

Space and Masculinity in James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*

Preeethi. R

Ph.D. Scholar

PSGR Krishnammal College for Women

Coimbatore

preetyjen6@gmail.com

and

Dr. Narasingaram Jayashree

Associate Professor

PSGR Krishnammal College for Women

Coimbatore.

James Baldwin's novel *Giovanni's Room* is preoccupied with questions of origin and the identification of an individual's orientation. The novel senses the loss and longing for home and a place to belong to. The protagonist Giovanni has left his wife and his birth place to find his ways for bread earning in Paris whereas David, the narrator had come to Paris in order to "find himself".

Illustrating the relevance of race in general and whiteness in particular, the novel notes only makes whiteness visible but it also portrays its dependence on masculinity and heterosexuality. Baldwin, in this novel projects the fact of whiteness being valued as heterosexuality and blackness is associated with homosexuality, both in literal and metamorphic terms. This paper aims to focus on race and homosexuality which are inseparable revealing both descriptive and symbolic meanings, through interrelatedness and mutual dependence.

LGBT literature deals with or features important LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender) characters or issues and may have same-sex romance or relationships as an important plot device. These authors may not choose to speak openly about their sexuality and tackle it as a theme in their books.

The LGBT community has contributed wonderful pieces of writing, from poems and novels to fantastic journalism, and many gay writers of the twentieth century, like Oscar Wilde and Tennessee Williams is studied in detail for a better understanding of this community. The contemporary gay writers seem to be more interested in exposing the personal, emotional trauma that taunts the gay community. They focus on stories about the loneliness, shame, and remnants of the past that haunt the gay community altogether.

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James Baldwin is known for his expeditions over the obstacles he overcame in order to seek rights for the gay community. He was born on August 2, 1924. He was an American novelist and social critic. His works explore palpable yet unspoken intricacies of racial, sexual and class distinction in Western societies. His works focuses on fundamental personal question and dilemmas and complex psychological pressure that thwart against the queer for acceptance. His prominent works are *Go tell it on the Mountain*, *The Amen Corner* and *Giovanni's Room*.

Giovanni's Room projects betrayed, human relationship, psychic problems, inability to find one's own orientation, murder trauma, which results in isolation madness and grief. Whiteness is associated to the heterosexual people and blankness towards the homosexuals. It counters the space of masculinity which has a mutual dependence on each other. Within the novel *Giovanni's Room* is portrayed with such characteristics as being Giovanni's prison, symbolic of Giovanni's life, holding the relationship between Giovanni and David being a metaphor of homosexuality for David and being under tomb water. These different portrayals of Giovanni's Room are dirty, suffocating and restricting: Baldwin reveals a reflection upon the common belief in society that homosexuality is unnatural and wrong, causing homosexual men to turn societal negativity into self-hatred.

This story is written from the perspective of an American man David, who finds himself alone, in Paris after his fiancé Hella moves to Spain to consider David's proposal. A sense of loneliness, longing for home and a place to belong to is portrayed through this character David. In the meantime, David meets Giovanni, an Italian and has a love affair bloomed and developed through his course of life. This relationship conquers both fear and pain accompanied with confusions with regard to one's own identity.

The relationship between David and Giovanni result in a drift when Hella desire to return to Spain in order to accept David's proposal. Giovanni loses his job, which raises the temper of David as he has no way to earn his bread and was totally depended on Giovanni. Making this a chance to the relationship, David gradually moves away from Giovanni. Giovanni murders his boss for the state of his life being in stake. He is sentenced to death Hella, knowing the true color of David breaks up the relationship and parts her life with much courage and strength. David remains shattered. Isolation taunts him as he decides memories of Giovanni remains in his heart, buried deep within a story that is unsaid.

Queer theory is applied to this paper. Queer theory that emerged in the early 1990's focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and sexuality and reworking of the identity crisis as a constellation of multiple and unstable positions. Queer theory is inseparable from this novel, from

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the fact that is a combination of love, repression, identity crisis, masculinity and its dependence on the choices to be made. The characters in this round cannot choose whom they love, as it just happens and the result is that they often experience love as a burden.

They feel helpless, as their romance stirs up with indifference, hatred and jealousy. The main conflict is that David wants to love women and be a part of the heterosexual community, best he gets himself attracted to men a sense of search for one's own orientation and identity (sexual) crisis is stiffened. As love follows desire, he admits his feeling for Hella though its empty and Cen romantic.

David has ideas, is aware of what it takes to be a man, as he articulate some of them and leaves the others implicit. His major problem that disturbs of his sense of masculinity is that he is not flexible enough to adapt to his changing Circumstances and lifestyle, specifically his intimate relationship with Giovanni.

At this time when Baldwin wrote this novel, there remained to be a though and belief which remained constant. It stated that whiteness was associated with heterosexuals. This situation is highlighted in the novel as David being a White, world never admit that he is gay. He took it to be insulting and he remains to be a real master of self – deception. Honesty is lost in him as he lets the mask out to the world, his real feelings hidden beneath.

Isolation is a huge impact in this novel, as every character being portrayed is in a state of being alone terrified. Lies and deception leads to isolation, yet the desperate nature of their relationship tends to only aggregate this fear more. Only honesty can bind people together, but the bond between the characters is lost. Making decision seems to be a major failure, as David regards to his choices as insubstantial and unimportant. Human is questioned with bringing in racial torments between America and Europe. David leaves America for peace, simultaneously searching for himself as well as in an attempt to lose himself. Discussions, both sweet and sour takes place between David and Giovanni, based on the difference and difficulties with regard to America and Europe.

In Queer Theory, remorse and regret by an individual to forget the past and move forward into the future is an important aspect. This can be seen in this novel as David, tries to move forward, towards his future but he remains to be a prisoner of the past. David led a dramatic life, as he feels responsible for Giovanni's death, he selected portrays events to make it seem as if he had no contrast ever what happened; at the moment where he remained passive, he claims if to be an impossible act.

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Guilt and blame can be found in the characters, as every character strives to find a way out, by retraining the whole tragedy. Thus, Giovanni's room is a replica queer theory, bewitching the traits of fate; an honest portrays of inner feelings, and also provides a scope for LGBT community to raise their standard in this world.

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