

Love as the Solution to the Problems of Life

in James Baldwin's *Another Country*

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Abstract

Love is central to the writing of James Baldwin (1924-1987). However, the importance of the notion of love in his novels has long been overlooked. In this thesis, the notion of love in Baldwin's *Another Country* (1962) is researched. First, the idea of love as a basis for social change is researched; both Martin Luther King, Jr. as well as bell hooks have elaborated on this topic. Baldwin, in his essay *The Fire Next Time*, has also emphasized the importance of love to achieve a more equal society. Using close reading, it is clear that this idea of "love as the practice of freedom" is present in Baldwin's *Another Country*: the novel advocates a transcendental love where people are seen as individuals, and not as belonging to the categories where white, patriarchal, capitalist society has placed them. The characters in *Another Country*, however, do not reach this transcendental love and therefore the personal relationships between the characters are analyzed to understand how the novel suggests coming to a meaningful relationship with the other. The novel shows the necessity of a profound self-love to make life bearable; once this self-love is attained, a meaningful love with the other can develop. *Another Country* thus shows the importance of a profound love in order to face the challenges – concerning both social inequalities as well as the personal quest for meaning in one's life – that life imposes upon the characters.

Keywords

James Baldwin – *Another Country* – Love – Transcendental Love – Self-Love

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“How’s one going to get through it all? How can you live if you can’t love? And how can you
live if you *do*?”

James Baldwin, *Another Country*

Contents

Abstract	p. 2
Acknowledgements	p. 3
Introduction	p. 6
Chapter 1: Love as the Basis for Social Change	p. 8
1. <i>Baldwin, the civil rights movement, and Martin Luther King, Jr.</i>	p. 8
2. <i>Baldwin on love</i>	p. 9
3. <i>bell hooks and “love as the practice of freedom”</i>	p. 10
4. <i>Conclusion</i>	p. 11
Chapter 2: Love as the Solution to Social Inequalities	p. 12
1. <i>Oppression and love in Another Country</i>	p. 12
2. <i>Alienation in Another Country</i>	p. 13
3. <i>Transcendental love to overcome oppression</i>	p. 14
4. <i>Conclusion</i>	p. 14
Chapter 3: Love as the Solution to the Quest for Meaning in Life	p. 16
1. <i>Loneliness in Another Country</i>	p. 16
2. <i>The other as object</i>	p. 17
3. <i>Self-love as a means to make life bearable</i>	p. 18
4. <i>Conclusion</i>	p. 20
Conclusion	p. 21
Works Cited	p. 23

Introduction

“Baldwin’s oeuvre is a love letter that he never stopped writing” (Farred 291); however, academic work on the notion of love in Baldwin’s work has mainly focused on his essays (cf. Grant Farred, Sean Kim Butorac), and has for some time ignored the connection of love in Baldwin’s novels to his “racial and sexual politics” and the importance of love as “central to his thinking about social change” (Freeburg 180). As love is also “one way of exploring Baldwin’s engagement with humanity’s ongoing spiritual conflict and encompasses how this is expressed historically as well as personally” (191), it is important to understand this notion in Baldwin’s work to understand his response to this “spiritual conflict”.

Some research has been done on the notion of love in Baldwin’s novel *Another Country* (1962). Nonetheless, this often focuses on specific and one-sided conceptions of love (cf. Christopher Freeburg and Lorelei Cederstorm, who focus mainly on sex and sexuality, and Michael Lynch and Marc Dudley, who focus on suffering and loneliness). Consequentially, a broader analysis of what the concept of love entails in *Another Country* is needed. As love in Baldwin’s work is both engaged with the socio-historical and the personal, the combination of these two aspects will provide an analysis that adds to the understanding of love in *Another Country* and thus provides a more complete overview of the importance of love in the novel. This adds new information to the debate about the importance of the notion of love in Baldwin’s *Another Country*.

The novel is essentially about the relationships between the characters – not only sexual and romantic, but also amical – across different races, sexualities, and genders. The novel revolves around a group of New York friends. The first part focuses on Rufus, a black young man who finds himself in a low place in his life. He was in an abusive relationship with a white woman, Leona, who eventually landed in a mental hospital. Rufus, tragically, commits suicide by jumping off a bridge. This happens early in the novel, and the rest of it revolves around the people in Rufus’ life. There is Vivaldo, a white young man who is Rufus’ best friend, and who starts dating Rufus’ sister, Ida. Ida eventually cheats on Vivaldo with Ellis, a media proprietor who can help her become a singer. Another important, already married, couple are Richard and Cass, friends of Vivaldo and Rufus. Cass ends up cheating on Richard with Eric, a young homosexual man who was part of their group of friends before he left. Eric also knew Rufus and was in love with him. He has come back from Paris to New York for his career as an actor; his boyfriend, Yves, will come in a few weeks. Before that, Eric and Cass end up having an affair and Eric and Vivaldo also have a sexual encounter. The novel ends when Yves’ plane

lands in New York. The story is told by an omniscient narrator who often interferes to give general statements and commentary on the events.

Concerning love on both the socio-historical as well as the personal level I will argue that an analysis of love in Baldwin's *Another Country* shows the need for a transcendental love – one that transcends the rigid categories society imposes upon people – to overcome certain social inequalities, but that self-love is a prerequisite before being able to meaningfully love the other. To show this, I will firstly analyze the idea of love as a transformative concept for society in the first chapter from different perspectives: Martin Luther King, Jr., James Baldwin and bell hook's views will be taken into consideration as they all have elaborated on this concept. Then, by use of close reading, the notion of love as a possible solution to social inequality as presented in *Another Country* will be analyzed in the second chapter, while the third chapter provides an analysis of the importance of love on the personal level. As a result, transcendental love and self-love will show themselves to be essential for counteracting the problems of life.

Chapter 1

Love as the Basis for Social Change

To analyze *Another Country* in the light of the notion of love, it is important to understand some ideas on the transformative power of love. This chapter will show that for Baldwin, a transcendental love addressed to everybody is needed. To reach this conclusion, I will firstly analyze Martin Luther King, Jr.'s approach to love, who advocates love as a basis for social change. Secondly, Baldwin's own conception of love will be researched; he goes further than King and proposes a form of love where society's categories are transcended. Finally, bell hooks' view of "love as the practice of freedom" will be looked at: she builds upon King's ideas of love and elaborates upon the idea of love as a basis for social change. It will become clear that love, for King, Baldwin and hooks, is a basis for social change.

1. *Baldwin, the civil rights movement, and Martin Luther King, Jr.*

For the civil rights movement, love was an important notion. Baldwin, even though having a somewhat difficult relationship with the movement due to his sexuality, did share their convictions and became an important voice in the fight for racial justice (Edwards 150). It is particularly during the late 1960s and early 1970s that Baldwin's work is influenced by the civil rights movement (159), but earlier on he was already concerned with racism. In 1956, in Paris, when confronted with American racism in the newspapers, he stated: "I could, simply, no longer sit around in Paris discussing the black American problem" (Baldwin qtd in Edwards 161). In 1961 Baldwin wrote a critical portrait of King, invoking the times they had met. Here, Baldwin states: "I liked him" (Baldwin "The Dangerous Road Before Martin Luther King" 638). Baldwin sympathized with the movement and its ideals and knew and admired King.

King stressed the importance of love for social change. He professed a brotherly, Christian love (Harris 55). In his speech "I Have a Dream", he states that he wants the United States to become a country where everyone is equal – no matter the color of their skin: "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character" ("I Have a Dream: Full Text March on Washington Speech"). To achieve this equal society, King believed non-violence and love to be the solution: "we must see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood" (King 838). He wants to "dramatize the issue [so] that it can no longer be ignored" (838). When being called an extremist, King asks,

in his *Letter from Birmingham Jail*: “Was not Jesus an extremist for love: ‘Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you’” (845). The love professed by King was one of “love thy oppressor” (Harris 56): black people should get rid of any anger towards white people in order to “free themselves, as well as the nation” (54). King professed love – even for the oppressor – as the basis for social change.

2. *Baldwin on love*

Baldwin, too, sees love as a catalyst for social change. However, he takes it further than King. In his essay *The Fire Next Time* (1963) – where he condemns the racist American society – Baldwin states that “love is so desperately sought and so cunningly avoided. Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within” (82). He proceeds to give a definition of his idea of love: “I use the word ‘love’ here not merely in the personal sense but as a state of being, or a state of grace – not in the infantile American sense of being made happy but in the tough and universal sense of quest and daring and growth” (82).

The links with Christian love, as for King, are also emphasized: he expands upon his years as a minister in the church and states about his thinking during that time:

But what was the point, the purpose, of *my* salvation if it did not permit me to behave with love towards others, no matter how they behaved towards me? What others did was their responsibility (...) But what *I* did was *my* responsibility (41).

This underlines the idea of loving everybody without expecting anything in return and emphasizes the personal aspect of love. This idea of personal responsibility also entails an asymmetrical aspect to love, as Farred shows in his analysis of love in *The Fire Next Time*: “Asymmetrical love expects no reciprocation. It expects nothing in return, it makes no demands on/of the Other” (301).

Baldwin’s love goes further than the one King professes, as he proposes a transcendental love “across the color line” (Harris 56). This is what Pekka Kilpeläinen argues in what he calls “postcategorical love”, where the traditional categories are transcended and where everybody is seen in their humanity:

Beneath Baldwin's defiance of essentialist definitions and categorizations lies the notion of postcategorical love. It is what gives rise to the principles of hope, duty, and continuity – and obligates us to guard and nurture the possibility of a better world (195).

Baldwin's ideas on love as a catalyst for social change are grounded in the same concept as King's, but go further because he transcends the categories in society, whereas King focuses on loving the other in spite of society's categories.

3. *bell hooks and "love as the practice of freedom"*

bell hooks, the famous American feminist, in her 2006 book chapter "love as the practice of freedom", published in *Outlaw Culture*, also emphasizes the "love ethic" that was present in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s approach (290). Even though hooks' work is dated significantly later than both King and Baldwin, her ideas on love for social change are based upon King's, and go even further. Her view helps to understand more profoundly the idea of love as the basis for social change and thus provides an interesting angle of analysis for *Another Country*.

In hooks' view, a "love ethic" is necessary in order to overcome social inequalities, and to get to "freedom". She argues that there is no real love present in contemporary society because real love cannot exist in a culture of domination. Under capitalism, love has become commodified (293). Consequentially, she argues for the necessity of love in order to "liberate ourselves and our world community from oppression" (289). In contemporary white, patriarchal society, "an ethic of love" (289) is needed to dismantle systems of domination. She argues that people fighting oppression are often only trying to dismantle the aspects of the system of domination that is hurting them – regardless of what is oppressing others – and states that there are many blind spots that society must lay bare before being able to change (289-290).¹ To get rid of this self-centeredness in the fight for equality, love is needed. In bell hooks' view, it is of great importance to not only care about oneself, but also about others: one should not see the other as an object, but as a subject (296). Love should form the basis of politics, which will lead to "transform society in ways that enhance the collective good" (294). The love she proposes is addressed to all; the "us and them" binary should be erased, for this only enhances the "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (297), and thus puts an emphasis on a transcendental kind of

¹ hooks' approach thus resembles an intersectional one (for the concept of intersectionality, see, for example, Anna Carastathis), even though she does not use this term.

love. She stresses that we should actively choose love to move against oppression (298) and, like King and Baldwin, she believes in the transformative power of love.

4. Conclusion

King, Baldwin and hooks all argue for love as the basis for change in society. Martin Luther King, Jr. professed a brotherly, Christian, “love-thy-oppressor” love. Baldwin, however, takes it a step further and argues for a love that transcends the categories society imposes upon people. Baldwin shows the need to love everybody – i.e., an asymmetrical form of love – and states that for him, real love is about growth and looking for meaning in your life. He thus goes against the common conception of infantile love. bell hooks’ view on love, building upon King’s ideas, shows the way love can function “as the practice of freedom”, as it goes against the system of domination present in contemporary society. A “love ethic” should form the basis of politics in order to achieve real social change. The notion of love has often been regarded as having the power to transform society. In this thesis, Baldwin’s conception of real, profound love that focuses on growth and looking for meaning in your life will be the main focus, all the while considering the idea of a “love ethic” to achieve freedom.

Chapter 2

Love as the Solution to Social Inequalities

In the previous chapter, the importance of love as the basis for social change was pointed out. The idea of love as the basis for social change is however not only present in Baldwin's essays, but also in his novels. In this chapter I will argue that *Another Country* presents a transcendental love as the solution to the oppression the characters face. To demonstrate this, first of all, I will explain Freeburg's analysis of love in Baldwin's novel. Secondly, I will point out the different forms of oppression in *Another Country*. Whereas this will mainly include racism, as this form of oppression is shown most poignantly, oppression involving sexuality and gender will shortly be taken into consideration. Finally, the analysis of the novel will show that the solution the novel proposes to these sorts of oppression is a form of "love as the practice of freedom".

1. *Oppression and love in Another Country*

As I pointed out in the previous chapter, the idea of love as the basis to achieve a society based on equality forms the foundation of some important thinking on social change. Freeburg shows in "Baldwin and the Occasion of Love" that this notion is present in Baldwin's novels and he argues that love is central to Baldwin's thoughts on social change (180). Baldwin shows the importance of love on this matter by using an individual basis and showing the way his characters form their own identity: he "deploys situations that involve love to disclose the difficulties that prevent individuals and groups from creating new social relationships without – or at least with less – racism, sexism, and homophobia" (181). He thus lays bare the blind spots – the ones bell hooks shows are preventing us from having an equal society – and shows how an "ethic of love" will improve society for all.

In the novel, many different forms of oppression are addressed. In the character of Rufus, the reader encounters the way racism influences the life of an individual. Rufus cannot handle his relationship with Leona because of the way society treats this relationship between a black man and a white woman (Baldwin *Another Country* 38-39). Rufus and Leona's relationship becomes abusive, leading to her being admitted in a mental hospital and him committing suicide. Ida and Vivaldo also cannot sustain a healthy relationship because of the differences of their experiences in life and society caused by their different skin colors. She tells him that "[b]ecause [she is] black (...) [she knows] more about what happened to [her] brother than [he] can ever know" (405). There is a dimension to oppression that one cannot understand if one is not part of the oppressed group, because, as the narrator states: "The

occurrence of an event is not the same thing as knowing what it is that one has lived through” (131), which becomes painfully clear when Rufus asks himself: “Maybe he was making it all up”, because “[Leona] noticed nothing” (38) when he is being treated racist.

Ida, for that matter, states that she loves, not hates, Vivaldo. Nonetheless, she feels the proximity of love and hate: “They say that love and hate are very close together. Well, that’s a fact” (343). There is a fine line between love and hate, which is shown throughout the novel through Rufus beating Leona, Ida’s behavior towards Vivaldo and Cass’ cheating on Richard.

Gender and sexuality also prove to be problems for the characters: Eric flees to France to escape the homophobia in the US, Cass has no place in the world because “what men have ‘dreamed up’ is all there is, the world they’ve dreamed up *is* the world” (112). In this light, the novel shows that the “love-thy-oppressor” approach as professed by King does not suffice. The characters *all* try and love their oppressor, but eventually all must flee to another place, to “another country” – be it literally or metaphorically. The relationships between the characters concerning social matters in *Another Country* show that the “love-thy-oppressor” approach is – as Ida stated – so close to hate, that it risks falling back into hurting and hating the other, the oppressor, instead of loving him. This shows, in line with bell hooks, that love is impossible in a culture of domination, and leads to the necessity of a deeper form of love to overcome oppression in society.

2. *Alienation in Another Country*

What seems to be the underlying problem is alienation. As Marc Dudley states: “*Another Country* is about alienation” (41). The characters are alienated from society. People have formed groups that do not accept different identities. Eric, for example, “was menaced in a way that [the other boys] were not, and it was perhaps this sense, (...) which accounted for the invincible distance, increasing with the years, which stretched between himself and his contemporaries” (Baldwin *Another Country* 199). He is at a distance from other people in society. *Another Country* shows that society is divided into groups that do not accept different identities: “[P]eople who despised him but who did not dare to say so (...) had long ago given up saying anything which they really felt, had given it up so long ago that they were now incapable of feeling anything which was not felt by a mob” (199). People, according to Baldwin in *The Fire Next Time*, “always seem to band together in accordance to a principle that has nothing to do with love, a principle that releases them from personal responsibility” (71). Further on in the essay, he states:

Perhaps the whole root of our trouble, the human trouble, is that we will sacrifice all the beauty of our lives, will imprison ourselves in totems, taboos, crosses, blood sacrifices, steeples, mosques, races, armies, flags, nations, in order to deny the fact of death, which is the only fact we have (79).

And so, the characters in *Another Country* are alienated from society: they do not comply with the rigid categories that white, patriarchal society imposes upon people.

3. *Transcendental love to overcome oppression*

The society presented in *Another Country* thus suffers from a lack of love, which results in the oppression of the characters: people do not band together according to love, but according to categories that are imposed upon them from society, which leads to alienation for those that do not belong to the dominant group. To achieve a more equal society, Baldwin states that there should be a “transcendence of the realities of colour, of nations, and of altars” (Baldwin *The Fire Next Time* 72). People should band together in accordance with a principle that *has* got to do with love. Vivaldo, for that matter, shortly lives an experience like this; “he was, briefly and horribly, in a region where there were no definitions of any kind, neither of colour, nor of male and female” (Baldwin *Another Country* 297). The reason that this was a horrible experience is because in such a region there is no order, which is something people look for in “their” categories. However, there is equality. By showing the way inequalities persist in the patriarchal, white society presented in *Another Country*, even when trying to adhere to the love as professed by King, the novel suggests another way of looking at the world. Freeburg’s analysis is excellently applicable to *Another Country*: by showing relationships between individuals, Baldwin lays bare the “blind spots” people have for the oppression of the other. This shows the social inequalities persistent in society and thus makes space for understanding and attempts at solving the problem. By transcending the “realities of colour, of nations, and of altars”, by going to ‘another country’ where “there [are] no definitions of any kind, neither of colour, nor of male and female”, inequality will lessen. In *Another Country*, transcendental love, or “postcategorical love” as Kilpeläinen calls it, is presented to be the solution to social inequalities persistent in personal relationships.

4. *Conclusion*

In analyzing the social problems addressed in *Another Country* through the idea of “love as the practice of freedom”, through Freeburg’s analysis of Baldwin’s works, and through Baldwin’s

own theoretical writings on social problems in the United States, *Another Country*, by laying bare the social inequalities and injustices present in contemporary American society, proposes a transcendental love as the solution to the social problems evoked. In the novel, King's approach of "love-thy-oppressor" has tendency to fall back into hate and does not provide the solution for society's problems. The characters get stuck in their personal relationships due to the categories society imposes upon them. There is need for a profounder form of love: *Another Country* suggests that it is necessary to transcend the division and inequality present in society and pursue a form of love where everyone is seen in their humanity. However, *Another Country's* protagonists fall back into hate and the transcendental love is not attained. This necessitates an analysis of love on a more personal level – in the sense of looking for meaning in one's life and in one's relationships to others – which will create a better understanding of the way love functions in *Another Country* and how one *can* achieve meaningful relationships.

Chapter 3

Love as the Solution to the Quest for Meaning in Life

A transcendental love is needed to get over the categories that society imposes upon someone. The characters, however, are still stuck in the “love-thy-oppressor” love that falls back into hate, and thus it is of importance to look at the way love in the personal relations among the characters is presented and how the love between the characters can evolve to a meaningful – and eventually transcendental – love. In love on the more individual level – in the sense of giving meaning to one’s life and to one’s relationships, be it friendly or romantic – the characters also have trouble finding their way. As Dudley states: “[T]his novel (...) is a book about lost-ness and finding one’s place in the world” (41). To counteract this “lost-ness”, love is of great importance: Vivaldo asks Eric “[h]ow’s one going to get through it all? How can you live if you can’t love? And how can you live if you *do*?” (*Baldwin Another Country* 333). As pointed out in the first chapter, for Baldwin, love is essentially about growth, daring to grow and going after meaning in life. This chapter will demonstrate that *Another Country* advocates a profound self-love as the way to take responsibility of one’s own life in order to grow and, secondly, being able to love the other in their individuality – as a subject, not as an object. To explain this, I will first lay bare the problems to the individual life as shown in *Another Country*; secondly, the way in which the characters deal with these problems and how these solutions show themselves to be problematic. Finally, self-love and love for the other as a subject, and not an object, are shown to be the solutions to the quest for meaning in life.

1. *Loneliness in Another Country*

Another Country is a novel about relationships, whether sexual, romantic, or amical: the story revolves around the way the different characters interact with each other and how their lives are intertwined. Cass, Richard, Vivaldo, Ida and Eric – and Rufus before his suicide – are all in contact with each other and all have evolving relationships; the relationship between Cass and Eric, for example, changes from being acquaintances to being lovers when they start their affair. However, all the characters are essentially lonely, as Marc Dudley also points out (41). Vivaldo, for example “had often thought of his loneliness (...) as a condition which testified to his superiority. But people who were not superior were, nevertheless, extremely lonely – and unable to break out of their solitude precisely because they had no equipment with which to enter it” (67). Eventually, Vivaldo realizes that he and his friends are “all equal in misery, confusion and despair” (296). As Vivaldo and some other friends ask themselves: “[t]he

question is – what *do* we want to be?” (302). Cass puts it as follows: “one doesn’t want to be simply another grey, shapeless monster” (395). There is thus the issue of finding one’s personality and giving your life meaning. Most people fail; Vivaldo asks himself: “What happened to people? why did they suffer so hideously?” (306).

In this light, the setting of the novel emphasizes the motif of loneliness. The crowdedness of New York contrasts with the quest of finding oneself and the feeling of loneliness. Surrounded by millions of others, one is still always lonely; in New York, “one was never (...) left alone (...), [and] one had, still, to fight very hard in order not to perish of loneliness” (228). As for its citizens:

[they] seemed to have lost entirely any sense of their right to renew themselves. Whoever, in New York, attempted to cling to this right, lived in New York in exile – in exile from the life around him; and this, paradoxically, had the effect of placing him in perpetual danger of being forever banished from any real sense of himself (311).

The danger of life in the big city and its inherent loneliness is the loss of a sense of reality and of oneself. This absence of reality is present in the character’s lives. Cass even asks about reality in the lives of her and her close ones: “(...) our lovers are out there in the real world, seeing real people, doing real things, bringing real bacon into real homes – are they real? are they?” (272) She lacks a sense of reality. The difficulty of finding one’s place in the world, to counter the “lost-ness” and to give meaning to one’s life, is why the characters suffer. They fail at finding their sense of self and thus at finding their touchstone for reality.

2. *The other as object*

The characters flee the responsibility of making something of one’s life by using the other and the mirage of ‘love’. They use exactly the kind of love “in the infantile American sense of being made happy” (Baldwin *The Fire Next Time* 82); they use each other to achieve a sense of reality. However, as the narrator states: “it was only love which could accomplish the miracle of making a life bearable – only love, and love itself mostly failed” (Baldwin *Another Country* 395-396). Love is necessary, but problematic and complicated. In the novel, the characters mainly use each other as objects: when Cass explains to Richard why she cheated on him with Eric, she says that “[h]e has something – something I needed very badly (...) A sense of himself” (366). Eric also uses others in order to stay in touch with reality: “He had used [Cass] in the hope of avoiding a confrontation with himself which he had, nevertheless, and with a vengeance, been

forced to endure” (396). He feels that, when he and Cass part ways after their affair, “he was falling, falling out of the world. Cass was releasing him into chaos” (398). It is “[t]errifying, that the loss of intimacy with one person results in the freezing over of the world, and the loss of oneself!” (355). In *Another Country*, the characters’ behavior is selfish as they are only occupied with being loved, and not with “actively loving each other” (Lynch IV). It is easier to use this infantile, shallow form of love because “[l]ove takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within” (Baldwin *The Fire Next Time* 81-82). Love in the sense of growth is frightening. Consequentially, the characters choose the infantile form of love. However, this only results in the loss of oneself and one’s reality because one is dependent of the other. The other is used as an object in order to stay in touch with reality.

3. *Self-love as a means to make life bearable*

To make your life bearable, *Another Country* suggests that love is needed to stay in touch with reality. The love commonly encountered is however not sufficient for this. *Another Country* shows that a profound self-love is required. It shows that making something of your life is completely your own responsibility:

And beneath all this was the void where anguish lived and questions crouched, which referred only to Vivaldo and to no one else on earth. Down there, down there, lived the raw, unformed substance for the creation of Vivaldo, and only he, Vivaldo, alone, could master it (301).

In order to get in touch with reality, you have to trust yourself, to know yourself. Because: “The person who distrusts himself has no touchstone for reality – for this touchstone can be only oneself” (Baldwin *The Fire Next Time* 43). As Freeburg states, Vivaldo “[accepts his] limitations, and (...) this acceptance means that [he is] free to thrive in love in new ways” (192). Self-love is essential in the individual “love as the practice of freedom”.

Even though *Another Country* emphasizes the necessity of self-love, it also acknowledges the inevitable presence of the other. In this light, bell hooks also emphasizes the interrelatedness of life (296-297). This leads to the importance of love for the other. The love for the other can, however, only arise when one loves oneself. One cannot use the other as an object. bell hooks argues that “[a] love ethic emphasizes the importance of service to others (...) To serve another I cannot see them as an object, I must see their subjecthood” (296). She emphasizes the importance of community and growing together (296). In *Another Country*,

however, self-love proves to be an essential requirement before being able to truly love the other. True love “in the tough and universal sense of quest and daring and growth” (Baldwin *The Fire Next Time* 82) can only be reached if people start seeing the other as individuals. Because, as Cass states: “nobody *belongs* to anybody” (Baldwin *Another Country* 395). This is thus exactly what Farred calls “asymmetrical love” when he describes Baldwin’s view on love in *The Fire Next Time* (301). *Another Country* also shows that you cannot use the other as an object and, consequentially, that you cannot have any expectations whatsoever of the service of the other to you.

Even though Freeburg, in his analysis of *Another Country*, focuses mainly on sex, this notion can be replaced by the broader concept of love when he states that “the novel shows how in facing one’s dark inner fears and pain, sex can be transformed from a scene of objectification to one of meaningful intimacy and love” (186). When analyzing Vivaldo and Ida’s relationship, he notes that “the novel’s central point is their acceptance of another person’s shortcomings, even without understanding, in a way that shows compassion and demonstrates love” (187). This, it seems, is not only applicable to their relationship but to the concept of love as shown in *Another Country* throughout.

In *Another Country*, self-love is thus shown to be the way in which one should stay in touch with reality. Everyone is responsible for making their own life bearable and meaningful. As love is the one thing that can make a life bearable, it follows that self-love is needed to accomplish this. Self-love is an essential requirement before being able to meaningfully love the other; once self-love is attained, you do not need the other anymore to ground you to reality, and thus you can see the other as an individual. Consequentially, there is no need for expectations of the other. The issues the characters face, such as jealousy and anger, will then no longer constitute a problem, as they are based on expectations of the other as an object. A profound, meaningful love between people can arise. *Another Country* suggests self-love to be an essential requirement before being able to truly love the other.

The characters, as for them, seem to philosophize about the meaning of love. Ida, for one, is cynical and sees that people use one another. She tells Vivaldo that

[p]eople don’t have any mercy. They tear you limb from limb, in the name of love. Then, when you’re dead, when they’ve killed you by what they made you go through, they say you didn’t have any character. They weep big, bitter tears – not for *you*. For themselves, because they’ve lost their toy (Baldwin *Another Country* 261).

As for Cass, she starts to wonder about love because of her affair with Eric. She is aware that there is no love between Eric and her, and “she wondered about that: love; and wondered if anyone really knew anything about it” (283). Because of her affair, “[n]ow, less than ever, did she know what love was (...)” (287). Near the end of the novel, Cass realizes that there is too little love in this world: she does not think there is any hope “for us”, because “we’re too empty – here.’ She touched her heart” (397). Their vision on love thus develops, but the characters in the novel do not seem to achieve the self-love and meaningful relationships.

4. Conclusion

On the personal level, concerning giving meaning to one’s life and the relationships in it, self-love shows to be of great importance in *Another Country*. The characters realize that the love present in their lives is not sufficient, but self-love is not reached by any of them in the novel and they are stuck in infantile love. By emphasizing the loneliness prevalent in everyone’s life, the fact that using others as objects only leads to the loss of oneself, and the emphasis on the “inner you” that only you can master, the importance of self-love is highlighted. Only love can make a life bearable; but as it is your responsibility to make your life bearable, it is through self-love that you accomplish this. However, it is impossible to deny the reality of the other; lives are interdependent. But the presence of the other is not there to ground *you* to reality; this, you should do yourself. Once you have assumed responsibility over your own life, love between people is possible; but this is a love where there are no expectations whatsoever – these are not necessary, because you already ground yourself to reality. Consequentially, in the love as advocated in *Another Country*, everybody is seen in their individuality, and people are not used as an object anymore. As a result, these meaningful relationships among people based upon self-love and individuality, give room for the transcendental love that is needed in order to overcome social inequalities to arise.

Conclusion

Love has proven to be of great importance in James Baldwin's *Another Country*. Research into the notion of love has shown that love is often thought about as basis for social change. Both Martin Luther King, Jr. as well as bell hooks have advocated a "love ethic" which would bring about social change and a more equal society. Baldwin himself, in his essay *The Fire Next Time*, points out the importance of love as well, but takes it a step further; whereas King mainly professes a "love-thy-oppressor" approach, Baldwin emphasizes a transcendental, "postcategorical" form of love. In Baldwin's approach to love, everybody is seen in their individuality and not according to which categories in society they belong. Baldwin also makes a difference between the "infantile" notion of love and a more profound sort of love that he describes as "a state of being, or a state of grace – (...) in the tough and universal sense of quest and daring and growth" (Baldwin *The Fire Next Time* 82).

In *Another Country*, the transcendental love that Baldwin professes in *The Fire Next Time* is also put forward as the sort of love needed to overcome social inequalities that interfere in relationships. By showing the way these social inequalities and the rigid social structures present in society intrude into personal relationships, the novel implies a transcendental love where these social inequalities are discarded of. In this way, transcendental love is proven to be the only way in which social inequalities can disappear. This love should be addressed to everyone. *Another Country*, too, professes a "love as the practice of freedom". The characters, however, adhere to the "love-thy-oppressor" approach, which, in the novel, falls back into hate; social inequalities persist in the relationships between individuals.

Consequentially, the personal relationships between the characters were examined in order to understand the way in which *Another Country* suggests achieving a meaningful relationship with the other and, as a result, be able to reach social change because of the change in personal relationships. On the personal level – where one gives meaning to one's own life and creates meaningful relationships with others – love is also presented as the way to overcome the "lost-ness" one experiences. By pointing out the character's loneliness, and how one is responsible for one's own life, *Another Country* presents an idea of love that is twofold; firstly, there is the necessity of self-love. Love is the only thing that can make a life bearable, but it is up to oneself to make it so; self-love is presented as the basic prerequisite to any bearable life whatsoever. However, the presence of the other is proven to be inevitable in *Another Country*. The characters are prone to use the other as object, as their "touchstone for reality". This leads to the fact that, in the novel, no one seems capable of sustaining healthy relationships. Once

self-love is attained, a meaningful and profound relationship with the other can occur; however, one cannot have any expectations of the other whatsoever, because one should see the other as an individual – as a subject – and not as an object. Once this profound relationship with the other exists, the possibility of a transcendental love to overcome social categories arises. Self-love is a prerequisite for any sort of love with the other, where meaningful relationships can arise and social categories can be transcended.

An analysis of the concept of love in *Another Country* shows the importance of love for solving both social as well as personal problems. Even though *Another Country's* characters might not have achieved the two forms of love most needed – transcendental love to overcome social inequalities and self-love to overcome one's "lost-ness" – *Another Country* shows this is the way to overcome the problems of life: once this is attained, alienation from society and loneliness will disappear and meaningful relationships will arise.

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