“…You have to go the way your blood beats. If you don’t live the only life you have, you won’t live some other life; you won’t live any life at all.” (Richard Wright, “The Ethics of Living Jim Crow,” Uncle Tom’s Children: 1940; New York: Harper & Row, 1982. 5).

In Richard Wright’s autobiographical essay, “The Ethics of Living Jim Crow,” he reflects on how he learned to live life along the color line. Wright recalls how his mother, teaching him an early lesson on how to interact with whites, chastised him for engaging in a battle with young white boys. “She finished by telling me that I ought to be thankful to God as long as I lived that they didn’t kill me” (185). Hence, as a child, Richard Wright experienced the power of whiteness. He thereafter equates whiteness with power, fear, and death. In James Baldwin’s novel Another Country the concept of whiteness, kill the African American male artist with words and actions. Sensitive, questioning, and talented, Baldwin’s artist-heroes must free themselves of their socially constructed positions as African American men if they are to achieve their artistic goals. Because of his continual confrontational nature, the artist is aware that the possibility of death looms greater over him than any other figure in James Baldwin’s fiction. In Another Country Rufus Scott succumbs to the power
of whiteness and dies in the first third of the novel. The lesson is continued through the character of Eric Jones who learns to define and accept himself. Baldwin’s triumphant protagonists resist being categorized in terms of their race and sexual orientation and ultimately embrace a more meaningful identity, that of the artist.

By making four of his principal characters artist-figures in Another Country, Baldwin argues for a consideration of how race, gender, and sexual orientation influence the artist-hero’s journey toward self-definition and self-acceptance. A central theme in Another Country, as in much of James Baldwin’s work, is the struggle to acknowledge and accept all facets of oneself. The novel is explored through Rufus Scott, Baldwin’s first artist-hero to embrace all aspects of his identity. The level of success that these characters attain is directly related to their desire and willingness to understand and accept themselves. In this chapter I will show how these two artists, one African American and one white, illustrate Baldwin’s view that the artist-figure is doomed unless he “goes the way his blood beats” (62). Another Country (1962) examines the effect of race, sexuality, and discrimination on the artist and his mission.

Baldwin’s previous works, Go Tell It on the Mountain (1953) and Notes of a Native Son (1955), were so well received that they cemented his relationship with the reading public. These texts, both autobiographical in nature, use the relationship between a father and his son to establish Baldwin’s interest in
democracy and individual rights. *Go Tell It on the Mountain* and “Notes of a Native Son,” like *Another Country*, explore a young man’s search for identity. *Go Tell It on the Mountain* addresses the difficulties between a deeply religious father and his son who wants to be a writer. The father and son are also divided on their views of white people. The father, a migrant from the South, advocates a separation of the races. His son, born and raised in Harlem, thinks of the kindness he received from a friendly white teacher and believes that blacks and whites can coexist in peace.

*Go Tell It on the Mountain* traces the maturation of a young boy, John Grimes. John’s spiritual epiphany, which should bring him closer to his minister father, becomes instead a challenge to his father’s authority. The religious tone of *Go Tell It on the Mountain* greatly influenced by James Baldwin’s three years as a child minister, underscores John’s sexual and emotional awakening. The ways in which that John Grimes probes his emotional, sexual, and religious development stand as a touchstone for Baldwin’s subsequent artist-heroes; this is a benchmark, which Rufus Scott fails to meet.

Similarly, the essay, “Notes of a Native Son,” another of Baldwin’s early works, also uses the strained relationship between a father, David Baldwin, and his son James to examine the effects of racism. Finding a response to racism is the central question in *Notes of Native Son*. The autobiographical essay is also a son’s plea for independence. Unlike his father, Baldwin believed in his own self-
worth and the principles of American democracy. This belief was constantly tested by the many acts of racial discrimination Baldwin encountered. When confronted with continual racism while working in New Jersey, Baldwin was forced to address the anger and rage that he felt.

“I first contracted some dread, chronic disease, the unfailing symptom of which is a kind of blind fever, a pounding in the skull and fire in the bowels. Once the disease is contracted, one can never be rally carefree again… There is not a Negro alive who does not have this rage in his blood one has the choice, merely, of living with it consciously or surrendering to it” (133). This question of dealing with the rage consumed James Baldwin at this point in his life, and it is this rage that is expressed through the character of Rufus Scott. The difference is that the “dread, chronic disease” claims Rufus’ life.

It is in Notes of a Native Son, that James Baldwin begins to understand his father and to comprehend the difficulty of life as an African American man. “In that year I had had time to become aware of the meaning of all my father’s bitter warnings, had discovered the secret of his proudly pursed lips and rigid carriage: I had discovered the weight of white people in the world. I saw that this had been for my ancestors and now would be for me an awful thing to live with and that the bitterness which had helped to kill my father could also kill me” (129).

The legacy of bitterness that the elder Baldwin passed on led the son to embark on a lifetime quest to understand and quell discrimination. Baldwin
realizes that he must learn to channel these negative feelings if he is to survive. *Another Country* explores attempts to overcome that anger. In *Another Country* the question of identity haunts Rufus Scott who must decide how to handle his own bitterness which becomes too “awful a thing to live with” (129).

*Another Country* is the basis for Eldridge Cleaver’s attack on James Baldwin in his collection of essays, *Soul on Ice*. Cleaver’s views on Baldwin and *Another Country* are helpful in the sense that they document the reactions of some Black Nationalists to Baldwin’s fiction. Cleaver describes Rufus Scott as “a pathetic wretch who indulged in the white man’s pastime of committing suicide” (Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (New York; McGraw-Hill, 1968; 107). He goes on to denigrate Baldwin personally: “There is in James Baldwin’s work the most grueling, agonizing, total hatred of the blacks, particularly of himself, and the most shameful, fanatical, fawning, sycophantic love of the whites that one can find in the writings of any black American writer the period” (Addison Gayle, *The Way of the New World* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1975: 215). Insisting on an autobiographical reading of the novel, Cleaver confuses Rufus Scott with James Baldwin. Rufus’ self-hatred leads to his death.

Addison Gayle offers a fairly black nationalist view of the novel: “Rufus has been murdered by an uncaring, unfeeling white society. *Another Country* is a novel of vengeance and redemption” (214). Black nationalists such as Gayle and Cleaver condemn Baldwin for making white characters as important as the
African American character in *Another Country*. Gayle also accuses Baldwin of conceptualizing African Americans in the same fashion that white Americans do: “Here is depicted also is the terrible tension in Baldwin’s life and work: the refusal to accept his status as a black man equal to Euro-American man and an obsession to claim European history and culture as his own. Instead of adopting European history and culture,” (214). Baldwin uses his time in Europe to clarify Baldwin: “Yet some have assumed the Baldwin slavishly courted a Western muse and wished to become indistinguishable from white American Nothing could be farther from the truth…” (62). Most troubling is Gayle’s assertion that Baldwin has accepted white stereotypes about African-Americans. This argument is more applicable to Rufus Scott in *Another Country* rather than to James Baldwin.

Some of the characters in *Another Country* express the kind of frustration that Baldwin articulated in essays and interviews during the early 1960’s In “The New Lost Generation,” published in Esquire in 1961, Baldwin begins his reflection on the experience of exile with the story of a friend who commits suicide: “Not only did the world stubbornly refuse his vision; it despised him for his vision and scourged him for his color. Of course it despised and scourged me, too, but I was different from my friend in that it took me nearly no time to despise the world right back…” (305). This friend, identified in interviews as Eugene, resembles Rufus Scott and Eric Jones, both central characters in *Another
There are obvious similarities. Both Eugene and Rufus had white girlfriends and killed themselves by jumping off the George Washington Bridge. But there are also more subtle links. It appears that homosexual desires led both the real man and the fictional character to desperation. In The Price of the Ticket Baldwin recalls Eugene saying that he might be involved with him shortly before he committed suicide. In Another Country Eric Jones tells Rufus Scott of his romantic feelings for him but here the confessor is redeemed by receiving the love he so desperately seeks.

Easily the most arresting character that Baldwin has created, Rufus Scott remains unforgettable largely because of the depth of his literal and figurative fall. Another Country begins on the last night of Rufus Scott’s life. The first part of the novel serves as an explanation for Rufus’ sense of despair. We witness his decline knowing, as he does, that there is no redemption in sight. Rufus has been roaming the streets of New York City for a month trying to cope with the physical and emotional pain he has inflicted on his lover Leona. He has not contacted his family or his friends and they are all worried about him. After nearly resorting to prostitution in order to eat, Rufus sees that his end has come. “Perhaps, now, though he had hit bottom… Yet there knocked in his heart the suspicion that the bottom did not really exist” (53). Rufus drops in to visit his best friend, Vivaldo Moore, before taking his life. Rufus’ descent comprises the first section of Another Country.
The fact that Rufus’s artistic identity is formed by the time that we encounter him in the novel foreshadows his demise. The development of the hero as an artist is central to Baldwin’s artist-narratives. John Grimes in *Go Tell It on The Mountain* and Sonny of Sonny’s *Blues* have their futures assured primarily because we witness their struggle to define themselves. “Sonny’s Blues” and *Go Tell It on the Mountain* both tell the story of young African American men who come to understand and accept themselves. This developmental element is missing in *Another Country*. We don’t witness Rufus Scott’s journey to the stage and are left wondering what led him to become a drummer. How did he make it to Greenwich Villag3e from Harlem and what was his life like before he met Leona? Although it is clear from the only scene in the jazz club that Rufus had been a successful and respected drummer, he does not perform in *Another Country*. Rufus is in constant flight throughout the novel. He even joins the Navy in order to escape the streets of Harlem and the drugs and violence that threatened his future. “And he had fled, so he thought, from the beat of Harlem, which was simply the beat of his own heart” (7). What Rufus fears is as much a part of himself as his heart beat: his artistic fate. The thing that Rufus is running from himself.

Unlike Baldwin’s other artist figures, Rufus Scott is reduced to the role of voyeur in his artistic area. In the only scene in the novel in which Rufus plays
with his band, a young horn player communicates his pain to the audience. Listeners become spellbound by the passion and fervor of his music.

“He stood there… Shivering in the rags of his twenty-odd years, and screaming through the horn Do you love me? Do you love me? This, anyway, was the question Rufus heard, the same phrase, unbearably, endlessly and variously repeated, with all the force the boy had… And yet the question was terrible and real” (AC8-9). In this question, Rufus repeatedly hears the pain and disillusionment that the young man experienced. The scene foreshadows Rufus’s death as it marks the end of his career as a musician. Rufus stands as a witness to the rise of an artist who uses his life in his art. Rufus, not the anonymous saxophone player, should be utilizing his music to communicate the lessons that he has learned. Rufus must find the courage to play his blues. Later while listening to Bessie Smith singing, Rufus wonders how people manage to overcome the blues: “for the first time Rufus began to hear, in the severely understated monotony of this blues, something which spoke to his troubled mind… and he wondered how others had moved beyond the emptiness and horror which faced him now” (AC 49). The blues contain the possibility of salvation for Rufus. The fact that Rufus cannot transform his blues into art is the precise reason for his suicide. The artist must articulate his blues through his art. At the end of his life Rufus cannot accomplish this feat and thus his failure is complete.
Characterized in stories such as *previous condition* and in *Go Tell It on the Mountain* as overly religious and life-threatening, Harlem is only a shadowy presence in this novel. Because he lives in Greenwich Village, Rufus is rarely depicted in Harlem. The distance between Greenwich and Harlem is not just geographic but emotional. Because his friends and lovers are white, Rufus constantly questions these relationships. By situating Rufus Scott in Greenwich Village and surrounding him with white characters, Baldwin removes Rufus from his natural support systems. If we consider Houston Baker’s view that “the embattled craftsman is always at the center of concentric circles: his family, the larger Black society, and the white world, “then Rufus does not meet the requirements for the “embattled craftsman.” His avoidance of his family and of his Harlem community is another indication of Rufus’ failure as an artist hero. He does not want to see himself reflected in their eyes. Rufus Scott’s emotional and physical lack of community leads to his tragic fate.

Because the geographical focus is on Greenwich Village and not on Harlem, perhaps *Another Country* is Baldwin’s test of the integrationist policies of the 1950s. Both Rufus and Ida Scott attempt to realize their artistic goals in the white world of Greenwich Village and midtown Manhattan. Yet both characters become pawns in someone else’s sexual fantasy. They cannot escape the sexual stereotypes of African Americans and are seen respectively as the black buck and the Jezebel. Ida Scott personifies the rage of African Americans
during the 1960s. Blaming white America for her brother’s death, Ida turns her relationships with the white characters in the novel to her advantage. Thus Ida Scott’s tenuous standing as a jazz vocalist emerges from the opinion of her peers, jazz musicians. She hasn’t endured the requisite suffering and her willingness to profit from Rufus’ suffering dooms her artistic effort.

Anger consumes Rufus, leaving no room for art, family, love or even his own humanity. His cry, ‘You took the best so why not take the rest?’ is the sign of his inability to fight racism, to fight stereotypes, to uphold his humanity. The best to which Rufus refers is all that he has lost: his life as a musician, his role as a respected member of his Harlem community and the community of musicians, and his own self-respect.

Rufus Scott’s sense of his powerlessness is shown in his relationships with his friends and his lover. He surrounds himself with white people. Rufus’ easy acquisition of Leona, his white girlfriend, leads him to madness. He becomes convinced that Leona dates him because of the stereotype of African American men as well endowed: “She loves 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” (AC 68). He doesn’t want to accept the possibility that Leona might actually love him for himself. Never able to forget his race, Rufus offers the following assessment of his dealings with white women during his Greenwich Village years: “not an easy
scene to play since it can bring out the worst in both parties, and more than one white girl had already let me know that her color was more powerful than my dick” (AC 55). Rufus’ unconscious acceptance of the role of black stud and of the superiority of white women leads to his decreasing self-esteem.

Rufus’ irrationality is not the derangement of the criminally insane, but the madness of one who is constantly assaulted because of his race. After a particularly violent fight with Leona, his white girlfriend Rufus is confronted by his best friend Vivaldo Moore. “You could be killed for this, ‘said Vivaldo. ‘All she has to do is yell. All I have to do is walk down to the corner and get a cop” (AC 55). Rufus sees the power of whiteness as the force which inhibits his ability to live his life as he chooses. Whiteness, which translates to power and oppression, fuels his rage.

Rufus Scott’s hatred of whites, particularly Southerners, may be traced to his Harlem upbringing and his military stint in the South. Yet the source of Rufus’ sexual and physical abuse of these characters is their whiteness, their skin color and all that it represents to Rufus. Only as he descends into his self-made hell does Rufus realize the connections between his relationships with Eric and Leona. “he remembered,” Baldwin writes, only that… Eric had loved him; as he now remembered that Leona had loved him. He had despised Eric’s manhood treating him as a woman, by telling him how inferior he was to a woman, by treating him as nothing more than a hideous sexual deformity. But Leona had not
been a deformity. And he had used against her the very epithets he had used against Eric, and in the very same way, with the same roaring in his head and the same intolerable pressure in his chest (AC 47). Rufus responds to Eric and Leona’s whiteness and not their affection for him. Although they are his lovers, Eric and Leona come to symbolize the power of whiteness, the power that has been denied to Rufus.

Addison Gayle suggests that Rufus’ fury emanates from his sense of inferiority: “At the core of musician’s rage is an inability to accept the fact that he is equal to white men, to arrive at a definition of himself outside that vouchsafed by the white world” (G Gayle, *The Way of the New World* 216). Gayle’s argument gets its validity from the fact that Rufus’ has internalized his self-hatred. Rufus Scott’s rage against Leona stems from the hostile responses by whites when he is in public with Leona. He picks fights with white men and physically abuses Leona to appease his anger and reclaim his manhood. He has internalized these feelings of inferiority and the myth of the black buck to the point that anger, sex, and violence dominate his life. Rufus’ equation of sex and love is troubling: “I just want to get laid- - get bellowed - - loved - - one more time” (AC 64). Rufus doesn’t seem to be able to believe in love, only in expressions of love. Thus he runs from those who show their feelings for him in a nonsexual way.
At the beginning of *Another Country* Rufus Scott is in the midst of his descent. Alone and alienated from his family and friends, Rufus must learn to use his isolation to come to terms with his fears. Rufus had been a successful jazz drummer before he met Leona. They immediately embark upon a sexual relationship that ultimately destroys them both. Rufus’ sense of powerlessness is diametrically opposed to Sonny’s experience in *Sonny’s Blues*.

You walk these streets, black and funky and cold, and there’s not really a living ass to talk to and there’s nothing shaking, and there’s no way of getting it out – that storm inside. You can’t talk it and you can’t make love with it, and when you finally try to get with it and play it, you realize nobody’s listening. So you’ve got to listen. You got to find a way to listen (AC 115). Like Sonny, Rufus Scott finds himself walking the streets and dealing with “confronting that storm inside.” But, unlike Sonny, Rufus doesn’t try to understand and conquer the pain. This inner conflict leads Rufus to avoid his family in Harlem and causes him to physically and emotionally abuse his white girlfriend. He simply walks blindly through the streets of Manhattan hoping that the pain will cease. Perhaps now, though, he had hit bottom… yet there knocked in his heart the suspicion that the bottom did not really exist … He wanted to stand up, breathe, and at the same time he wanted to lie flat on the floor and be swallowed into whatever would stop this pain. Yet he was aware that nothing would stop it, nothing: this was
himself….Nor did he understand what force within this body had driven him into such a desolate place (AC 53-54).

Rufus’ failure to comprehend his own experience dooms him. Like Sonny, Rufus must confront that force which drives him to destruction. The distance implied by Baldwin’s language demonstrates how Rufus Scott resists understanding and accepting himself. He is attracted to Eric and loves him but can never forget that these feelings are condemned by the larger society. Rufus in turn censures himself.

Through Baldwin’s initial focus on Rufus Scott, we examine the ways in which following social norms lead to a denial of identity and ultimately to death for the African American male bisexual. “Baldwin is careful to make all his characters bisexual faggots”, by which Baldwin means exclusively and effeminately homosexual”(165). After reading Baldwin’s Giovanni’s Room, Joseph Beam, a gay black man and writer, wondered if there was any hope for the future. ‘Could there be any happy endings in this kind of love?’ In Another Country James Baldwin asks readers to consider what motivate Rufus Scott, a bisexual man, to throw himself off the George Washington Bridge and why Eric Jones, a white homosexual, flourishes. Sadly Rufus clings to socially constructed definitions of himself rather than defining and accepting himself. Because he cannot acknowledge his bisexuality and his love for two white people, Rufus turns his love into hatred. Instead of focusing on his own feelings, Rufus destroys
those who love him. “Rufus had despised him because he came from Alabama; perhaps he had allowed Eric to make love to him in order to despise him more completely” (AC 45). Rufus’ violence towards Eric, and perhaps Leona, stems from being attacked by a Southern Army officer during his youth. James Baldwin expressed his thoughts on homosexuality and race in a 1986 interview with Richard Goldstein of the Village Voice.

“A black gay person who is a sexual conundrum to society is already, long before the question of sexuality comes into it, menaced and marked because he’s black or she’s black. The sexual question comes after the question of color; it’s simply one more aspect of the danger in which all black people live” (180).

Indeed. It is the “question of color” which leads Rufus Scott to commit suicide though his denial of his sexual feelings and acknowledgment of the sexual acts he performs with Eric play an important role. “But I am suggesting that one of the prices an American Negro pays—or can pay—for what is called his ‘acceptance’ is profound, almost ineradicable self-hatred. This corrupts every aspect of his living, he is never at peace again, he is out of touch with himself forever” (287). Rufus has sex with Eric and Leona because he wants their love, but he sees himself as being unworthy of anyone’s love. Walking the streets of New York City and contemplating prostituting himself makes Rufus think of Eric: “He glimpsed, for the first time, the extent, the nature, of Eric’s loneliness and the danger in which this placed him; and wished that he had been nicer to
him” (AC 45). Rufus’ own loneliness, compounded by the fact that he has distanced himself from Eric and all those who care about him, leads him to kill himself.

Recent research shows that suicide is surprisingly common among African Americans, citing the decrease of cultural ties due to the migration of African Americans from rural to urban environments, Richard Major finds that the African American male is increasingly displaced: “Black males are at much greater risk for suicide than black females, by a ration of four to one. Not only are black males more likely than females to be involved in deviant and self-destructive behavior… they are also less likely to complete high school and to be employed” (287). When we first encounter Rufus, he is unemployed and homes. The story of how he descended to this level is told in flashbacks during the first third of the novel. Through his relationship with Leona and his final tragic state, we see how Rufus Scott fits Major’s description. Rufus feels as though he failed his family and is ashamed to face them. As he rides the train, Rufus considers getting off in Harlem to visit his family but continues north. He departs the train at the George Washington Bridge. It is here that Rufus commits suicide.

Though suicide is often presented as a viable option for African American men in James Baldwin’s fiction, Rufus Scott’s taking of his own life is the only such depiction in Baldwin’s fiction. Rufus is characterized by a sense of hopelessness and despair that is unmatched by the other artist heroes. He is
unable to address his fear. Peter in “Previous Condition” and Sonny in “Sonny’s Blues” acknowledge and accept the possibility that their quests might end in death or madness.

Rufus’s death is related to events in Baldwin’s personal life. In the introductory essay to The Price of the Ticket, Baldwin sees the suicide of his friend Eugene as a possible foreshadowing of his own fate. If I say that my best friend, black Eugene, who took his life at the age of twenty-four, had been, until that moment, a survivor, I will be told that he had “personal problems. Indeed, he did, and one of them was trying of find a job, or a place to live, in New York. If I point out that there is certainly a connection between his death (When I was twenty-two) and my departure for Paris (When I was twenty-four) I will be condemned as theatrical (XVII).

Describing life for the African American man in such stark life or death terms is overly dramatic, but then their plight seems to call for such a response. Rufus’s homelessness is more than physical; he is emotionally and spiritually lost. The deprivation of faith, often associated with a belief in love in Baldwin’s fiction, is a major contributing factor to Rufus’ suicide.

By committing suicide, Rufus Scott maintains some measure of control over his destiny and continues to do battle with white racism. The act of throwing himself off the George Washington Bridge is foreshadowed throughout the first section of the novel. Rufus seems to hear the Hudson River calling to
him as he remembers a childhood drowning victim. His final words, “all right, you mother fucking Godal mighty bastard, I’m coming to you,” signal his surrender to what he perceives as white, racist forces (AC 88). Rufus’ suicide evokes the images of slaves who drowned themselves during the Middle Passage rather than endure further horrors of slavery. His suicide is also an act of defiance and illustrates his empowerment. Just as Morrison’s Sethe kills her daughter in part to retain some control over the quality of life for her child, Rufus finally takes control over the way in which he wants to live or die. With his thoughts on the bridge, Rufus comes closest to articulating his blues and, in Houston Baker’s terms, achieves “A resonant, improvisation, expressive dignity”(24) Certainly Rufus’s experience resonates throughout the remainder of the novel as the other characters try to comprehend his actions.

Reading Baldwin’s artist heroes as responses to Wright’s Bigger Thomas allows for a contextualization of some of the more distressing aspects of Rufus Scott. In Another Country Rufus Scott is reminiscent of Richard Wright’s archetypal figure, Bigger Thomas. The physical abuse Rufus inflicts upon his white Southern lover marks Rufus’ descent into Wright’s Bad Nigger archetype. Although Baldwin’s sensitive portrayal of an African American man consumed with stereotypical notions about his gender and race is sympathetic, I am troubled Another Country with Bigger Thomas in Native Son.
While Wright presents Bigger’s incarceration and probable execution as an outcome of his socialization, Baldwin rejects this naturalistic approach. Clearly Rufus has the ability to shape his destiny but lacks the necessary courage. Rufus tries to achieve his goals, but feels thwarted because of his race. Life in the democratic United States has taught Rufus that he is inconsequential that he doesn’t matter. He even questions whether he matters to God. “Ain’t I your baby too?” (AC.78). Unlike Bigger Thomas, Rufus Scott feels too much. His emotional responses to racism and discrimination lead to his suicide. By harming himself as well as other, Rufus internalizes the rage and hatred directed toward him. In his review of Another Country critic Granville Hicks asserts that hate is the overwhelming emotion of the novel. There is a great deal of hate in the novel and most of it is directed toward those who are considered different and or marginal. Rufus dies because he accepts these definitions of himself and because he cannot conquer his self-hatred.

Baldwin’s use of two dominant artist-heroes in Another Country lends itself to an examination of the impact of race and sexuality on the maturation process of the artist-figure. Despite the variable of race, both Rufus Scott and Eric Jones must undergo a revelatory experience in order to be reborn as artists. Refuting stereotypes based on race or sexual orientation and adopting instead a primary identification as an artist is the first sign of the requisite reawakening of the artist-hero. The transformation or the lack thereof determines the nature of
ensuing artistic experience. This awakening is particularly important for Rufus Scott because, as an African American male, his humanity is constantly called into question. Houston Baker, echoing Baldwin’s concern for African American male characters to accept their humanity, identifies the primary cause of Rufus’ death: “The rage of the Black artist is futile unless he is strong enough to cease battling for his humanity by those ‘brutal criteria’ bequeathed by Leona’s forefathers.” Rufus not only battles with the ideology passed on by Leona’s forefathers but he ultimately loses his life in the process. Rufus Scott’s descent is paralleled by Eric Jones’s ascent in Another Country.

Eric Jones emerges as Baldwin’s most successful artist-hero. Because of his personal struggles, he becomes a model of honesty for the other characters in Another Country. The only son of a wealthy Alabama couple, Eric is burdened with the weight of his parents’ high expectations almost from birth. Right from early days knows that he is different and that different means wrong. “But by this time he knew that everything he did was wrong in the eyes of his parents, and in the eyes of the world, and that therefore, everything must be lived in secret” (AC 199).

Yet Eric’s freedom lies in his rejection of a secret life. His first homosexual relationship frees him from the prison of his Southern hometown and his indifferent parents. “Many years were to pass before he could begin to accept what he, that day, in those arms, with the stream whispering in his ear,
discovered; and yet that day was the beginning of his life as a man” (AC 206). Eric’s painful journey toward self-acceptance is the single most important factor in his later success. Eric’s expression of his sexual self fuels his artistic liberation.

The road to self-love is a long and arduous one for Eric. Finding the strength to acknowledge and accept his identity as a homosexual and as an actor is the quality that makes Eric Jones the principal subject of Another Country. He does so in France and this act of courage is the source of Eric’s power. The fact that neither Eric nor Rufus can achieve a sense of wholeness in New York City is Baldwin’s commentary on the restricting nature of life in the United States. In “The New Lost Generation” Baldwin contemplates the impact exile had on his life. “In my case, I think exile saved my life…A man is not a man until he is able and willing to accept his own vision of the world…” (312). The distance the artist-hero travels should be in search of self, not in flight from self. It is significant that, for Eric to find out who he was, he had to leave New York City and the United States.

Like James Baldwin, Eric Jones gains a new, deeper sense of himself in France. Although Eric’s embrace of his sexual identity in Europe alters his life, he realizes that he must return to the United States if he is to measure his success: “Why am I going home? He asked himself. But he knew why. It was time. In order not to lose all that he had gained, he had to move forward and risk
it all” (AC 230). His renewed sense of self helps his acting career. Eric Jones’ sexuality and profession, possible weapons for his enemies, are transformed instead into tools of empowerment.

In Paris Eric learns the meaning of love. “For the act of love is a confession. One lies about the body but the body does not lie about itself; it cannot lie about the force which drives it. And Eric had discovered, inevitably, the truth about many men, who then wished to drive Eric and the truth together out of the world” (AC 212). Eric prospers because he is able not only to love himself but to accept himself. By defining himself, Eric achieves the only kind of success that is valued: the love and acceptance of self. “He had to create his standards and make up his definitions as he went along. It was up to him to find out whom he was, and it was his necessity to do this…alone” (AC212-213). This definition of love is closely related to what I see as James Baldwin’s vision of art. Honesty is the most important element in both artistic and love relationships.

An important indication of Eric’s success as a human being and as an artist is his ability to share his hard-won self love and acceptance with others. Baldwin casts him as a healer, one who heals through love, in Another Country. All who are intimate with him find themselves transformed. Eric has brief love affairs with Cass Silenski, a middle class wife and mother, and Vivaldo Moore, a young writer. Vivaldo, who has had sexual encounters with men in the past, understands that he is basically heterosexual, but his experience with Eric changes him. “So
what can we really do for each other except – just love each other and be each other’s witness?....So that we can really stretch into whoever we are?” (AC 396). Love, like art, not only liberates but nurtures. Fueled by honesty, it leads to positive developments. After a sexual “conversion” by Eric during which he discovers new meaning in his life, Vivaldo resumes his writing and his characters speak to him. His life as a successful artist begins. His writing, which had not been going well, begins to flourish. Vivaldo gains insight into his writing and his romantic relationship with Ida Scott. He finally acknowledges the futility of his relationship with Ida Scott.

Likewise Cass Silenski, trapped in her identity as a wife and mother, is liberated through her affair with Eric. After her first sexual experience with Eric, Cass reclaims her womanhood. “She really felt that a weight has rolled away, and that she was herself again, in her own skin, for the first time in a long time” (AC 292). Cass and Eric accept the relationship for what it is an affair and continue to be friends rather than lovers. Cass sought attention and honesty from Eric that she felt that was lacking from her relationship with her husband. Strengthened by her affair with Eric, Cass faces the truth about her husband and her marriage. She seeks to duplicate the clarity that she found in her relationship with Eric. Although it is unclear as to whether her marriage can be saved, Cass’ willingness to risk everything that she holds dear to gain truth makes her a positive character.
With its focus on Eric Jones and Rufus Scott, *Another country* is a critique of conventional notions of masculinity. All of the male characters, with the exception of Eric Jones, struggle with the way in which masculinity is constructed in the United States and each of them ultimately rejects narrow definitions of a gendered self. Even the minor characters Vivaldo Moore and Richard Silenski change their views of themselves as men. Richard had been Vivaldo’s high school English teacher and the two are engaged in a subtle competition. Each man has been writing a novel for years, but Richard secretly finishes his novel and presents Vivaldo with a published copy. Richard Silenski’s community of family and friends lose respect for him as a writer because they recognize the lack of truth and artistic effort in his commercially successful novel. Richard defines himself by his roles as a father, husband, and provider. He is forced to reexamine his life when his wife commits adultery with a bisexual man. Vivaldo Moore, a minor character, may not be a commercially successful writer like Richard Silenski but we, as readers, respect him as an artist because we see the internal struggle and self-examination which he undergoes in order to write fiction. He learns to listen to those voices he had previously tried to silence and this development leads him to begin writing his novel in earnest. Through his sexual experience with Eric, Vivaldo redefines himself in terms of his vocation and his masculinity.
Bell Hooks argues that “masculinity, as it is conceived within patriarchy is life-threatening to black men” (182). Often masculinity is defined as being a provider and the head of the household. Achieving this status is difficult for African American men because of cultural differences and the impact of racism on the African American male’s ability to gain employment. African American families are more communal and extended. Certainly following the phallocentric, hegemonic notions of patriarchy leads Rufus Scott to attempt to dominate women and ultimately kill himself.

For Houston Baker, the male sex organ is the key symbol in Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*. “The Black phallus as a symbol of unconstrained force that white men contradictorily envy and seek to destroy…” (182). In describing his rather combative relationship with fellow writer Norman Mailer, Baldwin ruminates on the status of African American men. “It is still true, alas, that to be an American Negro male is also to be a kind of walking phallic symbol: which means that one pays, in one’s own personality, for the sexual insecurity of others.” (290). The stereotypical image of black men as purely sexual beings is evoked not by Baldwin’s white characters but by Rufus Scott. He becomes so obsessed with what he believes are negative comments on his blackness that he internalizes the racism he perceives. Rufus increasingly defines himself in terms of his sexual prowess. By the time he becomes involved with Leona, he is no longer able to express his homosexual feelings and becomes, in his own eyes, the
stereotypical black buck. Rufus even describes his penis as “that most despised part of himself” (AC 74). He accuses Leona of wanting to be with him only for sex: “Why don’t you tell the truth? I wouldn’t have to beat you if you’d tell the truth. He grinned at Vivaldo. Man, this chick can’t get enough …” (AC 56-57). Rufus can’t hear or accept the truth. Leona loves him for himself, but all he can see is race. Having internalized negative stereotypes of black men, Rufus cannot accept love from anyone and cannot love himself.

Rufus Scott’s restricted definition of masculinity excludes his unacknowledged homosexual acts with Eric. It is significant that, at the end of his life, Rufus thinks of Eric and regrets the ways in which he punished Eric for helping him to reveal his own homosexual desires. Rufus must disavow his feelings for Eric in order to remain “black” and “male” in his own eyes and in the eyes of the African American community. This adherence to rigid cultural standards leads Rufus to deny his affection for Eric and thus submerge a part of himself. Rufus exemplifies Baldwin’s belief that “the American ideal of sexuality appears to be rooted in the American ideal of masculinity” (678). As Baldwin says in *The Furious Passage of James Baldwin*, “I know a lot of people who turn into junkies because they’re afraid they might be queer” (32). Confronting the fear of being different becomes the acceptance of a personal identity. Unlike the indecisive David in *Giovanni’s Room*, the men in *Another Country* are forced to make decisions about their sexuality if they are to survive.
In his study of gay self-representation in literature, David Bergman asserts that a negative identity becomes ‘an absence of identity.’ In other words there is no identity without a homosexual one. Eric Jones contradicts Bergman’s argument when he delivers the message of the novel: “I mean, I think you’ve got to be truthful about the life you have. Otherwise, there’s no possibility of achieving the life you want… or think you want” (AC 336). The responsibility of whether to live a life of truth or a life of lies clearly is the domain of the artist. Eric is determined to live life fully and honestly and it is this sense of completeness that the other characters in the novel seek.

Eric’s open acknowledgement and acceptance of his multiple identities silences those who would persecute him. By embracing both his masculine and feminine qualities, Eric Jones personifies Baldwin’s philosophy of love. Eric Jones has found fulfillment in his personal and professional lives while remaining clear about his sexuality, Vivaldi sees these qualities when he watches Eric at work. “…This masculinity was defined, and made powerful by something which was not masculine. But it was not feminine either….It was a quality which great numbers of people would respond without knowing to what it was they were responding… it was a face which suggested, resonantly, in the depth, the truth about our natures” (AC 330). Eric personifies masculinity, femininity, strength, and vulnerability. His ability not only to embody all these qualities but to express them is another factor in his success as an artist-hero. Baldwin would
again return to this theme in “Here Be Dragons,” the last essay in The Price of the Ticket. The essay, originally published in Playboy as “Freaks and the American Ideal of Manhood,” opens with a definition of androgyny as containing both male and female qualities. Baldwin concludes the essay with the argument that everyone is androgynous. “But we are all androgynous…because each of us, helplessly and forever, contains the other male in female, female in male, white in black and black in white”(69). By rejecting America’s definitions of homosexuals, Eric is forced to define himself. His role as healer is suggested by Baldwin’s choice of an epigraph from Joseph Conrad’s 1915 novel Victory: “Why don’t you take me in your arms and carry me out of this lonely place?”

The many depictions of sexual relationships in the novel have garnered more attention than Baldwin’s exploration of the artist figure. The fascination that surrounds black sexuality overshadows any aesthetic concerns. In Another Country, sex operates much in the same fashion that love does in James Baldwin’s works. It becomes a symbol of self-acceptance and personal growth and is something that takes on a transcendent quality. Critics such as Houston Baker and Craig Werner offer different interpretations of Baldwin’s use of sex in this novel. Baker, for example, sees both Ida Scott and her brother Rufus as characters who use their bodies to advance their careers. “And the Black artist as prostitute is an important figure in this novel filled to the brim with artistic
spirits.” 35 Clearly, Ida Scott initiates a sexual relationship with Steve Ellis, a music and theatrical producer, in hopes of advancing her singing career. Baldwin implies that Ida’s talent is not as great as her sense of survival. While Baker’s conclusion might be true for Ida, it rings false when applied to Rufus. Baldwin addresses such misreading of Another Country in a series of interviews with Fern Eckman, his first biographer. “It’s not sex at all. Its pure desperation…it comes out of the effort to tell oneself a lie about what human life is like. It comes out of the attempt to cling to definitions which cannot contain anybody’s life” (32). Eric Jones triumphs in the novel because he ceases to allow others to define him while Rufus Scott dies because he is afraid of what his definition of himself might reveal.

What is uncovered by focusing on the meaning and legacy of Rufus Scott in Another Country is that without this quest for self, without “going the way your blood beats,… you won’t live any life at all” (185). Eric Jones possesses the courage to examine himself and so he joins Sonny in representing the quality of honesty in life and art that characterizes the successful Baldwin artist-hero. We believe that the novel becomes a sanctuary for James Baldwin as he ages. It is a place for his to explore his position as an artist, as an African American, as a man. Certainly Another Country, Tell Me How Long the Train’s Been Gone, and Just Above My Head are all studies of the creative person in various stages of development and of the factors which affect his self-image. More and more
frequently the novel becomes the place for Baldwin to interrogate and analyze his own fragile position as a writer and his more accepted, though unwanted, stature as a racial spokesperson. In his next novel *Tell Me How Long the Train’s Been Gone*, James Baldwin examines the meaning of the artist who flees from truth and ends up in a prison of his own making.