Chapter III

Expansion of the Code

You do not know how desperately I hoped that you would grow not so much to love me as to know that what you do to me you do to you.¹

Another Country and Tell Me How Long The Train’s Been Gone are a continuation and expansion of the thematic concerns of the novels discussed earlier. They project the resolution of the protagonists against the heterogeneous social environment as compared to the homogeneous social setting of the novels discussed in the previous chapter. The resolution of Another Country, that a viable love relationship is possible, howsoever fragile, is analysed in greater depth and detail in Tell Me How Long The Train’s Been Gone. The resolution in Another Country involves the pairing of a white male and a black female, a bonding against which social hostility is directed with less severity. In Tell Me How Long The Train’s Been Gone, the pairing is between a black male and a white female, a situation which invites more ferocious social hostility. All the major characters are trying to attain success in their private as well as in their professional lives. Another Country ends when the success is in sight. In
the latter novel, Baldwin has treated this aspect spread over a period of several years though the resolution remains confined to the level of individual.

Loneliness and estrangement, search for personal and public identity, intensity of emotions, racial tensions in subtle psychological conditions and overt behaviour patterns, the terror and joy in sexual encounters, redemption in suffering and death, reality of pain, misery and suffering making life tragic, indictment of the American dream as being obsessed with power, status and wealth, urban experience of indifference and inhumanity, spiritual decay and the quest for love -- the major themes of the contemporary American novel are part of the scheme of *Another Country* realized in the complexity of relationships. Here the manifestation of the themes in sex, particularly of quest for love, is more comprehensive as compared to that found in *Giovanni's Room*. The characters are more variedly related to each other with a wider range of motives shaping their personality. The novel is divided into three 'Books' comprising four major narrative strands involving two main characters in each strand - Rufus Scott and Leona, Ida Scott and Vivaldo Moore, Richard and Cass Silenski, and Eric Jones and Yves converging and intertwining in a "a kind of phantasmagoria of inter-racial and inter-sexual relation among friends, strangers, lovers and married people in
Louis H. Pratt identifies ten patterns emerging out of these sexual relations through which Baldwin fashions out "a symbolic unity of the traditional racial, sectional, national and sexual differences which have become obstacles to human communication."

In *Another Country* and *Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone*, a transformed physical environment emerges as the objective corelative for the changed socio-psychological struggle of the protagonists. Their personalities are thrown into a broader relief the way they relate to New York. Rufus finds that New York is full of the "great buildings, unlit, blunt like the phallus or sharps like the spear,... city which never slept ... weight of this city was murderous, ... people under cover of the noise they could scarcely have lived without, pursued whatever it was they were after ..." In contrast, Eric's impressions of New York are extended and thorough:

It seemed to have no sense of whatever of the exigencies of human life; it was so familiar and so public that it became, at last, the most despairingly private of cities. One was continually being jostled, yet longed, at the same time, for the sense of others, for a human touch; and if one was never - it was general complaint - left alone in New York, one had, still, to fight very hard in order not to perish of loneliness. This fight, carried on in so many different ways, created the strange climate of the city. . . . He could not escape the feeling that a kind of plague was raging, . . . Even the young seemed blighted ... Their very walk, a kind of anti-erotic, knee-action lope, was a parody of locomotion and of manhood. They secured . . . to be at home with, accustomed to,
brutality and indifference, and to be terrified of human affection. (pp. 195-196)

In Eric, the physical merges with the social context. This context, in the novel, is unfolded along a twin co-ordinate of *Do You Love me*? and “love-was a country he knew nothing about” (p. 250). The predicament embedded within the question and the statement characterise all the characters. The answer to the question is difficult because it pertains to that arena of their life they are afraid to traverse. But their lives get affirmed only by taking up this challenge. A nuanced probing into this challenge is wrought in the novel through a network of relations predominantly sexual. These ‘pairings’ in the novel are strategic. These include Rufus and Leona; Ida and Vivaldo; Eric and Yves; Richard and Cass. The characters involved in these pairings occasionally move out of the pair to relate to the character of another pair. These strategic relational manoeuvres, thus, enable the author to probe various dimensions of America as a ‘system’ and helps him forge a viable ‘code’ to live within this system meaningfully.

Rufus Scott, a young black jazz drummer, is the focus of the novel. Though he dies in Book One itself, his presence is felt all through the novel because firstly, his sister Ida, who is a symbolic incarnation of his value system, upholds of his mantle, and secondly, because all the principal
characters have to redefine their relation with Rufus. The reigning passion of Rufus is hatred. He has accumulated a vast amount of hate that he has received from whites over the years. It is reflected and finds vent in his relations with Leona and Eric. This psychological blockade in Rufus mars his relation with Leona. Though her body attracts him, her whiteness repels him. Even in the midst of sexual encounter he is reminded of the brutal beating given to him by a white officier in South. This simultaneous attraction and repulsion bewilders him so much that it ultimately fragments his ‘being’. The result is that though he wants her physically and even begins to feel “a tenderness for Leona which he had not expected to feel” (p. 23), yet he does not want to be ‘bugged’ by her story. This conflict, evidently a result of unsublimated racial hatred, is aptly recorded thus:

And she carried him, as the sea will carry a boat: with a slow, rocking and rising and falling motion, barely suggestive of the violence of the deep . . . . He wanted her to remember him the longest day she lived. And, shortly nothing could have stopped him, not the white God himself nor a lynch mob arriving on wings. Under his breath he cursed the milk-white bitch and groaned and rode his weapon between her thighs. She began to cry. *I told you*, he meant, *I'd give you something to cry about*, and, at once, he felt himself strangely, about to explode or die. A moan and curse tore through him while he beat her with all the strength he had and felt the venom shoot out of him, enough for a hundred black-white babies. (p. 24)
The predominant imagery here is of violence but the act does not lead to catharsis of hate. The tenderness, if any, is soon scortched by Rufus’s perception which converts Leona into an enemy territory to be possessed and violated in order to vindicate his sense of injustice. The sex-act metaphorically becomes an arena of social-racial truth of America. Though Rufus and Leona start living together after this act yet their relation is never shorn of violence, a hallmark of racial society. For him this relationship does not transcend racial awareness.

Leona, on the other hand, loves him genuinely and tries to be sympathetic which drives him against her with greater ferocity. Rufus is unable to bear the contempt of white men. When he goes out with Leona, his hatred is further intensified. Leona becomes a symbol of the white society for him hence he gives her nothing but scorn, contempt, humiliation and abuse. In his distorted perception he can only view her motive for remaining his ‘mistress’ from a purely physical point of view. But deep down in his heart there is a strong urge to be loved by Leona. He tells Vivaldo: “I want the chick to love me. I want to be loved . . . . How do you make it happen? . . . What do you do?” (p. 63). She “tries desperately, though ineffectually, to fathom the black American experience and to regard Rufus with
compassion and understanding.\textsuperscript{5} She tells Vivaldo: "'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'" (p. 55). Though Rufus, too, wants to love her but he cannot help viewing her as 'whiteness concretised', but "[t]o love her would be to exert the greatest effort possible toward going into her country and allowing her to his. Race and culture make such openness impossible to Rufus."\textsuperscript{6} Consequently, he shuts himself up completely rather than sharing himself with her.

Thus the central refrain of the novel 'Do you love me?' in their case becomes for them "let's try to love one another."\textsuperscript{7} Encumbered as he is by the burden of his personality, Rufus cannot help but keep battling for the retrieval of his humanity snatched from him by those 'brutal criteria' bequeathed by Leona's forefathers which ultimately make her mad and force Rufus to commit suicide. Near his death he also remembers how he despised Eric, another white person, who had always been nice to him. He remembers clearly how badly he has treated both Leona and Eric. "He had despised Eric's manhood by treating him as a woman, by treating him as nothing more than a hideous 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” (p. 44). He only now realises that he did all this inspite of his affection for Eric and his love for Leona.

After Leona has been taken to a mental asylum, he starts roaming the streets. Short of money, not wanting to go to Vivaldo, to his home or even to his musician friends, he is about to prostitute hismself for a sandwich. But the feelings of revulsion are very strong and he spurns the ‘offer’ made to him by another homosexual. He comes to Vivaldo, his only friend left in the world. In Vivaldo’s apartment the loneliness of Rufus becomes very clear in the song of Bessie Smith. They go to a restaurant but after some time Rufus walks out and ultimately jumps from the bridge into the river thinking of Eric, Ida and Leona and cursing the God “all right, you motherfucking God alright bastard, I’m coming to you.” (p. 78) He commits suicide thinking “you took the best. So why not take the rest?” (p. 78).

Baldwin, through Rufus’ suicide, indicates that hatred not only kills one who harbours it but also others who are its objects. He is rendered incapable of love because his hate has been overpowering. Rufus overbearing hatred for the whites and his own self-hate for reaching on the brink of prostituting himself for “the bleaky physical exchange” (p. 41)
ultimately force him to commit suicide. Rufus is unable to bear the pain of his awareness that he loves Leona. He attempts to use “sex as a weapon against her in the same way in which white society has used sex as a weapon against him.”

He becomes more entangled with Leona “wallowing in an ancient source of pain, but never calls upon his family, or his music, the symbols of life, the talisman against death which might have been his salvation -- and Leona’s. His weapon proves self-destructive and weighed down with guilt and the pain of both past and present he commits suicide.”

Significantly he remembers only Leona, Ida and Eric at the time of his suicide. He has caused pain to two of them in his life and causes pain to Ida in his death. The failure of Rufus-Leona relationship is the failure on the part of Rufus to realize the degenerative potential of hate. It insulated him from any reciprocity and connectedness in his relation with Leona. It blurred his priorities and made his perception limited. The racial hatred infected his being to such an extent that he could not see any human relationship outside it. The ironic tragedy of his life is that he is not aware of what this hate is doing to him. Rufus gives back to the society what it gives to him -- hate.

The feelings of homosexuality engendered in Rufus the feelings of hate for Eric. But Eric’s homosexual relationship with Yves is based on his
realisation that “that the only way he could hope to bring about was to cease violating himself. If he did not love himself, then Yves would never be able to love him, either” (pp.182-183). In Yves, Eric feels a faint image of Rufus who didn’t return his love. He thinks that “Rufus had looked into his eyes and saw those dark men Eric saw, and hated him for it” (p. 165). The dark shadows that Rufus sees in Eric’s eyes are the shadows of shame and self-hate. Eric has come to realise that these degenerative feelings have to be overcome before one is able to realise oneself and establish meaningful relations with the others. This self-acceptance, belief in himself, trust in the dignity and worth of his own self enables him to enter into a worthwhile and meaningful relation with Yves. It makes his homosexual experience with Yves satisfying and joyful though both are aware of their future separation. Unlike Giovanni who pleads with David to stay and love him, Yves asks Eric to accept the offer of acting in America and go there. During this discussion, Yves makes clear that sentimentality is bad as it leads to mutual disrespect. For Eric, “love is expensive . . . one must put furniture around it, or it goes” (p. 192). The ‘furniture’ consists of trust, sharing and respect for each other’s self.
Eric’s maturity of vision based on the awareness of the totality of circumstances, Eric-Yves love affair can be considered a functional and viable relationship. The sex-act between Eric and Yves is characterised by a total involvement suggested by the use of words like ‘together’, ‘whisper’, ‘insistent’ etc. This is precisely the reason that Eric has been considered a touchstone for the rest of the characters and his sexual relation with Cass and Vivaldo can be considered purgative.

Eric’s ability to know himself comes from his effort to recognize his homosexuality and its implications. He prepares himself for a homosexual life. His life is full of pain and suffering. His abortive attempt to love Rufus results in his flight to Paris. He could not confront Rufus because his homosexuality was apologetic and furtive. Encountering the homosexuals in darkness without any involvement and commitment on the part of both Eric and the partner brings to him the hollowness of the sexual encounters. Sex without involvement and commitment does not communicate the pleasure between the partners and becomes meaningless and mechanical. The meaninglessness makes the act shameful because there is not sharing, shame make the sex-act defiling and the person guilty. Eric confronts his sexual identity and bears the pain and suffering arising out of this realization. This
capability to bear pain enables him to overcome shame and he becomes ready to involve and commit himself to the love relationship. Sorrow and suffering are also sublimated in his art and he is able to portray pain and suffering in his acting effectively and convincingly. Eric achieves a compatibility of thought and action. He has to dig out new values: “He knew that he had no honor which the world could recognize. His life, passions, trials, loves, were at worst, filth, and at best, disease in the eyes of the world, and crimes in the eyes of his countrymen. There were no standards for him except those he could make for himself. There were no standards for him because he could not accept the definitions... he had to create his standards and make up his definitions as he went along” (p. 181). It is precisely this capacity of Eric that gives him an edge over other characters. Erics’ wholeness of vision makes him capable of living a truthful life on the margin of society and giving solace to the fractured souls.

It is within the framework of Rufus’ hatred for the whites and Eric’s moral vision of love that Ida-Vivaldo relationship can best profitably be read. Fred L. Standley takes the view that Ida and Vivabdo story is the main focus of the novel because “the central focus at the conclusion is on their emergence and reconciliation as the principle norm of value in the book.”
Rufus-Leona relationship is in sharp contrast with Ida-Vivaldo relationship because the characters of Rufus and Eric are in total opposition.

Ida and Vivaldo are drawn together initially for their mutual love for Rufus. Ida Scott is an aspiring singer. She has lost not only a doting brother but also her hope of becoming a successful singer with his help. Vivaldo is trying to write a good novel. They develop love for each other but hesitency characterizes their love relation which is reflected in their first sexual intercourse. Vivaldo’s problem as a writer and his love for Ida are entangled into one.

The problems in the love life of Ida and Vivaldo is manifold. Their primary problem is that of the difference of colour. Their love relationship is bedevilled from the very beginning because both of them are the victims of racial consciousness. When they make love for the first time, Vivaldo becomes aware of a failure more subtle than he had known before and feels it “as though it were a technique of peacemaking” (p. 148).

Vivaldo accuses Ida that she never lets him forget this difference although it does not mean anything to him. But it is his simplistic approach that creates problems for Ida. The obliteration of colour consciousness has to be attained only through the recognition of the difference of colour and not its
Ida's accusation on the other hand is of serious nature. She accuses that he was her brother's best friend and he still was unaware of his fate. For Ida, this unawareness stems out of Vivaldo's feelings for a black friend.

Ida has deliberately hardened herself against the white world which has killed her brother. She even guards her own steps with Vivaldo and does not commit herself to him and keeps a very shallow and casual relation with him for a long time even though she knows that Vivaldo loves her. She does not want to disturb her hatred for the white people. Vivaldo is white and has to be taken as white, a subject of hate and not love because ""if any one white person gets through to you, it kind of destroys your -- single -- mindedness". They say that love and hate are very close together. Well, that's a fact"" (p. 295). She does not want her singlemindedness of hating whites disturbed. She takes whites to be a single entity and wants to keep this view of whites. To love Vivaldo would mean to know him as a person, not as a part of this white multitude. Since love lies in human heart very near to hate, loving may disturb and lessen the quantum of her hatred which she does not want.

She knows the precariousness of her situation of being black in a dominant white world and the price she has to pay to be a successful woman in this society. She does not have marriage in her scheme either. She tells
Cass: “But imagine, that he came, that man who’s your man -- because you always know, and he damn sure don’t come everyday -- and there wasn’t any place for you to walk out of or into, because he came too late. And no matter when he arrived would have been too late -- because too much had happened by the time you were born, let alone by the time you met each other” (p. 294).

Ida’s hate and pessimism is clear and she is determined to make the society pay back what it has stolen from her. Racial discrimination has left her with a cynic and grim view of life. Ida’s own experience hardens her view of whites and the hatred and retribution she demands, are justified. Because it is the whites who:

... kept you here, and stunted you and starved you, and made you watch your mother and father and sister and lover and brother and son and daughter die or go mad or go under, before your very eyes? And not in a hurry, like from one day to the next, but, every day, every day, for years, for generations? Shit. They keep you here because you’re black, the filthy, white cock suckers, while they go around jerking themselves off with all that jazz about the land of the free and the home of the brave. ... Some days, honey, I wish I could turn myself into one big fist and grind this miserable country to powder. (p. 295)

Her grudge is that Cass or Vivaldo, being whites, do not know the reality.

She further tells Cass that “Vivaldo did not want to know my brother was dying because he doesn’t want to know that my brother would still be alive if
he had not been black” (p. 295). As a result of her consciousness of racism, she has a grim idea of love. This world treats her as whore; so she decides to be the “biggest, coolest, hardest whore around and make the world pay” (p. 293) her back what it has taken from her. He knowledge of whites through sex is revealing. She understands the hypocrisy of whites who consider themselves rulers of the world but can be made to do lowest things in sex-act. Ida uses sex as a weapon like Rufus and she uses it to control Ellis to further her career. She also uses it against Vivaldo to wreck vengeance in her own peculiar manner. Her shield crumbles down when she realized that it was not she but Ellis who controlled the situation. She felt it when musicians rejected her because they saw her as Ellis’s whore defiling her brother’s memory. Ellis has the power to command acquiescence from musicians and Ida but the musicians punish Ida by not backing her up properly and it is “their distaste and rejection, Ellis’s ruthless power, and her realization that she has indeed defiled Rufus’ memory that drives her to the decision to break with him and to share her secrets with Vivaldo.”

Ida, thus, chastised becomes ready to accept Vivaldo’s love. Vivaldo can love her only if he is able to face the truth of his whiteness and inability to know Rufus. The same night Eric tells him about his homosexual relations
and love for Yves. This honesty of Eric encourages Vivaldo for a confession. He feels guilty that he did not extend the loving gesture to Rufus when he needed it most. He tells Eric about the last night when Rufus and Vivaldo were together. Vivaldo tells Eric:

'Well, when he looked at me, just before he closed his eyes and turned on his side away from me, all curled up, I had the weirdest feeling that he wanted me to take him in my arms. And not for sex, though may be sex would have happened. I had the feeling that he wanted some one to hold him, ... What would have happened if I’d taken him in my arms, if I’d held him, if I hadn’t been -- afraid. I was afraid that he wouldn’t understand that it was -- only love. Only love. But, oh, Lord, when he died, I thought that may be I could have saved him if I’d just reached out that quarter of an inch between us on that bed, and held him. (pp. 288-289)

Vivaldo’s fear is an echo of David’s fear. Eric tells him not to be guilty about it though he should have taken him in arms. Vivaldo is guilty of not giving his love to Rufus though he is not guilty of his death because even Leona’s arms couldn’t save Rufus from death. Eric tells him to “watch the dawn come up” (p. 289). It gives him a message of hope -- a message that he should not feel guilty about Rufus and look forward to receive Ida.

Erics’ words of wisdom help remove Vivaldos’ mental cobwebs and he sleeps with Eric after making up clear breast of his inability to help Rufus when he needed it most. During his sleep, Vivaldo ‘dreamed that he was
running, running, running, through a country he had always known, but could not now remember" (p. 321). This is the country of his own failures, country inhabited by Rufus and Ida -- the country of those who needed his help. Vivaldo dreams that Rufus, with dripping blood, is coming to kill him and Ida is not offering any help to rescue him. He falls down on the upliffted glass. "He could not bear the pain; yet, he felt again the random, voluptuous tug . . . Don't kill me, Rufus, Please, Please. I love you. Then to his delight and confusion, Rufus lay down beside him and opened his arms" (p. 322). Vivaldo expresses his love for Rufus and asks for mercy but the sequence also for has a sexual angle of 'Voluptuous tug' to it. Vivaldo’s confession will be complete only when he surrenders before another person who has made his peace with Rufus. He can be redeemed of his guilt when he submits, when he moves into the skin of Rufus, when he receives what Rufus could not receive that day. Only then the truce with Rufus will be complete. Mere words won’t do and the confession has to be acted out. Homosexual experience between Vivaldo and Eric that follows is characterized by his identification of the act with Rufus: “Rufus had certainly thrashed and throbbed, feeling himself mount higher, as Vivaldo thrashed and throbbed and mounted now. Rufus. Rufus Had it been like this for him?” (p. 325). The
whole scene is acted out in an atmosphere of tenderness. The accompanying thoughts of Vivaldo are sympathetic for Eric, homosexuality, love, Ida and of course for Rufus. through this act of being loved Vivaldo has crossed bravely the great expanse of fear and ignorance that was only "a quarter of an inch." By shedding ignorance Vivaldo gains and inner chastity and purity with which he can accept Ida with her colour not in spite of her colour. He will be in a position to understand her and her problems and would be able to take her as she is.

Coming close on the heels of Vivaldo's confession is Ida's confession of her infidelity. Chastened by her realisation that racial hatred and sex as weapons are double-edged weapons, she confesses her infidelity and tells Vivaldo how she came to realize the futility of her efforts of becoming successful with the help of Ellis. She tells him how debased she felt when she found that Ellis was misusing her. She admits her love for Vivaldo but tells that she does not want his sympathy. Confessions having been made, Vivaldo covers the gap between them, "trembling, with tears starting up behind his eyes, burning and blinding, and covered her face with kisses. . . she buried her face in his chest. There was nothing erotic in it . . . Her long fingers stroked his back, . . . she was stroking his innocence out of him" (pp.
361-362). Suddenly a detail of his novel that Vivaldo was searching for months clicked to him and everything of his novel fell into neat plans. In the next and the last scene of the novel we find Yves looking at New York from the plane, disembarking from it and “Eric above him, looking down on him through glass” (p. 366).

Id and Vivaldo relation is opposite to Rufus and Leona relation with a marked difference of degree in characters and the dynamics of American society are against the second pair more than the first. Leona is able to love in a sympathetic manner where as Rufus’s hatred can be mathced with confrontation of highly intense love. In comparison Vivaldo has the potential to confront Ida and when he attains this potential in practice he is able to math the furiousness of her racial hatred. He can do it only when he recognises his own latent racism and his unawareness of Rufus’s pain. Ida’s hatred is lesser than Rufus and she does not forsake the medium of sublimation of passion -- music. This difference in the characters is responsible for the failure of one and the success of the other. Ida and Vivaldo are together in the same room, she sleeping peacefully and Vivaldo on his work table because now he has got the detail of his novel he has not
been able to get at for months. It suggests that the relation between them has been established, howsoever, precarious it might be.

Baldwin in this novel has projected a 'code' that envisions the futility of racial consciousness in the face of involvement and commitment in love relations. In the characters of Ida, Rufus, Vivaldo and Eric we see that the awareness of one's true self is pre-requisite to love truly and sincerely. The realization of the truth by confronting it leads to the acceptance of one's true identity -- racial or sexual. One has to be ready to bear this identity, howsoever painful it may be. Eric had already confronted this issue and he had come to realize the true identity of his own self which makes matters simple for him. But for Vivaldo and Ida, this realization comes after a long process of pain and suffering. Hate in any form has no place in Baldwin's scheme of things as it leads to severe deformities in one's attitude is life and love. It led to Rufus' death and made Ida suffer untold miseries and sufferings that came in its wake. Thus, Baldwin expands his 'code' in *Another Country* by putting his characters into a heterogeneous racial, sexual and social context.
Having explored and established the possibility of a successful love relationship between a black and a white in *Another Country*, Baldwin acts out its viability over a period of many years in *Tell Me How Long The Train’s Been Gone*. This novel lacks the critical attention given to his previous novels and largely negative views have been expressed on account of its vision, theme or style. It has been viewed as a mere repetition without “a new dimension, a new depth, a new something”^{12} “a document of and for the movement, an emblem of the ‘sixties’, novel in which the sexual and political themes come together,”^{13} “prolonged rather than long story developed by errant associationism,”^{14} “Hollywood success story that ends in dreamland . . . agreeing to the militant solution of race problem”^{15} and a determined effort of “the protagonist and his brother to transcend the depressing, frustrating, murderous elements and launch the quest for self.”^{16}

The novel is the story of the protagonist Leo Proudhammer’s rise from the poverty stricken street urchin of Harlem ghetto to one of the most celebrated ‘black’ actors of the American Theatre. But it is also the story for the ‘quest for self’ and love. The life of Leo from childhood to mature age is told in first person predominently through flashbacks going back and forth in time. The novel is divided by the memory of one of the three characters as
they relate to Leo’s life. The meaning of the novel lies in his three relations - Caleb, his elder brother; Barbara, his female lover; and Christopher, his male lover. These three persons also relate to him at different stages in his life -- childhood, youth and mature age.

Racial consciousness, so predominant in Another Country, finds a fainter echo in this novel. Police is an agent of the subjugation and racial discrimination. Even ten year old Leo is frisked which humiliates him: “A hand patted me all over my body, front and back, every touch humiliating every touch obscene.”17 It produces negative image of whites in little Leo’s mind and brings forth rhetorical questions put innocently: “[A]re white people, people?” and “[A]re all white people the same?” (p.46) This experience in social learning accompanies Leo’s learning in another arena, i.e., sexual matters. Leo’s first exposure to sex is so similar to John’s that it seems to have been from the text of Go Tell It on the Mountain discussed in the previous chapter. It is not tenderness but violence that marks his first sexual exposure:

... two creatures, each in a dreadful, absolute, silent, singlemindedness, attempting to strangle the other! ... and she seemed to be crying-pleading for her life. But her sobbing was answered only by a growling sound. The muttered, joyous curses began again, the murderous ferocity began again, more bitterly than ever, and I trembled with fear and joy. The sobbing began to rise in pitch, like a song. The movement sounded like so many dull blows.
Then everything was still, all movement ceased -- my ears trembled. Then the blows began again and the cursing became a growling, moaning stretched-out sigh. Then I heard only the rain and the scurring of the rats. It was over -- one of them, or both of them, lay stretched out, dead or dying, in this filthy place (p. 45).

The experience is frightening and negative for Leo and it is associated with death, curses, filth, fear and joy, an act performed by two creatures not human beings. But Leo outgrows this negative image of sex very soon with the help of his elder brother Caleb. This has been made possible by the secular terms of references of Leo rather than theological frame of reference of John. Similar is the broadening of his experiences through masturbation without the feelings of sin and guilt. Leo here emulates the free nature of Roy, John's younger brother, without losing John's sensitivity. When Caleb comes back from prison emotionally bruised, homosexual act between Caleb and Leo imbues them with the feelings of joy, love and pride:

I felt a pain and wonder I had never felt before. My brother's heart was broken; I knew it from his touch. . . . I'll love you, you, Caleb . . . I stripped both of us naked. He held me and kissed me and he murmured my name . . . . I wanted Caleb's joy. His joy was mine. When his breathing changed and his tremours began, I trembled, too, with joy, with joy, with joy and pride, and we came together. Caled held me for a long time. (pp. 184-185)
Homosexuality, for Leo, becomes a medium, a means to establish love relations with others which are unblemished by any accompanying feelings of sin, guilt and terror of John or shame of David.

Leo has set a goal for himself in childhood. He decides early in his life to become an actor but he reflects upon the possibility of the realization of this goal and the reality of his circumstances: You are nothing but a nigger, and the life you lead, or the life they make you lead, is the only life you deserve” (p. 195). It shows his clarity of vision and complexity of awareness. Leo realizes that he has to be his own model because none of his elders could be his role model since they are the “living example of defeat” (p. 179). He has to create his own values, morals and strategies like Eric did. Leo resolves to fight against the circumstances prevailing in the family, the community and the country and resolves not to be defeated by the harsh reality of American society where race and homosexuality thwart the possibility of a black homosexual to attain his goal.

Leo’s problem is compounded because he is black and homosexual. Baldwin’s novels are replete with examples which show the unrelenting crushing power of these twin problems in smothering the self and the potential of individual. An awareness of the dimension of one’s being, a
candid admission of one's blackness and homosexuality and readiness to accept the label of an 'outcast' are the pre-requisites which can empower a black homosexual with a capacity to fight these problems. One has to be ready to bear the pain and suffering which the realisation of these pre-requisites brings in its trail. It is only because of this fact that Eric succeeded whereas Rufus failed. Leo also has the potential to succeed because he has realised his racial and sexual identity and he has decided not to succumb to the social mores prescribed by a white American society. The complexity of awareness he displays in grasping the stated and the practice, positive attitude to sex and the determination not to be defeated in the face of the harsh circumstances substantiate it.

Leo joins an actors' workshop to learn acting and meets Barbara. Leo is without a company for some time and his loneliness is well expressed in Madeline's words: "I need company much more than I need food" (p. 143) and the same feeling is expressed by Leo when he sends drinks to the table where two blacks were sitting. Afraid of the loneliness of his empty room, Leo goes with Madeline, a white actress, to her apartment. Madeline, a loner and a rebel, understands the loneliness of Leo and without any colour consciousness on her part, they indulge in sexual intercourse. Leo is driven by
his rising need but is conscious of the razor sharp situation. A thought flickers in his mind what would happen if she were to shout for help. Leo is “frightened and evil, patiently waiting, immense and heavy and curdled with love” (p. 175). Their first sex-act, thus, is hesitant but the second time the same night they end up doing it like ‘Mama and Daddy’. This relation with a white woman makes Leo ready for his relation with Barbara that follows. Leo tries to assess the magnitude of his own pain, rage and loneliness following his arrest for going to Madeleine’s apartment. He is aware that these feelings have to be sublimated if he is not to be overpowered by them: “My pain was the horse that I must learn to ride’ (pp. 89-90), a blues tradition to sublimate pain and anguish. It saves Leo from following the footsteps of Rufus. Leo’s maturity of vision, complexity of awareness and his ability to transcend the racial barrier in sexual relation prepares him to receive Barbara’s love. When she expresses his love Leo realises his precarious condition:

I felt a terrible constriction. It felt, I think, like death. I loved Barbara. I knew it then, and I really know it now; but what I ask myself, was it to do with her? Love, honour, and protect. But these were not among my possibilities. And, since they were not, I felt myself, bitterly, and most unwillingly, holding myself outside her sorrow; holding myself, in fact, outside her love; holding myself beyond the reach of my blasted possibilities.
One . . . must attempt to deal with what is, or else go under, or go mad. And yet -- to deal with what is! who can do it? I know that I could not. And yet I knew that I had to try. For there was something in it, after all, and I heard in her sorrow, and I heard it in my heart, and in spite of our hideous condition, which I had to accept, to which I could not say, No. I carried her to the bed (p. 235).

This long deliberation, awareness of the totality of situation and love preceding the sex-act make this love relationship different from any of the love relationships in Baldwin's fiction so far. There is no reference to sex here; only the possibility of making it a life long affair is at the center of thought. The impossibility arises out of denial of individuality, dignity and humanity to blacks in American society. Rufus, put in the same situation, responded differently. Even Vivadlo who prays for Ida's love reacts to the situation differently. Commitment on Leo's part is obvious and Barbara's commitment is also clear because it is she who has come to Leo and expressed her love. She tells Jerry that she loves Leo. Leo's nakedness, not deliberate, is symptomatic of the 'naked reality' and Barbara only in "bathrobe" early in the morning suggests the freshness and hope.

Leo and Barbara in their unpossessive love, are aware that their love is "impossible" and come at a simplistic solution that "we must be great . . . . That's the only way we won't lose each other" (p. 236). This simplistic
solution has an inherent explanation that they are actors. The world of performing arts had such examples before them and their inter-racial relation had been tolerated by people if the artists were great. So they just decide to "be to each other what we can. While we can" (pp. 236-237). Only the words are different but the idea is the same as that of Eric and Yves's in Another Country. Barbara's interpretation of the situation and the course she charts for themselves reveals some issues of Baldwin's philosophy. She, here seems to be Baldwin's mouth piece:

"... I know what I am doing. You're black. I'm white. Now, that doesn't mean shit, really, and yet it means everything. We're both young, and you, after all, really are penniless, and I'm really not. I'm really rich... If we were different people, and very, very lucky, we might beat the first hurdle, the black-white thing. if we weren't who we are, we could always just leave this -- unfriendly -- country, and go somewhere else. But we're as we are... We couldn't beat the two of them together. I don't think you'd care much that your wife was white-but a wife who was both white and rich! It would be horrible. We'd soon stop loving each other (p. 240).

Barbara's interpretation of the whole situation in terms of their being committed artists, economic disparity, racial difference suggests that it cannot be altered as such but can be overcome by opting to leave the matrimonial course. Marriage, she says, would end their love and Leo
agrees. Leo's latent fears related to the matrimonial alliance are dispelled by Barbara's acceptance of their situation.

Although they have opted for a non-matrimonial alliance but the danger of living as heterosexual couple (black male and white female) remains. This danger is not only in subtle social manners but it is very much physical. American history is a mute witness to innumerable lynchings. Leo is "simply, ignobly, and abjectly afraid" (p. 289) because every single day demands energy more than a 'fifteen round fight' even for such small things like going to town. Leo understands that "fear and love cannot long remain in the same bed together" (p. 298). Here Baldwin expands the 'code' by adding the dimension of the incompatibility of fear and love. Leo's fears do not end at the level of physical danger. His real fear is of alienation. He knows that "the most subtle and perhaps the most deadly of alienations is that which is produced by the fear of being alienated" (p. 304). He is afraid that he may be a hinderance in Barbara's career. This fear generates a dilemma in Leo which is quickly dispelled by his commitment to her. That he has committed himself to Barbara is made clear when he sees a falling star: "I wished that Barbara and I, no matter what happened, would always love each other and always be able, without any bitterness, to love each other in the eye" (p. 307). The
intensity of love between Leo and Barbara is reflected in the sex-act between them. The description of the sex-act is the best example of sex as communication, sharing, joy, pleasure and serenity. Not only Leo and Barbara are “joined to each other” (p. 307) but they are joined to the whole universe and the perfect orgasm is achieved against this background of cosmic context.

This cosmic imagery in Barbara-Leo sex-act leads to the procreative aspect of love, however symbolic it may be. By diverting his commitment to Christopher, Leo has developed a feeling of shame in his relationship with Barbara: “I was ashamed -- not of my liaison; but in beginning to thaw, I had to see how I had frozen myself; and, in freezing myself, had frozen Barbara” (p. 384). But Barbara’s commitment to Leo is greater than Leo’s and she salvages the situation in a peculiar manner by engaging herself sexually with Christopher. Her interpretation of the situation is: “I think he wanted to find out - if love was possible. If it was really possible I think he had to find out what I thought of his body, by taking mine” (p. 402). Barbara considers the sexual intercourse between them as a means to “redeem something. I think it’s our love that we redeemed” (p. 94). It is not only her love for Leo that she has redeemed; she has redeemed Christopher as
well by appropriating him to their lives. Leo now reflects that “perhaps we had given one child to the world” (p. 372). This child ‘given to the world’ is nobody else but Christopher. This procreation, although symbolic, is a step forward in Baldwin’s scheme. So far none of the love relations at the center of the novel has been given procreative role.

This novel is significant in Baldwin corpus from the point of view of love and sex -- most vital aspects of the ‘code’. This novel projects a positive vision of love as well as sex. Love comes to occupy precedence over sex which was not so in Another Country, Giovanni’s Room or even Go Tell It on the Mountain. In Go Tell It on the Mountain, Richard and Elizabeth’s love comes closest to the love of Leo and Barbara. But in interracial terms it is poles apart from Rufus-Leona love relation. Most significant aspect of this novel is that sustained love has been found to be possible at the level of the individuals in the face of social hostility. Racial hatred as a social force has been related to the love relationships by Baldwin since Go Tell It on the Mountain.

In Another Country Baldwin’s ‘code’ emerges in a heterogeneous context of race and sexuality. Eric is able to resolve his problem of ‘shame’ - - a continuation of Giovanni’s Room. Eric is homosexual and he knows it as
David does. The difference between David and Eric is significant. David resolves to commit himself to the love relation only at the end of the novel and his resolution is fraught with 'ifs' and 'buts' as discussed earlier. Eric, on the other hand, is able to overcome the feelings of 'shame' generated by homosexuality. In France he comes to realize the futility of having sex in darkness without love and commitment. He makes a self-confession, and this self-confession enables him to overcome shame and he is able to commit himself to Yves. Yves makes it clear that their realtion is not permanent but they would love each other for the whole life if they are true to each other. Being true to oneself and to the lover is one of the necessary conditions for the 'code' of which love is at the center.

Vivaldo-Ida relationship succeeds where Rufus-Leona relationship fails. this is possible only when the two lovers shed their hetred and racial consciousness -- overt in the case of Ida and covert in the case of Vivaldo. In inter-racial love relations the lovers have to unburden themselves of the racial-hatred, a really difficult task given the socio-historical circumstances of America. Rufus is not able to overcome his hatred and the love between him and Leona results in destruction. Rufus directs all his hate against Leona who becomes a living concrete proof of the white world. Sex is used as a
weapon by Rufus against Leona. But he severes himself in the process from himself, from his community and from the traditional source of channelization of his pain and suffering, i.e., music. Bereft of these things he is consumed by hate and inflicts destruction to the self and the beloved.

Another dimension of the 'code' is explored through the relationship of Vivaldo and Ida. To recognize and admit the worst aspects of one's own life is also a pre-requisit for establishing 'love' relations. Vivaldo's inability to confront himself renders him incapable of confronting Ida for her infidelity to him. He can change Ida if he can change himself. Ida has given him a signal to change when she accusess him for his failure to know the real state of Rufus. Vivaldo's confession follows a homosexual experience with Eric which enables him to confront Ida. It suggests the purgative quality of sex -- an important ingredient of the 'code'.

*Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone* tests the viability of the 'code' over a period of several years -- the possibility of inter-racial love relationship in America. In this novel Baldwin adds one more dimension to the 'code' -- love leads to 'procreation'. This dimension is only in symbolic terms but explored and realized fully in *If Beale Street Could Talk* discussed in the next chapter.
NOTES


5 Louis H. Pratt, p. 68.


9 ibid., p. 151.

10 Fred L. Standley, p. 506.

11 Trudier Harris, p. 124.


16 Louis H. Pratt, p. 71.