the center of their experience.

Quite differently Stefanie Dunning in "Parallel Perversions" points out that racial and sexual selves can never be homogeneous or circumscribed. He writes:

James Baldwin's *Another Country* reveals the interdependency of "disciplining" sexuality in the fashion outlined by Foucault[...]. There can be no "white" or "black" nation because the relationship of opposition between the two is what makes the idea of a racially pure nation even possible. (63)

This suggests that Dunning is against the concept of black and eurocentric nationalism. For him, the assumption of this nationalistic discourses of the idea of a racially pure nation that can be achieved through heterosexual and mono-racial sex is nothing more than a fantasy, which cannot be materialized.

Eldridge Cleaver, a prominent black critic, is famous for suggesting interracial homosexuality in *Another Country* as a "racial death-wish" typical of the black bourgeoisie (103), who have rejected their blackness, their African heritage; "The cross they have to bear is that already bending over and touching their toes for the

white men, the fruit of their miscegenation is not the little half-white offspring of their dreams..."(102). His discomfort is not only with homosexual desire, but also with submission to the white man. For Cleaver, to be both homosexual and black is to express a hatred for blackness through the death wish. In this construction, to be black is to be feminized and to be homosexual is to be castrated.

Another critic Andrew Shin in "Beneath the Black Aesthetic" says that this text has attempted, "To evoke the bohemian world through a sequence of riffs and montages [...]. The late-night world of Jazz clubs, endless talk and sexuality—this is the milieu that Baldwin depicts, but he debunks the popular representation of bohemian elan ..." (104). Thus, for Shin, the celebration of Jazz and Blues, endless gossips, probative sexual ventures and drug culture, Baldwin depicted in *Another Country*, act as forms of oppositional cultural power – an integral elements of the Civil Rights Movement, as well as, the sources of forms of indigenous black expression.

Peter B. High comments that in *Another Country*, however, "Baldwin begins to describe the moral confusion and race hatred of American cities" (217). Thus, he highlights the relationships of love and hate between the characters who are involved in intraracial sexuality.

To understand the spirit of the text, the above mentioned views are insufficient and just tangential. Therefore, for a more convincing analysis of the text race consciousness will be remarkable which the researcher will explore deeply in this thesis.

## II. Race, Racism and Racial Discrimination

### Introduction

Race refers to a socially constructed concept that divides human kind into major division in terms of distinctive characteristics; "In its original use, race itself referred to origins in common stock. This could be family, religion or nation, but it applied equally to plant and animal life" (Gerzina 129). Generally, categorization of a group of race resulted from the biological basis. In this sense, hereditary transmission of physical characteristics became the authentic base for the definition of race. Thus, genetically a race may be defined as a group with gene frequencies differing from those of the other groups in the human species. But even this hereditary differences turns out to be quite minimum when it is compared to a vast number of genes common to all human beings regardless of the race to which they belong. Bill Ashcroft defines race as:

A term for the classification of human beings into physically, biologically and genetically distinct groups. The notion of race assumes, firstly, that humanity is divided into unchanging natural types, recognizable by physical features that are transmitted 'through the blood' and permit distinctions to be made between 'pure' and 'mixed' races. (198)

The usage of the category of race to classify various types of human being is relatively recent, and indeed that the widespread usage of the language of race is a phenomenon of the post Enlightenment period. A clear statement of this periodization is provided by George Mosse. He writes:

Racism has its foundations both in the Enlightenment and in the religious revival of the eighteenth century. It was a product of the

preoccupation with a rational universe, nature and aesthetics, as well as with the emphasis upon the eternal force of religious emotion and man's soul. It was part, too, of the drive to define man's place in nature and of the hope for an ordered, healthy, and happy world. (41)

Whatever the long-term history of images of the 'other' in various societies and historical periods it does seem clear that only in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century does the term 'race' come to refer to supposedly discrete categories of people defined according to their physical characteristics. This is, of course, not to say that the category of race was not used in earlier times.

We have found some traces of the usage of the term 'race' in some of the earliest European languages. In the earliest human writings:

We can find more or less well articulated views about the differences between 'our own kind' and the people of other cultures. These doctrines, like modern theories of race, have often placed a central emphasis on physical appearance in defining the 'other' and on common ancestry in explaining why groups of people display differences in their attributes and aptitudes. (Appiah 274)

The study and practice of race was also prevalent in the writing of the classical Greek and ancient, Hebrew societies. They distinguished themselves with 'others' on the basis of appearances, customs, traditions, language, attitude, religion, physical surrounding or location. During the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the Greek writer Hypocrites tried to establish the superiority of the people of his own race arguing that "barren soils of Greece had forced the Greeks to become tougher and more independent" (Appiah 275). In the Hellenic world, the black "Ethiopians" and



blonde "Scythians" were regarded inferior to the Greeks. But, in the writing of pre-Socratic sophists and Homer, racial characteristics were defined on the basis of an individual quality of a person instead of colour.

The discovery of New World i.e., America by Christopher Columbus brought lots of changes in the perception of the people of the new land; "This accident of the history of the perception of human differences produced the race concept as it is now generally held" (Brace 116). During the Elizabethan period, Negro was defined as "black, ugly, cruel, sexual, rampant and barely human" (Salgado xiii). In the Victorian era many racialists were of the opinion that:

We could divide human beings into smaller number of groups, called 'races', in such a way that all the members of these races shared certain fundamental, biologically heritable, moral and intellectual characteristics with each other that they did not share with members of any other race. (Appiah 276)

It is certainly from the eighteenth century that we can trace the flowering in a number of European societies of writings about race, and the emergence of what we now call racism. During the eighteenth and nineteenth century lots of social, economic, intellectual and political change took place in the global scenario. The growth of invasions, conquests and migrations gave birth to a heterogeneous world population. The term 'race' became much more poignant during the colonial period when the people of different places came into contact with each other. The division of human society in the name of race is inextricable from the need of colonialist powers to establish a dominance over subject people, and hence justify the imperial enterprise. It provides impetus to draw a *binary* distinction between 'civilized' and 'primitive' and the same necessity for the hierarchization of human

types. It quickly became one of imperialism's most supportive ideas to fulfil their imperial mission: dominance and enlightenment. Thus, the study of racial doctrines and ideologies took new mode during post-enlightenment-period and reached its high point during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and it was defined according to the idea that "races embodied a package of fixed physical and mental traits" (Bulmer and Solomos 8).

The twentieth century has brought a significant, change in the theoretical attitude to race. The 1911 Universal Races Congress Organized in London demonstrated liberal thought and focused on 'monogenism' the idea that there is only one species of man living on earth today. Modern scientists, according to Kwame Anthony Appiah, "believe that such classification as Negro, Caucasian, and Mongoloid are of no importance for biological purposes" (277). Modern science does not believe in racial difference. The 1951 UNESCO statement of the Nature of Race and Racial Difference pointed out that:

Race, even from a strict biological standpoint, could *at most* refer to a group with certain distinctive gene concentrations. The statement asserts that mental characteristics should never be included in such classifications and that environment is far more important than inherited genetic factors in shaping behaviour. (Ashcroft 204)

However, in the 1960s, there was a sudden rise in biological thinking about human behaviour. The writers such as Lorenz, Morris and Andry asserted that personal behaviour was chiefly controlled by ancient instincts that could be modified by culture. This gave the way for a sudden increase in race thinking in popular science in the 1970s.

The continuing debates about the origins, evolution, and consequences of ideas about race show no sign of disappearing. On the contrary, a new wave of scholarship has started to explore the same broad terrain as earlier generations of scholars, albeit within new terms of discourse.

### **Racism and its Politico-Cultural Implications**

Racism is an ideology of racial domination based on beliefs that a designated racial group is either biologically or culturally inferior and the use of such beliefs to rationalize or prescribe the racial group's treatment in society, as well as to explain its social position and accomplishment. Bill Ashcroft defined it as, "a way of thinking that considers a group's unchangeable physical characteristics to be linked in a direct, causal way to psychological or intellectual characteristics, and which on this basis distinguishes between 'superior' and 'inferior' racial groups" (199). In short, it is a belief system or a set of implicit assumption about the superiority of one's own race or ethnic group other than that of one's own. Thus, it is a discrimination made by a group of people on the basis of race, colour, religion or culture and the discrimination itself is the product of prejudice and stereotypical mode of thoughts or assumptions that "attempts to classify humanity according to the idea that 'races' embodied a package of fixed physical and mental traits" (Bulmer and Solomos 8).

Racism is a broader term which encompasses the elements of history, culture and ethnicity. It involves the superiority of one group, ethnicity or its cultural practices over the other because the entitled inferior group lacks the set of criteria as prescribed by the privileged group. In course of social dealings, racism exists both in conscious and unconscious level. Forming an instant fixed idea of a group and to associate the genetic traits to social characteristics is a false notion,

usually based on false or incomplete information. Therefore Gerzina has rightly said that "racism at individual level involves a misguided personal belief that an entire racial group is deficient or superior because of a set of moral, intellectual, or a cultural traits that are thought to be indicated by the group's biological origin" (126).

Racism as a concept is much more closely tied to race, a concept confused with ethnicity and culture. Race refers to social groups which differ in terms of physical attributes accorded social significance. Ethnicity on the other hand, is a classification which is based in terms of language, culture, place of origin, or common membership of a descent group without distinguishing physical characteristics. Whereas, culture is a broader category that extends beyond race and ethnicity to include any group of people who share common lifestyle, which are passed on to members of the particular group, e.g., socio-economic status, sexual orientation, geographic location.

Racism basically has two forms: individual racism and institutional racism. Racism at individual level include, an individual's belief that an entire racial group is inferior or superior on the basis of physical features linked with intellectual and moral characteristics. If these personal characteristics get connected with cultural institutions like religion, education and military institutions in order to exclude or include not a person but also an entire group, it takes the form of institutionalized racism. Idea of indoctrination, i.e., Afro-Americans are inferior and the discrimination or the feeling of superiority over "the other" on the basis of colour and shape of skin, eye, hair, lips etc. are the dominant tendency of racism. When a Afro-American family moves into a home in the white neighbourhood and is stoned, burned or routed out, they are the

victims of the act of individual racism. But when hundreds of babies die each year because of lack of proper food, shelter and medical facilities and thousand more are destroyed and maimed physically, emotionally and intellectually because of poverty and discrimination in the Afro-American community, they are the victims of the act of institutional racism. Racism, after all, begins at personal level. This individual racism takes the form of institutional racism which ultimately culminates into the cultural racism. A National Council of Churches work group has summarized this institutionalized racism as:

Both consciously and unconsciously, racism is enforced and maintained by the legal, cultural, religious, educational, economic, political, environmental and military institutions of societies.

Racism is more than just a personal attitude; it is the institutionalized form of that attitude. (qtd. Feagin 3)

In the context of the resistance and riots of the 1960s Carmichael and Hamilton published *Black Power* (1968) which presented what became an influential political analysis and strategy. They defined racism as "the prediction of decisions and policies on considerations of race for the purpose of *subordinating* a racial group and maintaining control over that group" (qtd. Miles 352). They distinguished between overt and individual racism on the one hand and covert and institutional racism on the other. The former was defined as explicit actions by individuals and the latter as those actions and inactions which maintain 'black' people in a disadvantaged situation and which rely on "the active and pervasive operation of anti-black attitudes and practices" (qtd. Miles 352). Thus, the concept of racism was expanded in the meaning to include not only beliefs but, more

important, all actions, individual and institutional, which had the consequence of sustaining or increasing the subordination of 'black' people.

The concept of 'Negro race' as inferior and European civilization as superior is based on the belief that 'Negroes' lack certain qualities such as lack of good social organization and social actions, lack of fellow feeling, lack of originality of thought, and lack of artistic qualities especially "deficient on the side of mechanical arts", and in general, "show [ing] no tendency toward higher development" (Reinch 3). Both in the past and at present, Afro-Americans are discriminated and declared as an inferior race on the basis of colour. Ever since the pre-Christian era to the present the very black colour is associated with ugliness, despair, evil and death, whereas, the whiteness is associated with beauty, goodness, virtue and innocence. The white racists try their best to dehumanize Afro-American by labelling them as a link between monkeys and men, i.e., white people and their approval goes something like the notion of New Testament that "we are the chosen people look at the colour of our skins. The others are black or yellow: that is because of their sins" (Fanon 30). "Racist assumptions of white superiority have been so deeply engrained into the fiber of the society that they infuse the entire functioning of the national subconscious ..." (Carmichael 31). Thus, racism is ubiquitous and it informs every level of discourse in our society.

In America racism was analyzed for political purposes so that it would be easy to rule over the oppressed groups. William H. Tucker in his article "The Science and Politics of Racial Research" argues, "The truth is that though waged with scientific weapons, the goal in this has always been political, indeed the debate has no strictly scientific purpose or value" (380). Thus, making science as an authority to propound and perpetuate the existing racial prejudices, scientists

modified the subject matter to suit their personal agenda. It is the strategy to rule over the Afro-Americans by silencing their voices. Therefore, the study of racism in twentieth century is the study of political racism because genetic difference between the Afro-American and white is studied under the scientific criteria giving the political colour. Tucker further says:

The question of genetic differences between races has arisen not out of purely scientific curiosity or the desire to find some important scientific truth or to solve some significant scientific problem but only because of the belief, explicit or unstated that the answer has political consequences. (382)

Likewise, they also taught that the Afro-American is less human because he has "an oval skull, flat forehead, snout-like jaws, swollen lips, broad, flat nose, short crimped hair, calfless legs, highly elongated heels, and flat feet" (Ellis 13). Thus, exaggerating the deformities as set by the white standard, they tried to give permanence and stability to the false doctrine of natural Afro-American inferiority.

The experience of the second world war and the knowledge of the consequences of Hitler's 'final solution' to the 'Jewish question' led to new initiatives after 1945 to try to prevent the discourse of 'race' from being used for similar political purposes in the future. The most significant was undertaken by UNESCO in 1950s. The fourth UNESCO statement defines racism as a falsification of the scientific knowledge about human biology: "Racism falsely claims that there is a scientific basis for arranging groups hierarchically in terms of psychological and cultural characteristics that are immutable and innate" (qtd. Miles 348). Thus, this statement on race, took the lead in arguing that biologists

should abandon the race concept in dealing with human variation because the assumptions embedded in common social usage made it unsuitable for scientific discourse.

Racism takes new shape due to interference of different social, political and cultural institution in course of time and instead of following a notion of singularity, it encompasses diverse scholarly ideas which has been shaped and determined by several power politics. The contemporary form of racism is defined in terms of culture and identity which is shaped by the discourses like nationalism or patriotism, xenophobia, gender differences etc. The social and political upheaval of the '60s and '70s paved way to the post modern liberal and multicultural society. The traditional mode of racism has been replaced by 'New-racism'. New racism sees the race not as biological issue or heredity but as culture product. At the surface level, it doesn't believe in the superiority of one race of people over the others but 'only' harmfulness of abolishing frontiers. But its main ethos is to segregate the other than the people of one's own race; "The new racism is primarily concerned with mechanism of exclusion or inclusion" (Gilroy 250). It has not diminished the gap between the meanings used in the past centuries to the present century. Thus, "Racist ideologies and practice have distinct meanings bounded by historical circumstances and determined in struggle" (Gilroy 248).

### **Racism in American Society**

The history of America began with the grabbing of the land from Native Americans and enforcing the Afro-Americans to cultivate the land. It consequently created hierarchies in colour and division of land. The whites established a system of privilege in terms of oppression and exploitation. American geographical and cultural space has provided limitless potential to the



whites since its settlement, but the Afro-Americans have been denied such spaces. Their African heritage and later the southernness are repudiated by the larger culture. Over the different historical events – slavery, emancipation, migration and integration – they tried to negotiate their relationship with their cultural traditions. But white race and its cultural heritage consistently marginalized them. Therefore, it won't be hyperbolic to state that American history itself is a practice of racism. Thus, the American society was clearly based on exploitation. Previously rich white people and later on the whites in general excessively exploited Indians and especially Afro-Americans and marginalized them. Harris and Ordonez say:

The social divisions along the colour line crossed class, nationality, language, and religious barriers. The simple fact of "whiteness" meant the overall life, fortune, and destiny of white people [...] white people were exempt from slavery, land grab, and genocide the first form of white privilege. White enjoyed wide latitude of opportunities, personal freedom, and democratic rights protected by state. Even though poor American – born and immigrant whites were viciously exploited by rich white people, they were not on the bottom. The bottom was reserved for Indians, black, and other people of color. (27-28)

The African American lived in a state of constant humiliation. His dignity as an individual was not admitted and he got no respect from the white and even non-white people of the world. The African American was segregated from school, was deprived of public facilities and had to suffer excessive police brutality. The African American's true identity was only that of a wage earner and professional

man in American society. African Americans were never privileged for more skilled jobs. Rather they continued to be concentrated on the less skilled jobs and most of them remained unemployed. They were living with both socially and economically depressed status. It is due to the discrimination against them in training and employment opportunities offered by the armed services, discrimination against them in vocational and academic training, discrimination against them in referral services rendered by state employment services, the African Americans were forced to live under the depressed status. Moreover, the African American students had been denied admission to the white school. Even if given admission, the student was not given equal treatment; he was required to sit at a separate table in the library and had a specific seat in the classroom.

It is from the time the Africans were first brought to America, the social body and mind of the white race had been acting against the Afro-American. It was believed that many Afro-Americans were poor, uneducated and deficient in health, morals, and manners and thus, were not very agreeable as social companions. It was also pointed out that Afro-Americans were different in physical appearance even if they had the same basic mental capacity and moral propensities. Beside these beliefs centering on Afro-American inferiority, there are a great number of other popular thoughts arranged to justify social segregation, the thoughts that Afro-Americans liked to be separated, that they were happy in their humble status and would not like to be treated as equals. Another idea with the same function is that the separation was necessary in order to prevent friction between the two groups.

Whenever one talk about racism and its practices in the United States of America, civil war takes forefront position in such discussion. Both the south and

northern region appear as the dominant playground of racial discrimination. Regional economic differences helped bring about the outbreak of the civil war in 1861. In the south, enslaved African Americans provided the labour needed for an agricultural economy based on raising and selling cotton. In the north, free people both white and Afro-American worked for wages in the mines, factories, and trading companies of a growing industrial economy. As the nation expanded westward, many southerners wanted slavery to expand with it, but most northerners did not. It was during the presidential year of Abraham Lincoln that Afro-Americans were declared free from slavery and equal level of opportunities were pronounced even to them.

After the declaration of emancipation, Afro-Americans moved to North for better opportunities and freedom but they felt themselves alienated and isolated in new urban life. Again in North they faced the problem of identity crisis, sense of dispossession and fragmentation. So in order to gain new identity they started to internalize white norms because it was the only alternative available to them, but it caused the split in Afro-American self. This very tragic state is explained in DuBois' *The Soul of Black Folk*. He says that Afro-American people were "born with a veil, and gifted with second sight in the American world – a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world" (364). Thus, emancipation only brought the sense of regional displacement and elevated African Americans to the position of a semi-independent being. The slave trade indeed, disappeared during the first second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century but the master slave relationship between whites and Afro-Americans was replaced by "other forms of unfree labour such as indentures, share cropping, debt – bondage" (Bulmer and Solomos 10).

The life of Afro-American during the slavery is characterized by extreme pain and misery. Sexual exploitation and inhuman treatment became rampant. The separation of father and mother slaves on the one hand, and their separation with their children on the other, was a common phenomenon. The slave holder held the total power as a result the victim, was helpless. Frederick Douglass, who was himself an American slave, explains in his work *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas*, a sensational and heart-breaking account of physical torture and mental agony which was indeed the day to day experiences in the lives of Afro-American slaves. He writes:

I have often been awakened at the dawn of the day by the most heart rendering shrieks of an own aunt of mine, whom he used to tie up to a joist and whip upon her naked back till she was literally covered with blood [...]. He would whip her to make scream and whip her to make her hush, and not until overcome by fatigue, would he cease to swing the blood-dotted cow skin. (15)

It was the experiences of Afro-American slaves in the southern plantation land where oppression, exploitation and severe punishment were common. During the post – bellum period, the ex-slaves of the south moved to the North as an industrial labour so that they may attain the freedom and material success. But North, too, could not fulfil their wishes. In fact, Afro-American's journey from south to North is nothing more than "out of the fire into the melting pot" (Ellison 150). Everywhere Afro-Americans suffered from the loss of identity and social recognition and, thus, they were dehumanized.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first couple of decades of the twentieth, the Afro-American appears to have started uttering the

voice of deep hurt and bitter disappointment against white mainstream culture. In 1920's the New York city community of Harlem developed into the cultural centre for Afro-Americans. They glorified the attainments of Afro-Americans in music, literature, painting, athletics, business, or other professions. They promoted Afro-American fraternal orders, civic association, churches, commercial establishment and other groups and institutions. In doing so, they expressed their displeasure concerning their overall condition and articulated their cultural heritage.

The event which brought about a significant change in the image and status of Afro-American was world war II. During world war I American Afro-Americans had fought in segregated regiments, but in world war II many more Afro-Americans were involved, and no longer were they separated from other American soldiers. This was the first time that the Afro-American on a large scale had been officially treated as equal to the white man. Also during the 1930's and 1940's the Afro-Americans economic status vastly improved, their sporting achievements were universally acclaimed, and their music was recognized as a significant art form. Nevertheless, though the Afro-American was no longer ignored, his situation in society was not essentially different from what it had been during the earlier years. This gave rise to considerable frustration, and the Afro-American's search for identity moved into a more assertive phase. No longer did the Afro-American aspire to be like the white man, no longer did he feel impelled to adopt an identity created for him by others. On one level this new phase in the Afro-American's search for identity manifested itself in various negative ways, being motivated by a simple desire to be as different from the white man as possible. The police, being made up almost exclusively of white

Americans was associated with the white establishment. Therefore, to be on the wrong side of the law tended to become a way of asserting one's identity as a Afro-American. If the dominant religion in America were Christian, than one should assert one's identity by adopting to Islam. A more positive approach, however, was an attempt to renew ties with black Africa.

Centuries of slavery and decades of legal segregation finally came to an end with the civil rights revolution of the 1950s and 1960s. This is the moment in which James Baldwin's powerful indictment was issued. His eloquent voice became one of protest and social outrage against racial inequality. With the germination of the sense of revolt, organization such as the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP), the Committee on Racial Equality (CORE), and the Urban League accelerated movements for African – American rights pointing to the doctrine of human equality and of the natural or divine rights of man. "Freedom Riders" ranged through the south demanding desegregation and implementation of the US Supreme Court decision on educational desegregation. The year 1963 marked, of course, the hundredth anniversary of the Emancipation, and it was a year made notable by many vast demonstrations mounted by Afro-American groups in the streets of cities in the north, as well as in the south, as they passed forward their demands for the desegregation of public facilities and for the extension of fair employment opportunities. This activity was brought to a kind of climax on the twenty-eighth of August by the march on Washington for jobs and freedom, when more than two hundred thousand people, Afro-American and white, from all over the land gathered on the mall extending from the Washington monument to the Lincoln

memorial, in the largest outdoor mass meeting in the history of the nation's capital.

Less than a year after the march on Washington in 1964, the congress under president Lyndon Johnson, enacted the most comprehensive civil rights legislation in the country's history, the Act giving to the Attorney General effective power to defend all citizens against any deprivation of their free access to public facilities, of their exercise of the ballot, and of their use of the nation's public educational resources. Thus, widespread societal changes came in the 1960s as African Americans moved into areas of society formerly off limits to them. Federal and state governments began the task of dismantling the legal foundations of a segregated society and granted Afro-Americans formal equality. Some government and private employees implemented programs to overcome the consequences of past discrimination. Between the mid-1970s, and the early 1990s, however, many white decision makers in the private and public sectors abandoned aggressive programs to redress racial discrimination and retreated to a rhetoric of formal equality. As a result, in the twenty-first century also racial discrimination remains at the heart of U.S. society. Therefore, W.E.B. DuBois' remarks – "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line" which he prophetically observed in 1903 is, still, equally apt for the twenty-first century (qtd. Bulmer and Solomos 3).

### **Black Consciousness in Literature**

The history of the Afro-American man in America has been a series of protests. Proclamations of dignity, selfhood, equality, freedom, and justice have always been the Afro-American man's most personal confrontation with the speaking platform. The numbers and varieties of the Afro-American writers and

spokesmen suggest the energy expended in the effort of Afro-American liberation. The Afro-American writer's voice concern over the presence in today's society of the same racist tendencies that have existed in the nation since 1619. While they are aware of some change, they see the need for an even greater commitment on the part of the American society for liberty and justice for the Blackman. There has never been significant movement by Afro-Americans to overthrow the American government, to the contrary, Afro-Americans have sought to bring about more authentic changes in the American political, social and economic system through black consciousness movement. On the other hand, they also sought to redress the negative self-image created in many Afro-American people by their long history of enslavement and discriminatory treatment, treatment made inescapable by the visibility of their perceived difference.

Unlike the writers most frequently studied in literature courses, Afro-American writers were created mostly by need rather than by desire. There are obvious reasons for the more utilitarian motives of Afro-American writers. First, the literated Afro-American man who could write effectively assumed the responsibility of speaking for Afro-Americans, individually or as a group. Second, publishers – whether nineteenth century Abolitionists or twentieth century editors – most often have been interested in publicizing the works of a Afro-American writer if he addressed himself to "The Negro Problem". Through the centuries, the specific issues have varied : protests against slavery; biographical or historical presentations of the cultural achievements of Afro-American men, protests against lynching, arguments about education, job opportunities, voting rights, legal rights, civil rights, housing. Despite the seeming



variety, always there is "The Causes" developed in two dominant themes – protests against unjust treatment of Afro-Americans and defences of Afro-Americans based on their contributions to America. Because of this sustained emphasis upon purpose, the literary writings of Afro-Americans have been judged more frequently according to the popular appeal of the subject matter rather than the literary skill of the writer.

Although usages of the term 'race' to classify various types of human being have been traced somewhat earlier in a number of European languages, the development of racial doctrines and ideologies begins to take shape in the late eighteenth century, and reached its high point during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is, of course, not to say that the category of race was not used in earlier times.

It is from the turn of the nineteenth century that race formed an important body of literary writing. Appiah writes:

For literary purposes, the developments that begin at the turn of nineteenth century have another immediate consequence: race becomes important at the theme of great body of writing in Europe and North America – and, indeed, in the rest of the world under the influence of "western" cultures – and the concept often plays a crucial role in structuring plot. (279)

During the exuberant 1920s, Harlem became the national centre of African American culture, including the arts of theatre, dance and music. The African American jazz became widely praised as beautiful music. Langston Hughes was one of the important poets of Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s in the company of James Weldon Johnson, Claude Mc Kay and Countee Cullen who popularized

African American jazz rhythms. The second half of the twentieth century brought a renaissance to multiethnic literature. Ethnic studies initiated during the 1970s. In 1980s, a number of academic journals, professional organizations and literary magazines concerned about ethnic groups were begun.

In a nutshell, racial issues have become the constant themes of literature especially, in the United States of America. American culture projects a hierarchy of white and Afro-American culture. The differences among people play a vital role in forming our values and identities. So long as the racial difference lasts, the literary study and production will rest upon the theme of race. Appiah writes:

Differences among peoples, like differences among communities within a single society, play a central role in our thinking about "who" we are, in structuring our values, and in determining the identities through which we live [...]. And so long as it continues it is likely that race will continue to be a preoccupation, not only of the literary history of nineteenth century and twentieth centuries, but also of future literary production and literary study. (287)

So, racial differences, prejudice, and inequality have helped enrich the creative potentialities of the authors.

### **III. Racial Consciousness and Afro-American Identity**

Race consciousness is to be regarded as a phenomenon, like class or caste consciousness, that enforces social distances. Thus anything that intensifies race consciousness; anything, particularly if it is a permanent physical trait, that increases an individual's visibility and by so doing makes more obvious his identity with a particular ethnic unit or genetic group, tends to create and maintain the conditions under which race relations, may be said to exist. In this sense, race relations are not so much the relations that exist between individuals of different races as between individuals conscious of these differences.

The relationship between whites and Afro-Americans as a member of two distinct races is shaped by the power relation on the one hand and the wide economic gaps on the other. In this regard, their relationship appears like that of master and slave. The whites as members of a privileged class are inclined to oppress the Afro-American on the basis of colour, caste and socio-economic status so that they can impose their own ideology and rule upon them. But Afro-Americans in spite of their poor socio-economic status are not ready to accept such inhuman treatment. As a result members of respective communities get into clash and consequently, it invites racial hostility.

Whites as a member of a privileged class have valorised the colour of their own caste, i.e., whiteness. In this regard, whiteness is associated to beauty and happiness by contrasting blackness to ugliness and despair. As a member of a distinct race an Afro-American becomes 'the other' in white men's eyes. And when the economic status and the colour of skin is labelled as a measuring rod of social acceptance the Afro-Americans get systematically deranged. The social structure has become so complex that the members of both communities feel devoid of love

and co-operation. As a result, a deep rooted hatred is born in their heart that ultimately helps to build up the uncongenial and hostile situation.

When whites started to enslave Afro-American by instigating racial violence, the relationship became the bitter one. But counter racism by the Afro-Americans made the situation rather worse. It is disbelief and distrust that occupy the heart of both community members. As a result, racial hostility has brought tragedy in their lives. Whites do not see Afro-Americans as an individual, simply, because they are in power and position. They discriminate the Afro-Americans on the basis of colour, caste and class. As a result, they are systematically deranged. The pronouncement of social equality, freedom and pursuit of happiness to all member of American citizen could not materialize on behalf of Afro-Americans. Whites enjoyed the power and position, whereas, poverty and social inequality became the permanent lot of the Afro-Americans. In fact, Afro-Americans, too, equally took part in the building of nation but their contributions were never paid attention. In such state, the relationship between Afro-Americans and whites turned out to be quite hostile or problematic. The position of Afro-Americans as circus animal and whites as the master created a deep gulf in the relationship between whites and Afro-Americans.

Thus, Baldwin has raised the Afro-American man's voice for equal rights, opportunity and identity in his prominent work, *Another Country*. Baldwin's *Another Country* portrays the struggle that one Afro-American man faces while trying to live in a racially segregated society. It develops through the many levels of conflict. Personal conflicts arise on superficial level, but conflicts about race, social status, and political view points drive these superficial conflicts. The characters act out in rage due to the stress caused by social circumstances. It is a

powerful, intensely gripping story of an unhappy Afro-American Jazz drummer who was driven to commit suicide by reason of a New York environment which is essentially hostile towards Afro-Americans and which erects barriers to their desire to love. The protagonist is a social misfit who is addicted to sex, drug, and late-night-world of jazz clubs and endless talk. Due to the effects of racial suppression, he is frustrated and neurotic. In despair and desolate situation, he disappears from his friends and family and finally commits suicide.

### **Rufus Scott: A Victim of Institutionalized Racism**

The protagonist, Rufus Scott, is a grown up, poor, uneducated, unprivileged and an unhappy jazz musician. He has been oppressed and controlled by whites throughout his life. He grew in a society where two worlds, white and Afro-American, were apparent. These two worlds were physically separated. There were white schools and Afro-American schools, white churches and Afro-American churches, white business and Afro-American business, white graveyards and Afro-American graveyards and moreover, a white god and a Afro-American god. Thus, Afro-American and his family are the oppressed victims of racism which is systematically institutionalized by the white racist society. Because of their colour, their poverty, and the white myth of Bad Nigger, they are confined to the Black Belt of New York city and are prevented from developing their human potential for growth. The full consciousness of the shame and misery of the way they are forced to live threatens to engulf Rufus in fear and despair. Thus, Rufus' life has been filled with hostility and oppression. Anger, frustration and violence are the only reality of his life.

The idea of indoctrination, i.e., Afro-Americans are inferior and the discrimination or the feeling of superiority over "the other" on the basis of colour

and shape of skin, eye, hair, lips etc. are the dominant tendency of racism. Racism after all, begins at personal level. This individual racism, in course of time, ultimately culminates into institutional racism. Actually, discrimination of personal level forms at the collective level. It provides stamp of legality. At social level it becomes mind set, but when it becomes system or institutionalized it is very much difficult to change. Thus, it can be defined as those activities and practices which are intended to protect the advantages of a dominant group and/or to maintain or widen the unequal position of a subordinate group.

Rufus Scott, the protagonist of the text, is a victim of institutionalized racism. The 'policeman' as a very dominant motif in this novel, comes frequently. It symbolizes the white racist society. The police, being made up almost exclusively of white Americans was associated with the white establishment. Rufus repeatedly notes that policemen's prejudice does allow them to see him; it has forced him into a life of frustration and despair. Because he has realized "about this world and its power to hate and destroy" (27).

Rufus' relationship with Leona, his white lover, went wrong within few months and started beating and scolding her for no reason. To this, Vivaldo, his white friend, refuted and said that "you could be killed for this. All she has to do is yell. All I have to do is walk down to the corner and get a cop" (55). This instance, shows how covert or institutionalized racism is prevailing in white society. No doubt, Vivaldo loves Rufus very much and even Leona liked him from her heart which is itself revealed from her own statements, "I love him [...] I love him, I can't help it. No matter what he does to me. He's just lost and he beats me because he can't find nothing else to hit" (59). But they are the product of the same racist society. The idea that Afro-Americans are inferior to them and so they

must be oppressed and controlled by them, who are superior race is placed somewhere in the unconscious part of their mind. Knowingly or unknowingly it gets out and they also start to behave as their other fellow members having racist attitudes. So it is very difficult to get rid of this sense of superiority which is imposed upon them by the long history of slavery, exploitation and racial segregation.

After this incidence, Vivaldo and Leona left Rufus alone in his apartment and as they were looking for a taxi, Baldwin writes:

A policeman passed them, giving them a look. Vivaldo felt a chill go through Leona's body. Then a chill went through his own. He had never been afraid of policeman before, he had merely despised them. But now he felt the impersonality of the uniform, the emptiness of the streets. He felt what the policeman might say and do if he had been Rufus, walking here with his arm around Leona.

(59)

This also associates the policeman with white authority. For the first time in the story, Vivaldo realizes the pitiable situation of Rufus and in general of Afro-American people. He is revealed that the African American lived in a state of constant humiliation. His dignity as an individual was not admitted and he got no respect from the white and even non-white people of the world. The African American was segregated from public as well as private facilities and had to suffer excessive police brutality. Thus, the African Americans were forced to live under the depressed status.

Once Vivaldo and Rufus got injuries in a bar while fighting with some people and Vivaldo requested Rufus to go with him for treatment. But Rufus said

"No, man. Listen. If I go with you, it's going to be a whole lot of who shot John because I'm black and you're white" (35). So, Rufus mind is filled with different thoughts. He is completely aware of the racial antagonism prevailing in an environment in which he belongs. Though both of them are involved in the fight, he knows that it is only he, who would be accused for the injuries of Vivaldo. This hints that Rufus is psychologically disturbed by white racists attitude towards the Afro-Americans.

The day before Rufus committed suicide, he faced the policeman for the last time, "The policeman passed him, giving him a look. He was hungry, his mouth felt filthy. And he was broke and had nowhere to go" (1). His black male body is under surveillance. This suggests the ongoing racial tension between whites and Afro-Americans in American society. The policeman is a representative of white authority who always looks at the Afro-Americans with envy and suspicion. Baldwin further says, "The policemen strolled by; carefully, and in fact rather mysteriously conveying their awareness that these particular Negroes, though they were out so late, and mostly drunk, were not to be treated in the usual fashion" (10). So, white racist believed that Afro-Americans were poor, uneducated, powerless and deficient in health, morals, and manners and they were not very agreeable as social companions. Besides these beliefs centering on Afro-American inferiority, there are a great number of other popular thoughts arranged to justify racial segregation; the thoughts that Afro-Americans liked to be separated, that they were happy in their humble status and would not like to be treated as equals. Another idea with the same function is that the separation was necessary in order to prevent friction between the two groups. So, the whites think



that they have the right to "look" and monitor the social, economic and cultural activities of Afro-Americans.

Thus, Rufus and his family are the oppressed victims of the white exploitative and industrialized world and its systematic institutionalized forms of racial hatred. Because of their physical attributes, they are confined to Harlem – a Black Belt of New York. Rufus himself recognised that "the weight of this city was murderous" (4).

Racial consciousness proves to be fatal for Rufus Scott. The more conscious he becomes of the hostile environment, the more he dives into the state of depression. The racial tension between Rufus and Vivaldo is more explicit right after Rufus and Leona get together. Vivaldo comes over the night after Rufus and Leona have sexual relationship, and Rufus immediately finds himself thinking about what Vivaldo is thinking about him, sexually:

He stole a look at Vivaldo, sipping his beer and watching Leona with an impenetrable smile [...] perhaps Vivaldo was contemptuous of him or perhaps he was flirting with her because she seemed so simple and available : the proof of her availability being her presence in Rufus' house. (26)

Rufus is questioning his sexual value as a Afro-American man to a white man, whose sexuality is thought to have the most value. He wonders, if Vivaldo wants him or thinks he is "easy" because he is Afro-American. Rufus' fear that Vivaldo's desire for Leona is mediated by a racist assumption that she is available (and loose) because she is with a Afro-American man is his indirect way of wondering if Vivaldo considers him, a Afro-American man, a worthy sexual partner. On the other hand, questions of submission are at stake between Rufus and Vivaldo. In

other words, who will have the power, who will be the man is the question standing between them. The sexual desire that is possible and below the surface is suppressed by this context of racialized masculinity. Vivaldo realizes this explicitly when he thinks:

Well, perhaps they had been afraid that if they looked too closely into one another each would have found – he looked out of the window, feeling damp and frightened. Each would have found the abyss. Somewhere in his heart the black boy hated the white boy because he was white. Somewhere in his heart Vivaldo had feared and hated Rufus because he was black. (134)

They are, in fact, fighting for the right to be the man. It is a battle of patriarchies: it is two nationalisms, i.e., Afro-American and white, fighting for primacy.

Rufus' feelings for Leona are not far from his love –hate dilemma as expressed by Fanon. As is the case with African American, the problem with Rufus Scott is that he suffers from the inferiority complex, alienation and dislocation in the mist of dominant white cultural norms. Therefore in order to get rid of mental agony he tries to adopt the mainstream cultural norms and values but in this process he gets split between two modes of cultural values. African heritage and the American tradition. He can't get proper adjustment in either side. His journey backward toward his unknown roots can't provide him solace because his original culture have been creolized due to white interference; nor his attempt to assimilate himself within white cultural norms is possible because on the one hand, his inner conscience forbids him and on the other, he is categorized as 'the other' by the whites.

Afro-Americans in a racist society are categorized, defined, and dehumanized but their desire of being 'white' is the product of their wish to attain social recognition and nothing more than that. Due to this he develops the wish for the white skin. He wants to be the part of white culture, white beauty, white whiteness. His restless hands want to caress that white breast, to grasp white civilization and dignity and make them his own. The love-hate dichotomy characterizes Leona and Rufus relationship as well. In the conversation Vivaldo and Rufus have before Rufus' death, Rufus expresses intense hatred for white people, "How I hate them – all those white sons of bitches out there. They're trying to kill me, you think I don't know ? They got the world on a string, man, the miserable white cock suckers, and they tying that string around my neck, they killing me" (67). The rope (or string), which characterizes whiteness is associated with death for Rufus. Baldwin uses the metaphor of lynching to capture the intensity of Rufus' feelings about racism. Vivaldo tells Rufus that "not everybody's like that" (68) and that "Leona loves you" (68), to which Rufus says, "She loves the colored folks so much [...] sometimes I just can't stand it. You know all that chick knows about me ? The only thing she knows ? He put his hand on his sex, brutally, as though he would tear it out, and seemed pleased to see Vivaldo wince" (68). The link here between lynching and the violence enacted by Rufus to his penis is a painful reminder of the history of racial and sexual oppression represented by lynching. Lynching is a sexual and racial crime, perpetuated on Afro-American bodies and frequently included mutilation and post-mortem violation of the body. In this way, Rufus forcefully reminds Vivaldo of precisely what it is that separates him from Leona and Vivaldo : racism, and specifically, the history of violence it embodies and the continued threat of it. His

mention of 'string' is a bold allusions to one of the injustices Afro-American man suffered under slavery and Jim Crow. The love he expresses for her is the result of his self-hatred. His "love" for her is negated by the history of, and his experience with, American racism.

Racial awareness of Rufus Scott gradually moves him into the state of alienation, double consciousness and depression. This depthless alienation from oneself and one's people is, in sum, the American experience for Rufus. Having recognized the pain of alienation figured in the expatriate experience one must also recognize that the problem is differently coded for the Afro-Americans and the white. Baldwin's peculiarly African American sense of alienation was double and is some ways parallel to the concept of "double-consciousness" expressed in W.E.B. DuBois's *Souls of Black Folk*. For the latter, the American World yields the Negro:

No true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness – An American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two irreconciled strivings ..." (215)

Of course, DuBois's alienation is less metaphysical than Baldwin's. The earlier writer is describing the Afro-American's exclusion from equal opportunity, and his yearning to merge his double self in a war which would not require him to deny his Blackness. Nevertheless, a more radical sense of alienation is implicit in the pained cry of Black childhood friends recorded by Du Bios: "Why did God

make me an outcast and a stranger in mine own house ?" (214). And while DuBois rejects the futility of this bitterness, he does not deny that Africa is no longer the Afro-American's "house" or that he is a stranger in his new homeland.

Yves, the young Frenchman, is also estranged from his own culture in the text. He arrives in New York, which is described with ambiguous irony as "that city which the people from heaven had made their home" (366). And the first thing he realizes is that, despite his disaffection, he is profoundly French. He will discover in New York what his American lover, Eric, had gone to Europe to find. This expatriate experience situated on the frontier between two cultures, be it that of the American in Paris or of the Frenchman in New York, would then represent that of the African American subject irremediably exiled from his/her African past, yet denied access to the new American culture.

Trapped in a similar dilemma, the expatriate subject in America, especially Afro-Americans, are distanced physically and emotionally from Africa, yet not fully integrated into American society. Such was the case with Rufus Scott. He is fed up with "the great buildings, unlit, blunt like the phallus or sharp like the spear, guarded the city which never slept" (4). Beneath them he walks as, " One of the fallen for the weight of this city was murderous—one of those who had been crushed on the day, which was everyday, these towers fall. Entirely alone, and dying of it, he was part of an unprecedented multitude" (4). Thus expatriate or exile may be the result of banishment by superior powers or self-exile due to hostile circumstances, and the later, in fact, does not require physical displacement, as witnessed by Rufus in the despairing vision of New York, "It was a city without oases, run entirely, insofar, at least, as human perception could tell, for money; and its citizens seemed to have lost any sense of their right to

renew themselves. Whoever, in New York, clung to this right, lived in New York in exile ..." (267). For the African American subject in particular, the voyage to a foreign land is an exile that restages the original historical and cultural alienation at "home". In one sense, then, the fact of geographic exile can be seen as the symbolic extension of a radical existential exile, and the knot of internal and external in such a perception is difficult to undo.

Colour and homosexuality assume a common rhetorical function, evoking the dark side of human nature, and this terror-ridden inability to come to terms with them was not, in Baldwin's view, his problem, but that of white America. By posing the kinship of Afro-American and homosexual as racial and sexual exiles, repressed by the national consciousness, it is not difficult to see the struggle of the African American. Rufus, and the white American, Vivaldo, as a narrative paradigm for the relationship of Afro-American and White in America. Thus, *Another Country* portrays Baldwin's mapping of the American psyche, Afro-Americans and homosexuals as the model for such heroes. Caught in a double bind, they may wish to efface their alienation, but the price of their own identity lies in the retention of their difference. Thus, the homosexual and expatriate experiences are made to function as paradigms for the African American experience.

*Another Country* thrives on sexual rectangles that connect Rufus in several directions – to Eric, Yves, Vivaldo, and Cass. Eric sees Rufus in his lover Yves, Vivaldo thinks of Rufus as he and Eric have sex, Eric sees the cufflinks that he gave to Rufus "as a confession of his love" (249) dangling from the ears of Ida. Thus he returns over and over to haunt them. This proves that he is "somebody" (40), which is, of course, denied by the white racist society. Leaving Rufus'

funeral in a cab, Cass, who had liked but not known Rufus well "wondered by, in that moment, she had so hated the proud towers, the grasping antennae. She had never hated the city before" (126). If the memory of Rufus functions to bring two men together, giving Vivaldo the sense that there is one man on earth who loves him, it also forces Ida, Rufus' sister, and Vivaldo to confront the formidable racial divide between them. In their final conversation, Ida insists that neither Vivaldo nor his other white friends really knew Rufus: "How could you – how can you dreaming the way you dream ? You people think you're free. That means you think you've got something other people want – or need. Shit" (413). Ida changes the tense to the present, asserting Vivaldo's continuing ignorance of Rufus. When Vivaldo accuses Ida of hating white people, she retorts:

"This all began because I said that you people –"

"Listen to yourself. *Your people !*"

"–didn't know any think about Rufus–"

"Because he was black."

"Oh, I give up. And, any way, why must we always end up taking about Rufus ?" (414-15)

Ida and Vivaldo must end up talking about Rufus because his life is being misread as pathetic or inexplicable. By emphasizing Rufus' blackness, and then her own, Ida attempts to keep the conversation focussed on Afro-American experience unmediated by white misunderstanding of it. Ida again asserts her difference from the other interpreters, claiming that she knows more about what happened to Rufus because she "watched it happen – from the beginning. I was there" (515). Ida cannot, because of her homophobia, adequately speak to her brother's history

– she was not there for everything. But she can describe him as a boy and what his body looked like after it was recovered:

When we saw Rufus's body, I can't tell you. My father stared at it, and stared at it. It didn't look like Rufus, it was-terrible-from the water [...] because he was so broken and lumpy-and ugly. My brother. And my father stared at it-at it-and he said, They don't leave a man much, do they? (416)

The transformation of the "beautiful boy" into "it" destroys the family: "all the light went out of that house" (416). After seeing her brother's dead body, Ida feels as if she has been "robbed" (417) by cowards and both she and her father live only to be "paid back". For them, there is nothing pathetic or inexplicable about Rufus' death. He was killed by the white racist society. They were robbed.

### **Rufus' Suicide : A Racial Murder**

To dismiss the suicidal moments in *Another Country* as counterproductive articulations of victim ideology means to ignore or misread the political function of death in literature. The novel invites our centripetal preoccupation with Rufus, his life and, importantly, his death by mapping all the racial tension that follows through his character. The text's syntactical re-enactments of Rufus' death point to his central, traumatic place in the characters and the narrative itself. For the characters, Rufus seem melancholically undead; he returns over and over to haunt them, asserting his presence through the re-enactments that commemorate him.

The first section of the novel follows Rufus' movements and memories through the "murderous" streets. Baldwin writes, "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 within this body had driven him into such a desolate place" (54). This shows Rufus' constant search for love and affection and an African American identity which is perpetually denied by white racist society. Thus, it is clear that the oppressive white society made him live the miserable life, he lived. By not letting him to become "somebody", but a social misfit, they led him to frustration and despair and, of course, violence which is implicit in the text.

On the subway, in an interior monologue Rufus considers that, "Many white people and many black people, chained together in time and in space, and by history, and all of them in a hurry. In a hurry to get away from each other, he thought, but we ain't never going to make it. We been fucked for fair" (86). Thus, Rufus as a mouthpiece, Baldwin wants to say that "the root of the American Negro problem is the necessity of the American white man to find a way of living with the Negro" (Boyle 155). Even Rufus, on his self-exile from the hostile environment of New York city, realized that he wants to go someplace "where a man could be treated like a man" (68). Thus, Rufus' entire existence is a sort of prison. He is imprisoned in his own consciousness. His entire life is filled by a sense of failure, inadequacy and unyielding fear.

At the funeral, Reverend Foster, a childhood friend of Rufus, rejects the notion that suicide is an evil act worthy of hell-fire and emphasizes that "can't none of us say why he did what he did" (121). He reminds the community that destroying the physical body is not the only form of self destruction. He says:

I know a lot of people done took their own lives and they're walking up and down the streets today and some of them is preaching the gospel and some is sitting in the seats of the mighty. Now, you remember that if the world wasn't so full of dead folks

may be those of us that's trying to live wouldn't have to suffer so bad. (121)

The minister extends the definition of the dead to the living and calls on mourners to witness the connection between Rufus' suffering and a lethal social climate. He further says, "the world's already bitter enough, we got to try to be better than the world" (122).

Unlike Reverend Foster, Cleaver, a prominent Afro-American critic, sees the death of Rufus Scott in *Another Country* as a consummate example of Baldwin's death-wish. He argues that Baldwin "slandered" Rufus Scott and Cleaver sees Rufus as a "weak, craven-hearted ghost" (106). Baldwin's crime is that he renders the only Afro-American man in *Another Country* a failure of the idealized vision of Afro-American masculinity imagined by Cleaver. But, Cleaver's obsession with the character of Rufus Scott, who dies at the beginning of the novel, mimics the behaviour of the characters in the novel, whose subsequent narratives are framed and informed by Rufus' life and death. This shows a contradiction in his own arguments about Rufus' death. The tendency to focus so excessively on Rufus illustrates the power of the Afro-American male figure as the referent for masculinity, sexuality and raciality.

*Another Country* starts with a tortured heterosexual, interracial relationship between Rufus and Leona and ends with a mono-racial, homosexual one, Yves and Eric. There is nothing however, to suggest that this relationship will work any better than the others in the novel. It is significant, though, that Yves is arriving in New York, in America, from another country. Yves is both arriving from and to another country. This suggests that his movement from one emotional state of reluctance and fear to another of joy and certainty represents a literal and

emotional emigration from one country to another. It is significant that a novel called *Another Country* ends with a French citizen arriving in New York. His voyage across the Atlantic is met by Eric, who with his hair "spinning and flaming" (435) about his head, mimics the Statue of Liberty whose halo of spikes might be described as "spinning and flaming". The sight of Eric inspires within Yves the same hope the Statue of Liberty is said to inspire in immigrants. But, ironically, the novel has taught us to be skeptical, as sceptical as we are of the 'American Dream' and we know that if Yves and Eric are lucky then they might achieve "a maximum of relief with a minimum of hostility" (132).

Therefore, the racial consciousness that comes in Rufus Scott, because of the ill treatment he receives in an environment which is essentially hostile toward Afro-American, is the sole reason of his frustration, despair, alienation and desolate situation. And in the state of mental depression, he disappeared from his friends and family for nearly a month. At last, he arrives, aware that the pain will never stop, at the George Washington Bridge and jumped from it. Thus, Baldwin parodies the notion of democracy, liberty, and justice around which United States and its founding documents, especially, the US constitution stand, by having his anti-hero suicide from the same bridge which was "built to honour the father of the country" (87).

Rufus Scott's death is a "murder", enacted upon him by the effects of racism. Rufus' death suggests that there is no black utopia, no place where he can escape the iniquities of racism. More importantly, *Another Country* suggests that we have not yet found a model for thinking outside the box that frames our discussions of interraciality. It suggests, more importantly, that eliminating racial difference will not solve the problems of difference either. The title of the novel

suggests the wish for "another country", another nation, in which the racial selves are imagined and defined differently or perhaps where they are not defined at all.

It is this dynamic of internalized racism that catalyzes the only genuinely well-drawn relationship in *Another Country*, the one between Rufus and Leona, the pathetic white southern woman whom he destroys. In the novel the white woman seems to occupy a place squarely at the centre of the Afro-American man, Rufus's consciousness. She occupies it, however, not as woman but simply as an instrument, as the catalyst that sets into motion a sociosexual dynamic that seemingly involves not just this particular Afro-American man and white woman, but this man, this woman, and all of the men, Afro-American and white, to whom the relationship supposedly represents the ultimate act of social transgression. Just as, after a while, to think of Rufus is to think of Rufus and Leona, all of the culturally specific aspects of Rufus's experience that would have to be represented if Rufus were to have some force as an individual are reduced to peripheral elements which are subordinated, if not completely invalidated, by his desperate need, as a deindividualized Afro-American man, to acquire an equally deindividualized white woman. "You'd never even have looked at that girl, Rufus, if she'd been black" (28), the imagined voice of his sister says to Rufus at one point, "But you'll pick up any white trash just because she's white" (28). Correspondingly, throughout their time together, Rufus almost never refers to Leona by her real name. She is among other things "Honeychild" (9), "Miss Anne" (10), "Little Eva" (17), "a funny little cracker" (22), and "a splendid specimen of Southern womanhood" (25), but rarely simply Leona.

Both the simple fact that Leona is a white woman and the equally important fact that she is a white woman from the South immediately create a

sense of double scapegoating that decisively excises this relationship from the utopian drama that will be played out in the novel's remaining pages. For example, soon after meeting Leona, Rufus:

Remembered suddenly his days in boot camp in the South and felt again the shoe of a white officer against his mouth. He was in his white uniform, on the ground, against the red, dusty clay. Some of his coloured buddies were holding him, were helping to rise. The white officer, with a curse, had vanished, had gone forever beyond the reach of vengeance. (12-13)

Leona's sexual availability as a woman enable her to stand in for and ground Rufus's relationship with Vivaldo, the white man with whom Rufus is involved in an unspoken game of racial and sexual competition, while her unique position as a southern woman enables Rufus to turn her into a surrogate for the white men against whom he cannot effectively express his resentment.

Leona, on the other hand, can scapegoat herself by "loving" and then allowing herself to be destroyed by the dangerous "other" that Rufus represents, just as another part of her had loved and been destroyed by the equally abusive relationship that her marriage to a hyperracist southern "cracker" had been. In fact, it is exactly Rufus's otherness, his blackness, that Leona must deny in order to perform her role in the drama that they are enacting. At one point Rufus asks, "Didn't they warn you down home about the darkies you'd find up North?" (13) and she answers, "They didn't never worry me none. People's just people as far as I'm concerned" (13). This response reveals her denial of both racial and sexual difference and, thereby, her repression of the distinctly sexual nature of her interest in Rufus. Being a product of the particular racial and sexual hierarchies

which organize southern society, Leona could in fact never be unaware of the transgressive nature of her involvement with Rufus. She, perhaps more than any other characters in *Another Country*, would know that people are not just people, and that there are real and potentially dangerous social implications in the sexual choices people make. Just as Rufus's self-hatred stems from his inability either to enact or reject the roles that have been socially validated for white men and made inaccessible for Afro-Americans, Leona's self-hatred is the result of a similar failure to fulfil internalized social expectations. She has "failed" as a wife and as a mother, and because of this failure has marked herself as someone deserving of destruction.

The catalyst in the Rufus/Leona relationship is the homoerotically charged presence of Rufus's best friend, Vivaldo. Because it is Rufus's status as a Afro-American man and not his sexual identity, whatever it may be, that makes him essentially unacceptable and places him outside of the positive community that Baldwin is conceptualizing in the novel, whether Rufus can best be coded as homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual is finally unimportant. Rufus's relationship with Leona provides the means by which the idea of the white woman as the mediating factor linking Afro-American and white men can be dealt with. This mediation is one in which despite the narrative prominence accorded to Rufus's sister Ida, Afro-American women play no part other than as sexual objects, as the sources of a sexual release that is peripheral to any status concerns that a man, especially a white man, might have. Emotionally and hierarchically, only white women can situate Afro-American and white men in relation to each other. Thus, Leona cannot be worshipped, and Rufus is incapable of actually loving a woman. Therefore, Rufus's only option is to defile or "animalize" her. Having finally

attempted to maintain a socially visible relationship with a white woman, rather than just another covert and simply sexual one, Rufus has been forced to see exactly what his romantic options are. He realizes that he and Vivaldo are equals only in private.

This dynamic is borne out most forcefully by the fact that Vivaldo's "abandonment" of Rufus occurs when, for the first time in Rufus's presence, Vivaldo seriously considers taking advantage of the kind of romantic possibility that Rufus is denied:

A tall girl, very pretty, carefully dressed – she looked like an uptown model – came into the room, looked about her, peered sharply at their table. She paused, then started out.

"I wish you were looking for me", Vivaldo called.

She turned and laughed. "You're lucky I'm not looking for you !" ...

"Well you scored, old buddy", Rufus said, "go get her".

"No", said Vivaldo, smiling, "better leave well enough alone" ...

Rufus wanted to say, Don't let me stop you, man, but he said nothing. He felt black, filthy, foolish. He wished he were miles away, or dead. (77-78)

The fact that Rufus feels not only "filthy" and "foolish", but specifically "filthy", "foolish", and "black" represents one of the most telling moments in the novel. By recognizing both the physical specificity of his blackness and its social implications, Rufus must at last face his repressed awareness of the fact that Vivaldo, his best friend, is a white man with all of the advantages that this entails, and that he, Rufus, is not. Baldwin's strangest achievement in *Another Country* is

that he creates a world in which, when Rufus says of the brutalized Leona, "she's the only chick in the world for me" (54), it makes perfect sense.

Despite his limitations, Rufus is the most complex and important character in the novel. This is because he is the only one who actually seems to grow not only in self-awareness, but in the awareness of himself as a specific self in the specific world in which Baldwin has placed him. His suicide functions as an overwrought but existentially respectable manifestation of his desire to live and die in accordance with the one "truth" that his history has taught him. This truth is that, appearances to the contrary, James Baldwin's world at this point just didn't have enough room for everyone.

Thus in *Another Country* this dystopianism is enacted by, or one could say projected onto, the figure of Rufus. At best, Baldwin's Rufus is the depiction of a pathology that is explicitly acknowledged, a case of internalized racism. Contextualized by his unlikely group of middle class white friends, Rufus's life and suicide can best be read as the acts of a tragically self-aware Afro-American man destroyed by the inescapable forces of white racism.



#### IV. Conclusion

Race is a concept that divides human beings physically, biologically and genetically into different groups. Race relations, includes all the relations that ordinarily exist between members of different ethnic and genetic groups which are capable of provoking race conflict and race consciousness or of determining the relative status of the racial groups of which a community is composed. It also includes relations which are not now conscious or personal, though they have been; relations which are fixed in and enforced by the custom, convention, and the routine of an expected social orders of which there may at the moment no very lively consciousness. Thus, racial consciousness is a phenomenon that enforces social distances. It, however, implies not a bridge, but a mirror, and in American context, it demands analysis not only of the professed principles of U.S. democracy, but also of the very terms in which political inquiry into those principles is conducted.

The elements of racial consciousness play a vital role in shaping the attitudes of the characters in Baldwin's *Another Country*. Rufus Scott and his sister Ida, the major Afro-American characters in the novel, present a continuing struggle for their social, political, and economic freedom. The protagonist, Rufus, from the very beginning of his life undergoes a great conflict with his white racist society. His main concern is to accentuate the idea of racial autonomy so that the African Americans can affirm their identity and freedom in its entirety but the white racist society not only jeopardizes their identity but also denies their presence. As a result, they are compelled to live in the slums where they are deprived of all rights.

In the novel, the white society has chased the Afro-Americans, the characters, from the community; it has isolated them from the mainstream of humanity. The racist society has torn them asunder mercilessly as if they are beasts. The Afro-Americans are subject to subjugation and exploitation. The characters find themselves imprisoned in the narrow cells of white law. The writer, through his characters, has attempted to convey how bad things were for the Afro-American race. He has captured the powerful emotions and sufferings, the frustrations and yearnings of the oppressed characters.

The desire for a "human life" and genuine identity marks Rufus' struggle. He is in the quest for "someplace away from all these nowhere people", where a man could be treated like a man. The first section of the novel follows Rufus' movements and memories through the "murderous" streets. As he struggles to arrive at a conception of his own identity, he finds his efforts complicated by the fact that he is an Afro-American man living in a racist American society. He finds different ideas about how Afro-Americans should behave in society. As he attempts to define himself through the values and expectations imposed on him, the prescribed role limits his identity as an individual.

Ultimately, Rufus Scott realizes the subjugation and exploitation of the white racist society and its "power to hate and destroy" the African American. Due to the effect of racial segregation, he is frustrated and neurotic. The more conscious he becomes of the hostile environment, the more he dives into the state of mental depression. So the lethal social climate is the main cause of Rufus' suffering and, of course, his death. Even the white characters in the novel, specifically, Vivaldo, speculate that Rufus' death is caused by their and society's shortcomings. Thus, it is the oppressive white society that made him live the

miserable life, he lived. By opposing him to become "somebody", but a social misfit, they led him to frustration and despair and also violence, which is implicit in the text.

So, the novel invites its reader's centripetal preoccupation with Rufus, his life and, importantly, his death by mapping all the racial tension that follows through his character. Baldwin, artistically, portrays Rufus' hatred and discomfort towards whites, the naivety of white society, i.e., the white's ignorance to Afro-Americans, and Rufus' mental agony. He certainly shows that racial segregation and oppression will only foster race consciousness that ultimately enforces social distances between Afro-Americans and whites.

Thus, Rufus' death in the novel suggests that there is no black utopia yet found, no place where they can escape the racial injustice. Rufus' wish for 'another country', a place where relationships are not fractured by racial difference remains an imaginary and mythic one.

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