

OPPRESSIVE RELATIONSHIPS/RELATED OPPRESSIONS:

Ethnicity, Gender and Sexuality

and

the Role of Gay Identity

in

James Baldwin's Another Country and

Hubert Fichte's Versuch über die Pubertät

by

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ABSTRACT

Patrick Gignac, "Oppressive Relationships/Related Oppressions: Ethnicity, Gender and Sexuality and the Role of Gay Identity in James Baldwin's Another Country and Hubert Fichte's Versuch über die Pubertät"

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the relationship between the formation of a gay identity and the dynamics of oppression which are articulated through the categories of ethnicity, gender and sexuality in James Baldwin's Another Country and Hubert Fichte's Versuch über die Pubertät. The first chapter will outline the background methodology of the study, defining ethnicity and gender as constructed and connected categories. In Chapter Two, a theoretical discussion of gay identity will ensue from the development of stereotypes, the configuration of the closet, the interpretations of patriarchal myth and the progression toward an affirmative self-defined identity. A review of the existing critical literature will also be included. Chapter Three examines Another Country, comparing the representations of ethnic, gender, and sexual oppression in the novel as they relate to the construction of gay identity. Baldwin's solution to the problem of oppression is a masculinisation of love which is conveyed through homosexual relationships. The same approach is applied to Versuch über die Pubertät, where the discussion in Chapter Four notes the advancement of sexual politics in Fichte's

work towards a greater sexual explicitness and understanding of diversity. The study concludes with an assessment of Baldwin's and Fichte's political analysis of oppression, which provides a solution to oppression in society by advocating a universal expression of love through male sexuality. Hence, Baldwin and Fichte unwittingly establish masculine privilege as the major force behind the oppression of marginalised groups in society.

DEDICATION

To Ken and those that possess the secret of joy.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The depiction of gay identity in the twentieth-century novel has, until relatively recently, generally been disguised, stereotyped or avoided in literary works or criticism. Most of the criticism and indeed many of the texts rely on popular conventions of psychological maladjustment to explain homosexual behaviour. Giovanni's Room (1954), James Baldwin's first novel dealing with homosexuality, is laden with homosexual stereotypes and ends with the predictable execution of Giovanni. Baldwin's novel Another Country (1962), however, marks the beginning of a more human portrayal of gays and their personal relationships. Another Country is one of the first English language novels published which depicts a positive gay identity and describes a fulfilling gay relationship. This novel, unlike his first two, deals with interracial relationships both homosexual and heterosexual and reveals the connections between racial, gender and sexual oppression in America.

Twelve years later, Hubert Fichte further explores issues of gay identity in his novel Versuch über die Pubertät (1974). The novel addresses alternative expressions of gay sexuality and advances the positive representation of gays in literature by celebrating diversity. Fichte exposes sado-masochism and cross-dressing as ritualised behaviours

rather than considering them as deviant or unusual. This attempt at a positive portrayal of these controversial topics was, in 1974, unique in gay literature accepted by traditional publishers. Furthermore, Fichte uses a cross-cultural comparison to illustrate the construction of ethnicity, gender and sexuality in different cultures and to demonstrate effects of oppression on these constructed categories.

Another Country and Versuch über die Pubertät offer an assorted and more complete sample of gay characters both positive and negative than had previously existed. This thesis should not be considered to be an exhaustive representation of the portrayal of gay characters in gay literature. Nevertheless, this presentation will hopefully contribute to the understanding of gay literature through the comparison of sameness and difference across these examples. Appropriately, the two novels investigate the interrelationship of ethnicity, gender and sexuality in society and are forerunners to more recent theoretical investigations of the relationship between gender and race.

This thesis will investigate the varying perspectives on gay identity in these two novels. While discussing gay identity, the study will expose the paradox of the constant complicity of gay identity with stereotypical behaviour and the defiance of gay identity against socially constructed norms. In addition, the thesis will provide an analysis of

the relationship of the aforementioned paradoxical dynamic of oppression to the formation of gay identity under the categories of ethnicity, gender and sexuality. Studies of sexuality and gender, race and gender, and race and sexuality have recently appeared; however, none have investigated the interdependence of ethnicity, gender and sexuality together. These three categories clearly illustrate the oppressive forces in society and serve as a basis for the examination of other categories of oppression such as socio-economic class or differences in individual abilities. The terms gay and homosexual will be used with the following general meanings, although they overlap and become obscured within the process of self-identification and in historical contexts.¹ I will arbitrarily assign the term gay to mean persons or characters who form emotional, spiritual and physical bonds primarily with members of the same sex and who adopt cul-

¹As a justification of the use of such historically ambivalent terminology (that is, the debate between constructionist and essentialist terms in referring to homosexuality, gayness etc.), John Boswell has put forth a convincing argument in "Categories, Experience and Sexuality," in which he states three propositions for the use of terminology: "1) there may be reasons for the structure of a language other than its reflection of 'objective reality'; 2) modern terms for sexuality are not necessarily any more comprehensive or accurate about the present than ancient ones are for the past; 3) application of modern categories to the past, even if they do not match precisely, may be a useful strategy for determining the relationship between the two" (142).

tural and political strategies which separate them from the heterosexually dominated society. A homosexual is any person who primarily engages in homosexual activity, but may not self-identify as gay, or adhere to or approve of gay culture.²

I will now briefly outline the concepts of identity and gay identity as they pertain to a literary investigation of the two novels under inquiry, and then discuss the categories of ethnicity, gender and sexuality. During this discussion, it will become clear that certain oppressive constructs have developed in response to the societal condemnation of homosexuality. A definite pattern has formed during the gay liberation movement which mimics the dynamics of the struggle for women's rights and for the rights of Blacks.

The concept of identity, given its brief theoretical history as a social construct, remains an enigma since it comprises the complex relationship of the individual to self, other and society. From a sociological and psychological perspective, a theoretical foundation of identity was established during the nineteen thirties, forties and fifties (Weigert 5-6). In his Mind, Self and Society

²Homosexuality refers to same-sex sexuality, although the term was developed to describe what was thought to be a psycho-medical condition which precipitated moral perturbation and emotional anxiety as a result of sexual acts between men (Greenwood 326).

(1934), Mead conceptualises that

[t]he self is not something that exists first and then enters into relationship with others, but it is, so to speak, an eddy in the social current and so still a part of the current. It is a process in which the individual is continually adjusting himself in advance to the situation to which he belongs, and reacting back on it. So that the "I" and the "me," this thinking, this conscious adjustment, becomes then a part of the whole social process and makes a much more highly organized society possible. (182)

Theorists soon shift their focus from the process of socialization as a mode of thought interaction to an examination of the relationship between the individual and social structures. The psychoanalyst Lacan asserts that identity is subsumed by language. His notion that "I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it like an object" (86) denies the individual and society both knowledge and power. Habermas investigates communicative action as the medium of rational social knowledge. In this model, knowledge stands in opposition to power since truth can only be realized in the absence of coercive forces. As Giddens notes, "[t]he more social circumstances approximate to an ideal-speech situation, the more a social order based on the autonomous action of free and equal individuals will emerge" (213). Foucault, opposing this conceptualization, professes that

power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.

These "power-knowledge" relations are to be analyzed, therefore, not on the basis of a subject of knowledge who is or is not free in relation to the power system, but on the contrary, the subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of these fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformations. (Discipline and Punish 27-28)

If knowledge and power combine to form identity, then the implications of this notion for marginalised groups is that they must become involved in the knowledge-power dynamic. As identity takes on an increasingly political meaning under the knowledge-power rubric marginalised groups continue to reject these stigmatised designations and begin the process of self-definition.

The quest for gay identity is problematic since it has been relegated to the category of "other." Gays must seek an identity based upon an assumption of deviance and in an attempt to gain acceptance strive to confound this imposed singularity--lesbian identity becomes even more nebulous for lesbians are "other" other. The examination of this enigmatic relationship of individual and society in conjunction with the constructed categories of ethnicity, gender, and sexuality forms the basis of an initial investigation of the emergence and reflection of a gay identity.

It remains quite implausible that a definition of gay identity can endure such fixity, since individuals and society constantly reconstruct gay identity. The interplay of the three categories of ethnicity, gender and sexuality

and their concomitant oppressive forces expose the power imbalance between marginalised groups in society and patriarchal authority. The similarities between these categories and the effects of oppression upon the emergence of a positive identity become more evident and foster a unique relationship between self, other and society.

When examining gay identity, this thesis will place a strong emphasis upon liberationist thought and self-affirming theories. In using such "positive" theorisations of gay identity, it is not my intent to privilege gayness over any other identity. I hope to provide a more balanced and realistic picture of some aspects of being gay by exposing the differences and similarities between marginalised groups and the dominant ideology.

Any reflection on gay identity is certain to include a discussion of the closet,³ gay stereotypes, and the creation and affirmation of a positive identity. The closet, as a distinctive feature of being gay, is almost analogous to the gay psyche. The denial of one's homosexuality provides a means for survival in a homophobic society although the

³The closet is a term used for the process by which a homosexual's sexual identity remains hidden from self or other. The oppositional act is that of coming out of the closet which can be a lifelong project and which presents potential difficulties with each new situation. The closet represents both a safe haven to retreat into and a vulnerable position from which potentially to be blackmailed. With every new inquiry, the closet acts as a s(c)ensor, forcing gays to calculate the risk of disclosure.

psychological effects of the closet can be often devastating and sometimes fatal. Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick discusses the dynamics of the effects of the closet in her Epistemology of the Closet (1989). She outlines the effect of the closet in literature and the necessity to open up the closet door through the consideration of homosexuality as a possibility.

Gay stereotypes which emerge in the two novels under investigation include the effeminate man, the promiscuous homosexual, the paederast and the woman hater. The stereotype of the effeminate man endures as a cross-cultural phenomenon,⁴ and perhaps its validity lies in the perception of masculinity and femininity as being culturally specific constructs separating gender from an ostensibly inherent maleness and femaleness. I will examine the proscription of gender transgression as it relates to the oppression of gays and ultimately the oppression of society.

The stereotype of sexual promiscuity will also be discussed in the following chapters and placed into the context of oppression from which the sexual license granted to males absolves them of sexual responsibility. The exposure of gender and sexual mythology through the

⁴David F. Greenberg, in his extensive study of homosexuality throughout the ages and in different cultures, examines the association of homosexuality with femaleness or femininity. Surprisingly, in many cases this results in a privileging of the homosexual man or woman since they possess both masculine and feminine gender characteristics and often this privilege results in fulfilling a spiritual function in society (56-7).

investigation of homosexuality reveals an interchangeability of sexual partners and roles for the individual. Men are sometimes viewed as possessing an uncontrollable sexual desire, and they often use their sexuality to reaffirm their manhood. The threat of the homosexual to society is exacerbated, since the homosexual exists as a possible sex object for all men. This possibility is significant enough to warrant the interminable suppression and repression of homosexuality through the use of psychological and physical violence.

Another interesting aspect of gay identity to be addressed in this thesis includes the rejection of women and femininity, and the reclamation of masculinity. The adoption of the male cultism by some gay men has become a powerful instrument in creating legitimacy for homosexuality.⁵ In spite of this legitimacy, these men have neglected to acknowledge that the supposed masculinized position which they adopt is quite arguably the tool which oppresses gay men. This extends further: since the law of heterosexual male dominance cannot be reproached, male cults which practice homosexuality will never possess the same social status as heterosexual male groups and will always be

⁵The historical foundation of this behaviour perhaps lies in Greek idealisation of the male which led to the establishment of elitist male cults. Kenneth Dover's study Greek Homosexuality (1978) provides a history of male cults in ancient Greece.

viewed as inferior in terms of their masculinity. This dangerous practice has in fact not liberated homosexual expression; rather it has created yet another category of oppressive ideology to which men must conform in order to be tacitly accepted by society and within their own communities.

The stereotype of the paederast endures in gay literature and in these two novels. Although this behaviour is common in some other cultures, it is, for the most part, considered reprehensible in Western society. I will consider the power dynamics between men and boys as it coincides with the relationship between men and women.

The adoption and acceptance of some of these stereotypes, though basically oppressive, have allowed the homosexual to operate within the confines of society and have created a form of identity. Imitating the stereotype is one of the most obvious signs of gay identity; there has, however, developed a more complex system of identification through the use of coded language and "mis"representation.

This thesis will investigate these oppressive stereotypes and their function in the development of gay identity. I will also demonstrate that some oppressed groups have reclaimed and have attached a positive value to some of these stigmatised attributes as an act of empowerment. In addition, I intend to examine the

construction of other affirming facets of identity, some of which generate a demarcation from straight⁶ society and others which mimic it.

Like gay identity, racial or ethnic identity is an important theme in the works of Baldwin and Fichte. Baldwin was a black rights advocate for the greater part of his life and was both admired and despised by the black communities during the sixties. Fichte had spent a great deal of his life examining the cultural rituals of African and Afro-American peoples with a particular emphasis upon religious rites and psychological cures--which were often one and the same. I will conflate race and ethnicity as ethnicity to simplify the analysis, since both of the novels ingenuously strive to delimit racial boundaries and expand ethnic experiences. Oppression occurs more strongly along racial rather than ethnic lines since ethnicity can become obscured under close scrutiny. Race has very powerful connections with the indisputable contamination of blood lines.⁷ However, ethnicity, as a broadly encompassing term, will be the focus of the examination of both ethnic and racial commonalities with gay identity.

⁶The term "straight" in this thesis is used to designate heterosexual.

⁷Anthropologist Felix M. Keesing refutes the idea of racial determinism and concludes that racial purity is a misnomer due to the pre-historic migrations of different populations (75).

The obscurity between race and ethnicity is comparable to the instituted categories of gender and sex, that is masculinity and femininity, and male and female.⁸ Throughout this work, I intend to focus on gender behaviour and gender roles regarding the oppressive nature of restrictive gender stereotypes. Women are initially oppressed on the basis of their physical characteristics and then their corresponding gender behaviours. Consequently, female roles and female gender behaviour comprise two aspects of women's oppression. The male characters in the two novels emerge either as oppressors or the victims of other men and sometimes both. They simply do not appear to suffer any negative consequences because of their maleness-- they do, however, suffer under the obligatory constraints of masculinity.

Women have traditionally been neglected in literary critical analyses, but especially when dealing with gay-male literature. The representation of women also suffers from a lack of characterisation, which is especially apparent in Fichte's works. Baldwin's women are plentiful and

⁸These categories though seemingly fixed through biological investigation also become blurred by the so-called genetic aberrations from the standard XX and XY chromosomal patterns. The discovery of various genetic combinations of the X and Y chromosomes has presented science, religion and law with a difficult conundrum which Foucault explores in the case history Herculine Barbin (1980) and in his The History of Sexuality Volume 1 (1980). See also Judith Butler's critique in Gender Trouble (1990).

believable in their responses, but though they are portrayed more realistically, they do not possess much power except for their sexuality. Fichte's lack of presentation of women, though common in many gay novels, reinforces the homo-social notion of societal interaction which excludes women from any role other than a symbolic representation of heterosexuality and procreation.

The most complex categorisation is the construction of gender roles and behaviour in males in these two novels. Society has invested a great portion of its authority in the assurance that men remain adherents to masculine behaviour.

Baldwin's and Fichte's women, who are both admired and admonished for their dichotomous gendered behaviour, prevail as primarily feminine. In portraying gender, to which both novels devote much discussion--though more overt and explicit in Another Country--the masculinity is deemed a necessary condition of manhood. Such a transgression from the realm of masculinity by men is more often met with harsh criticism than with understanding. It must be stated that these categories of masculinity and femininity become elusive and remain obscure since both authors--as does each individual--conceptualise these terms slightly differently.

But for my purposes, masculinity will stress dominance and power and femininity passivity and submission. I will concentrate on the function of masculinity and femininity within the characters in the two novels and consider the

relationship of gender to socially defined sex roles. The male characters in the two novels often become archetypes of maleness competing for control and power mostly through a sexual medium. I will consider masculinity and femininity from both Baldwin's and Fichte's perspectives, and the discussion will refer to other works and biographical information to assist in elucidating their conceptualisations of these terms.

Lastly, this thesis will address the subject of sexuality, which for gay relationships surprisingly has been conflated with love. Both novels use love to provide a justification for most sexual acts. This notion of sex and love serves to unify sexuality, but as will be demonstrated through the critical literature the oppressive forces of homophobia often deny this association. It is interesting that both authors view love as a panacea to the ills of society. The authors' ideas of love appear naive, since love does not necessarily consist of a deeper understanding, but blind acceptance. This love becomes universalised through sexuality into an idealised bisexuality which purports to open the way to reconciliation between and amongst the sexes. This solution, however, reduces the issue to an individual desire that is devoid of any greater political dimension and serves to trivialise the complexities of oppression. The solution becomes even more puzzling considering that the novels perpetuate mythic

images of homosexuality that, because of society's overwhelming refusal to validate gay relationships, undermine the attempt to reveal sexual realities.

This thesis will examine the portrayal of gay identity in Another Country and Versuch über die Pubertät and reveal the relationship of gay identity to the concepts of ethnicity, gender and sexuality. Baldwin and Fichte depict a gay identity that both mimics patriarchal thought and betrays it by challenging stereotypes and resisting oppression. The effects of oppression on gay identity such as the closet, stereotyping, and the struggle for an affirmative identity create a framework through which other categories of oppression can be scrutinised. Throughout the examination, I shall pay particular attention to the interplay of the power relationships between black and white, male and female, masculinity and femininity, and homosexual and heterosexual, as they relate to the established framework of gay identity formation. It is hoped that this examination will demonstrate the similarities between ethnic, gender and sexual oppression in the two novels and their relationship to the constructs of gay identity.

This thesis will also expose the inconsistencies in Baldwin's and Fichte's solution to resolve the problems of oppression in society. Both authors propose that love and understanding can overcome the problem of oppression, as

depicted in their two novels Another Country and Versuch über die Pubertät. Love between men as expressed through gay sexuality often transcends ethnic, gender and sexual boundaries and promotes an understanding of difference. There still remains, however, a power imbalance in the relationship between masculinity and femininity which both authors do not seem to adequately address. Baldwin and Fichte condemn unsolicited violence, yet insist that men remain faithful to their masculinity. I will illustrate that this privileging of masculinity remains the cause of ethnic, gender and sexual oppression in the novels and presents a paradox for the construction of gay identity.

II. A FRAMEWORK FOR A LITERARY ANALYSIS OF GAY IDENTITY

A. A REVIEW OF THE CRITICISM OF HOMOSEXUAL LITERATURE

Thus far, the critical literature has not adequately addressed the similarities between various forms of oppression and the effects of oppression on identity formation in the novel. This review will begin with a discussion of critical works from the mid-seventies which emanate from German critics or pertain primarily to German literature. The review will then consider Anglo-American criticism as it appeared at the same time and conclude with some relevant works which relate ethnicity, gender and sexuality.

Homosexuality in German literature is of course not a new topic and was publicly debated as early as 1829. The most notorious example occurs with Heine in his attack on August Graf von Platen's homosexuality (Mayer, Außenseiter 207-23). In Außenseiter (1975), Hans Mayer deals with the theme of the homosexual as outsider, from both a literary and historical perspective, indicating a need for tolerance and acceptance. Mayer, however, lacks the understanding and experience of the homosexual condition; his study remains inadequate since it disregards some important considerations such as the effects of societal intolerance upon the individual's self-esteem. He entitles the section on

homosexuality "Sodom" which suggests the subjugation of any positive concept and conveys a biblical condemnation of homosexuality from the outset.

In his Homotropie und die Figur des Homotropen in der Literatur des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts (1982), Volker Ott attempts to deal with the concept of the homotrope⁹ in literature, including a sound review of the then recent literary criticism. Though the approach is rather conventional and without much appreciation of the politics of "gay" literature, Ott summarises more than half a century of gay writing in English, French and German. The scope of the study remains far too broad to provide more than a surface analysis of the texts, especially in considering the current and conflicting developments in sexual politics. Ott develops types and categories for various representations of gay characters. The implications of and justifications for these delineations are not questioned.

One study which focuses on the period before the National Socialist takeover in Germany is James W. Jones's "We of the Third Sex": Literary Representations of Homosexuality in Wilhelmine Germany (1990). Jones discusses the homosexual as a reflection of the scientific discourses in the medical, psychological and legal spheres as represented

⁹The homotrope, like homophobia, is a construct much broader than homosexuality. The term encompasses homo-eroticism, as well as tender feelings for members of the same sex and also homophile relations.

in the literature of the period. He uses both "gay" literature and literature about homosexual men and women written by heterosexuals to support his argument that the majority of representations, both positive and negative, were constructed through the social institutions of science, jurisprudence and religion. Jones contends that the stereotypes generated by these institutions were also integrated into the identity of homosexual individuals. Jones's book is a condensed version of his doctoral thesis completed at the University of Wisconsin (Madison) which contains a more extensive list of works from the turn of the century and considers the so-called trivial literature or fringe literature of the time. Though much of the literature discussed is, admittedly, poorly written, it is fascinating to note that writers in Wilhelmine Germany dealt with the topic of homosexuality with an openness and frankness which had never before occurred.

In Alan Korb's dissertation on victimisation and self-persecution on the German stage, he discusses the reluctance of audiences to view positive representations of gay characters and the incapacity of gays to create these images. One section of Korb's thesis deals with the stage adaptation of Hubert Fichte spricht mit dem Ledermann (1977), which, though lacking in action, is nonetheless a unique representation of the taboo subject of sado-masochism and ritualised sexual practices. Korb fails to examine the

leather scene¹⁰ and in doing so leaves the reader with an inadequate analysis of sexual difference and the power dynamics of a same-sex sado-masochistic relationship. The underlying question of the pervasiveness of such contrary images of gays is abdicated to the conjecture of the reader.

Thomas Vollhaber discusses contemporary gay literature under the categories of Die Angst, Das Nichts, Die Erfahrung (1987). This study, which is based upon German texts and foreign works in translation, coincides with many British and American analyses of gay literature. The abundance of theoretical work as discussed in his second chapter comes from Anglo-American theorists, who may lack a familiarity with many German texts. Only those works containing the most glaring examples of homoeroticism, such as the works of Thomas Mann, are criticised. Even Klaus Mann, who was open about his sexual orientation as early as the nineteen-twenties, has been for the most part ignored. Vollhaber's work aspires to deal adequately with many facets of gay writing. His study, however, is very confusing and disjointed since the author strives to make psychoanalytical, historical and some political connections without laying out

¹⁰The leather scene is usually associated with bars or clubs frequented by groups of gay men and more recently lesbians who may participate in sexual practices involving leather, urine, faeces, torture, bondage, degradation, etc. These sexual rituals are sometimes described as spiritual in nature. For a more complete explanation, see Mark Thompson's Leatherfolk and Urban Aborigines, edited by Geoffery Mains.

a firm theoretical basis.

Marita Keilson-Lauritz, in her work Von der Liebe die Freundschaft heißt: Zur Homoerotik im Werk Stefan Georges (1987) proposes that the examination of the oppositional relationship that exists between the hetero-text, hetero-reader and hetero-author and their respective homo counterparts is most necessary for gay criticism. She asserts that her oppositional model forms the basis for an examination of the differences between hetero-criticism and gay criticism. The importance of the distinction between the two interpretations will be encountered when considering the divergent critical literature on Baldwin and Fichte.

Anglo-American criticism, like its German counterpart, tends to disregard linguistic boundaries and claims the international body of gay literature for its own. Most useful as a research guide is Ian Young's The Male Homosexual in Literature (1975). This work is not only composed of an extensive bibliography containing mostly titles from English-language fiction, but also includes the more recognisable names of foreign-language authors. The guide also contains a cursory history of the gay novel as well as surveys of other genres. Thus, Young's book serves as a respectable first endeavour at establishing a gay literary canon. Georges-Michel Sarotte's study of American gay fiction, Comme un Frère, Comme un Amant (1976), purports to be scientifically objective, yet the author admits to his

political favouritism of psychoanalysis and imposes this critique upon all works. Sarotte deliberately categorises gay relationships into four groups through carefully selected works, but fails to observe that all gay relationships do not easily conform to the limitations of such constructed categories.

A shift to an historical study which treats the works of a relatively large number of twentieth-century gay authors can be found in Roger Austen's Playing the Game (1977). Austen notes that this topic has thus far been subject to "shabby treatment." His work is a positive, yet cursory account of homosexual and homoerotic themes in American literature.

James Levin attempts to accomplish a more than ambitious survey in his book appropriately entitled The Gay Novel (1983, 1991). But this work, because of its lack of focus, only superficially deals with the subject matter since he includes over 200 titles. Most other works, however, tend to become more specialised. Works such as Stephen D. Adams's The Homosexual as Hero in Contemporary Fiction (1980) provides a more positive discussion of gay characters and relationships¹¹ in American fiction with a deeper understanding of the societal effects on the gay

¹¹This is one of the few accounts of Baldwin's Another Country in which the love between Eric and Yves, the homosexual couple in the novel, is not qualified by an adjective such as "apparent" or "supposed."

psyche--a trend that continues throughout the eighties. A collection of essays compiled by Stuart Kellogg, Literary Visions of Homosexuality (1985) examines both American and English works, establishing four thematic categories of the homosexual novel: Arcadian, political, sociological and psychological. These four categories continue to be too broad to be useful in the analysis of the complexities of gay literature, and the collection deals only with literature from the canon. Seymour Kleinburg's essay in this collection, "The Merchant of Venice: The Homosexual as Anti-Semite in Nascent Capitalism," is of interest, since it uncovers some aspects of racism and homosexuality in Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice.

In an attempt to disclose a history and further develop an identity and tradition, the most recent criticisms examine more closely the oppressive forces that homosexual authors experienced and how these forces are exhibited in their works. One such study, Displacing Homophobia: Gay Male Perspectives in Literature and Culture (1989), a collection of essays on topics ranging from the Shakespearean stage to AIDS, exposes the discrimination against gay men by a homophobic and heterosexist¹² society. This marks the beginning of a shift in approaches to gay literature from the simplistic analysis of gay stereotypes to the

¹²Heterosexism is the assumption that everyone is heterosexually inclined without proof to the contrary.

examination of gay identity as a constructed reality.

Even more relevant is Claude J. Summers' Gay Fictions: Wilde to Stonewall: Studies in a Male Homosexual Literary Tradition (1990). Summers explores the development of a gay identity through literature and deconstructs various stereotypical representations of homosexuality. His book begins with an analysis of the works of Oscar Wilde, which Summers describes as the advent of gay literature. Summers includes chapters on E.M. Forster, Gore Vidal, Tennessee Williams, Baldwin's Giovanni's Room, and Christopher Isherwood. The chapter on Baldwin comments on the deliberateness of Baldwin's harsh portrayal of homosexuality as a defence mechanism to provide for a condemnatory and socially acceptable interpretation. However, Summers continues by commenting on the exposition of homophobia in literature as a societal evil to be overcome through understanding and compassion, and he concludes by citing the positive ending to the novel. Although the case is somewhat overstated, it does, nevertheless, provide a more positive interpretation, which is a distinctive innovation with respect to the majority of literature dealing with homosexuality.

In addition to studies of the novel, one contemporary criticism of gay theatre worth mentioning in this context is Nicholas de Jongh's recent account of homosexuality in drama, Not in Front of the Audience (1992). This study

illustrates the function of the gender archetypes of masculinity and femininity developed by Jung as well as the representation of other psychological models of homosexuality. Unfortunately, de Jongh does not completely divorce the notion of sex from gender.¹³ He promotes gender as partially culturally constructed and also refers to its biological implications.

These critical works lend much to the study of gay identity and provide background insight into the works of Fichte and Baldwin. However, since the topic of homosexuality remains largely taboo, much is still misunderstood by critics and by the authors themselves. The posthumous release of E.M. Forster's novel Maurice (1971), completed in 1914, is just one illustration of the extent to which homophobic patriarchal law has been integrated into the Western psyche.

The recent surge of interest in gay identity theory begins to address some of the questions surrounding gay identity. These studies--to be examined in the subsequent section--often integrate gender into their discussions, but do not consider the relatedness of oppressed groups. Some feminist studies attempt to link race and sex, or sex and homophobia, such as Suzanne Pfarr's Homophobia: A Weapon of

¹³Sex is determined by biology, whereas gender constitutes the socially constructed concepts of masculinity and femininity. The differences and ambiguities relating to these terms will be further considered in the theoretical discussion in this chapter.

Sexism (1988) or Michele Wallace's Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman (1978). The effects of homophobia on gay identity are similar to the effects of other forms of prejudice on other oppressed minority groups.

The imposition of the negatively valued label of difference on identity remains the inextricable connection between oppressions. The focus of much of gay writing is upon the acceptance and tolerance of devalued identity constructs in an attempt to provide a solution or a new perspective on the "problem" of the homosexual in society.

B. THEORISING GAY IDENTITY

In considering gay identity as it pertains to literature, a discussion of the major literary and other scholarly contributions to the theory behind gay identity is necessary. I will briefly examine the development of gay identity theory by considering four different conceptualisations: labelling theory, the analogy of gay identity to ethnic identity, the historical formation of gay identity, and the role of oppression in forming a positive identity. These theories of gay identity progress from the unconscious adaptation of ostensibly negative behaviour to a positive valuation and acceptance of this so-called negative behaviour. I will then focus more specifically on aspects of gay identity as reflected in literary theory, which will include a discussion of the public and private realms of the closet, the deconstruction of negative stereotypes, and the process of affirming a positive identity. This section will conclude with an illustration of the importance of positive gay representation in fiction. I will also explain the contributions of Another Country and Versuch über die Pubertät in exposing oppression and the relationship between the causes and effects of oppression and gay identity.

i) Some Theories of Gay Identity

The "[s]elf is a multidimensional, reflexive, experiential process involving knowledge and emotion shaped by the individual's roles and social position" (Weigert 42). This process of creating a sense of self and identification with a prescribed social role, as described by Weigert et al. (1986), both isolates and connects the individual to society and provides a sense of belonging. This dualistic perspective establishes the dynamics of the relationship between self and other, a dynamic which generates tension, since the objectives of the process are antithetical. This tension between establishing an identity and achieving social acceptance balances the equilibrium between the need for self and the need for other. Consequently this dynamic comprises the central issue in the theorising of gay identity, since the relationship of the homosexual to society remains problematic both on a practical and theoretical level. The heterosexual/homosexual opposition, both in its concept and its expression, has encouraged the investigation of the paradoxical interplay between the dominant and deviant in society. This dichotomy has established an anomalous identity for homosexual behaviour which society utilises to maintain authority through the omnipresent coercion to conform, while simultaneously tacitly repudiating this unconventional experience.

Sociologists have employed the theory of labelling to describe the phenomenon of perpetual deviant behaviour when society has imposed the label of other. According to Howard Becker's sociological study on outsiders, "social groups create deviance by making rules whose infraction constitutes deviance and [those who break the rules] are thus labelled as outsiders" (9). Once society assigns such a label, the outsider is condemned to interminable deviant behaviour, since not only is it expected, but society implicitly sanctions it. Although the validity of this theory of labelling may be discredited since each individual reacts differently to each situation, DuBay supports this theory by condemning the acceptance of the label "gay." He states that

[g]ay-identified persons utilize the gay role itself as their most favored neutralization technique. While some neutralization techniques focus on the status of the victim, the adoption of a deviant role focuses on the status of the actor: I can do this because that's how I am. This explains how one's gay behavior can pass so quickly into one's self-image: It has become the warrant to proceed in behavior regarded as unacceptable by society. For others, access to sexual pleasures is guaranteed by the mere status of being human. Gay-identified persons, however, secure that access by placing an emphasis on an internal condition: their sexual difference. (127)

DuBay argues that reliance on the difference for justification of behaviour only emphasises deviance, and that the

focus on sexual difference and development of a distinct gay identity inherently prevents gays from entering mainstream society. His premise hinges primarily upon sociological and psychological studies of the nineteen-fifties, sixties and early seventies to demonstrate his point; but he fails to see the inherent flaws in these studies.¹⁴

In another endeavour to study gay identity, Epstein generates a correlation of the development of a gay identity and that of ethnic identity. This conceptualisation, contrary to DuBay, fosters the idea that developing a gay culture will enhance and provide a unifying force for all gays, thus creating more power for the advancement of gay identity in the social hierarchy.

The modern Western system of sexual classification is embodied in social identities, roles, institutions, and ways of life that can hardly be abolished by an arbitrary act of will. Gays who tried to do so would be giving up the resources they provide for self-defense. Few if any social constructionists have advocated doing so. (Epstein 493)

Epstein, though more cognisant of political realities

¹⁴These studies use samples either from a ghettoised population, based on an extremely small sample size or from patients seeking help in dealing with their sexual orientation, or a combination of these populations, and are not representative of the overall population of gay men. The majority of gay men live very private lives, and it would likely be nearly impossible to locate or coerce them into participation in such studies.

than DuBay, fails to be convincing with his analogy of gay identity with ethnic identity.¹⁵ Gay identity differs from ethnic identity on several fronts. Ethnic identity is supported through language, custom and tradition from birth onward and endures principally as a constant reference to ancestral heritage. Though its conceptualisation may change, a sense of ethnic identity is sustained through historically established cultural structures. Gay identity, however, lacks familial or societal support and demands an authoritative voice since sexual desire is not a constant. Racial identity resembles the dynamics of gay identity more closely since various groups belonging to the same race can exhibit extremely diverse characteristics, traits, values and behaviours. The bond between racial adherents is constructed through biological and anthropological science with visual demarcation becoming the main-stay of recognition. Privileging one set of characteristics over another on the basis of superficial visual cues renders the significance of such differences meaningless. The relationship between racial and ethnic identities and gay identity becomes important when considering James Baldwin; his race and ethnicity--Baldwin's Afro-American perspective conflates race with ethnicity--played a predominant role in his life. Fichte's cultural ties to Judaism may have had a

¹⁵For a more extensive analysis of this criticism, see Cohen (Inside/Out 71-92).

significant effect on his views of ethnicity since his professed Jewish heritage is reflected in his novels. Fichte also devoted his adult life to anthropological studies of various cultures.

The problem of gay identification arising from ethnic comparison or from labelling confounds the reality of gay experiences since the garnering of certain symbols, or even a common goal, is not comprehensive. The concept of a shared identity by gay men, like racial identity, becomes illusive and limiting, according to Ed Cohen:

So, although the assumption that "we" constitute a "natural" community because we share a sexual identity might appear to offer a stable basis for group formations, my experience suggests that it can just as often interrupt the process of creating intellectual and political projects which can gather "us" together across time and space. By predicating "our" affinity upon the assertion of a common "sexuality," we tacitly agree to leave unexplored any "internal" contradictions which undermine the coherence we desire from the imagined certainty of an unassailable commonality or of incontestable sexuality.... It is my sense that in unproblematically hinging "our" personal/group identity upon idealized notions of sexuality and the body, the aggregation of "gay" and "lesbian" as epistemological, social, and political categories frequently occludes the very difficulties that both bring us together and keep us at odds time and time again--i.e., the force of "our" difference(s). (Cohen, Inside/Out 72)

Cohen and many other gay theorists argue that the notion of

difference is paramount to the concept of gay identity, since gay commonalities seem particularly chimerical, and even sexual desire fails to compensate for this fracture.

Yet there does appear to exist a certain commonality that remains contrary to "the force of `our' differences" (Cohen, Inside/Out 72). This force of difference constitutes a societal demarcation which invokes the oppression from which it was wrought. The formation of homosexual as species according to Foucault took place in the late nineteenth-century (101) and has been linked to the formation and the strengthening of a capitalist society. The relationship between the oppression of homosexuals and the power of the market economy has been brilliantly laid out by D'Emilio and further theorised under a post-Lacanian rubric by Irigaray.¹⁶ This oppression, then, played a crucial role in the formation of identity since no such identity had ever been discussed or proposed before. Gay identity was formulated and refined under the auspices of the medical, legal

¹⁶D'Emilio explains that, for capitalism to function, it was essential for the basic unit of production to remain intact (i.e., the constructed heterosexual family), and as a consequence, sexual pleasure, though not procreation, was suppressed. In order to accomplish this, sodomy and indecency laws were reinforced to act as a threat, to ensure the production of a labour force, and to prevent the abuse of abundant opportunities for pleasure due to urbanisation. For a more detailed and comprehensive explanation see D'Emilio, Weeks, and Dollimore. Irigaray contends in This Sex Which is Not One that homosexuality is the governing force underlying all male-male exchange and is mediated through commodities (women) as men vie for power within society.

and psycho-social discourses and was contrived ironically for the rectification of social corruption.¹⁷ Society wields the homosexual threat as a scapegoat, but in doing so has also allowed the formation of a self-defined identity, since this imposed stereotype acted as the impetus for a system of verification.

What is most interesting about this process with respect to the formation of new homosexual subcultures is how the temporary failure of collective regimes of power and knowledge produced in the seams of culture various sites on which marginal peoples began to construct and empower their own collectivities, their own access to "experience" understood not simply as the "experiential" (and therefore individual) but as their link to a meta-narrative (and collective) that might explain their being. There is, in fact, ample evidence that sexological definitions of homosexuality, while now appearing oppressive, actually served a positive function for certain people in the twenties. (Yingling 69)

It is also this oppression which more recently forged common bonds and continues to connect what were previously isolated groups of lesbians and gays into a network of people with a quite similar oppressive experience. Using this negative constituent as a catalyst for identity formation provided a powerful and unifying force, but it comprises only one facet of gay identity. However, this was sufficient to furnish the stimulus for the establishment of urbanised groups--

¹⁷See Greenberg's The Construction of Homosexuality and Foucault's The History of Sexuality.

usually white and middle-class--who organised themselves as a reflection of the heterosexual community.

The gay liberation movement...also began the transformation of a sexual subculture into an urban community. The group life of gay men and women came to encompass not only erotic interaction but also political, religious and cultural activity. Homosexuality and lesbianism have become less of a sexual category and more of a human identity. (D'Emilio 248)

The normalcy of homosexual experience confounds the existing negative stereotypes that provide, however false they are, a definition for gays which gay men must continually re(de)-fine.¹⁸

ii) Oppression and the Literary Discourse on Gay Identity

One of the most enduring facets of gay life which differs from heterosexual experience is the closet. The

¹⁸One stereotype is the notion of a gay sensibility. Judy Grahn refutes this notion in her "Some of the Roles of Gay People in Society." "Is there a gay sensibility? No. There is not a gay anything, we are much more diverse than that. There are gay countercultures, undergrounds, circles, cliques, ghettos, histories and sensibilities.... Some of these sensibilities stem from our history and particular psychic values, some from our suppression and the special positions we hold within the various ethnic, racial, gender, et cetera, spheres of our society" (33). The notion of a sensibility has perpetuated many other characteristics that society attaches to gay men, especially the knowledge of the obviousness of gay behaviour.

most notable theorist dealing with the significance of the closet is Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick. In her Epistemology of the Closet, Kosofsky-Sedgwick explores the various facets of the closet and its interdependence upon a homophobic society. The closet¹⁹ has many facets in terms of the heterosexualisation of gay identity; and since inadequate empirical evidence exists to support the current theories, the closet still persists as an abstruse construct. Closetry among gay men is perhaps the single most unifying experience. It is one dimension of gay oppression--another component is being "out" and oppressed--since many gay men assume a "straight" role in society and either repress their sexual desire or devote a substantial amount of energy to keeping their sexuality a secret. Closeted gay men can appropriate the inherent privileges of that straight role, although this jeopardises identity, or perhaps more accurately, constitutes a different identity. This opportunity to appropriate privilege is especially available to white gay men for they have the most to lose in terms of potential income and status. Yet they also have the most to gain through coming out with regard to strengthening their identity and the support of a community, since their skin

¹⁹A term used to denote the secrecy of being gay, as in the phrase "to come out of the closet." Coming out defines a developmental process whereby a man or woman self-identifies as gay or lesbian and consolidates this discovery into the personal and social aspects of their lives including publicly disclosing one's sexual orientation.

colour affords them the privilege of identifying with an increasingly powerful white gay liberation movement, while racism still exists. Being black and gay represents quite a different dynamic in which racial views on homosexuality, and racial and gay oppression figure highly in the coming out process.²⁰

Kosofsky-Sedgwick explains the importance of the closet for gays:

...for many gay people it is still the fundamental feature of social life; and there can be few gay people, however courageous and forthright by habit, however fortunate in the support of their immediate communities, in whose lives the closet is not still a shaping presence. (Epistemology 68)

The closet, one of the most enduring features of gay literature, typically elicits the societal and the self-imposed restrictions upon the author, narrator and character, while the gay reader devours the text and scans the sub-text for the "real" story. The constant tension between the desire to express homosexual characteristics in the text and the need to protect these revelations from public scrutiny creates a sub-text with a language of its own. Literature has assisted in perpetuating the vocabulary of an invisible culture to establish a gay presence in the

²⁰Michael J. Smith's Black Men/White Men: A Gay Anthology provides some perspectives on the differences between white and black gay experience.

text for both author and reader. Homosexual authors provided commonly known cues in the gay underground to alert an astute reader to the presence of gay characters in order to counter the effects of the closet.

David van Leer condemns coming out as a masochistic act and criticises Kosofsky-Sedgwick for her use of oppressive terminology as a liberationist device.

Coming out of the closet may be an act not of self-affirmation but of self-flagellation, less a self-identification than an identification of oneself as the enemy. To someone fully adjusted to his sexuality, who does not accept the social definition of the normal, there simply is no closet to leave.
(Van Leer 596)

Van Leer, though making some interesting points, either deliberately ignores or needs to become more aware of social realities, and what emerges is more a personal than an objective observation, since persecution takes place on various and subtle levels within society and often enters into the sub-text. It is hard to imagine that the absence of imagery or scarcity of openness about homosexuality could make anyone "fully adjusted to his sexuality."

The elitist notion that gays possess superior qualities compared to the average heterosexual lies at the other end of the sexual identity spectrum. The underlying assumption is that if gays are outsiders it is because of their superiority--they possess an elevated aesthetic acumen, are more

intellectually and emotionally liberated and currently are better critics of societies' ills.

Elaine Showalter deals with the superiority issue in her analysis of the conceptualisation of male homosexuality as idealised love in her Sexual Anarchy. She describes gay men as being misogynist since their love transcends biology, and the concomitant celebration of the male body leaves women out of this framework. Since men hold the balance of power in society, the notion of love between men becomes doubly powerful to the detriment of women's power in society through their function as child-bearers. "This rationalization of homosexual desire as aesthetic experience has as its sub-text an escalating contempt for women, whose bodies seem to stand in the way of philosophical beauty" (Showalter 176). Baldwin's idealised portrayal of Eric's and Yves's love attests to Showalter's argument through the exaltation of male homosexual love over its heterosexual counterpart, while Fichte's novel portrays heterosexual relationships as loveless, which also lends support to Showalter's argument.

A more recent development which does not necessarily claim the superiority of gay men, but constitutes a reaffirmation of a positive gay identity arising from the gay pride movement, is the deconstruction of the negative stereotype.

Homosexuals who attempt to retreat from a societal

stigma are thrust into homophile

"aristocratization." This exchange of one cul-

tural source of identity validation for another,

which is taken to be more noble and formidable,

serves as a powerful example of the social con-

struction of the meaning of gender at work in the

face of a negative generalized other. (Weigert

82)²¹Literary representations of a homosexual

identity--rather than representations of

homosexual behaviour--whether overt or covert

appeared about the same time as scientific models

of homosexual identity were formulated. A reverse

discourse to the patriarchal conceptualisation of

homosexuality emerged in literature which also

influenced gay self-perception. With regard to

the twentieth-century novel, a tradition of

writing about homosexuality as a deviant lifestyle

was well established, but this portrayal changed

during the nineteen-fifties and sixties and then

again in the seventies and in the eighties.

During the fifties and sixties, homosexuality was still

²¹Society, however, does not acknowledge this affirmative, positive role and more militant and aggressive gay factions continue to politicise the issues. Daniel Curzon uses the manifestation of situational reversal where the norm is homosexual and the oppressed heterosexual in his novel Something You Do in the Dark (New York: Lancer, 1971).

negatively depicted, but the portrayals elicited far more sympathy and understanding than repulsion.²² After the Stonewall Riots of 1969--the birth of the modern Gay Liberation Movement--more positive imagery slowly found its way onto bookshelves.²³ In the age of AIDS, gay literature has received hesitant recognition, but has also developed into a more acceptable topic for representation. Since society has often used gays as scapegoats for the introduction of the HIV virus to the West, the ironic outcome of the popularity of AIDS issues has led to a resurgence of gay culture and literature. Public interest in gay issues has arisen from the increased articulation of anger within gay communities concerning the funding of AIDS research and the lack of government action on AIDS awareness programmes. These actions have ultimately gained only some sympathy for human rights demands including freedom of cultural expression. These petitions have only partially been addressed by society. The literary establishment still largely treats gay sexuality in literature as taboo; as long as gays are not "gay"--note the re-reversal of meaning--their representation is acceptable.

²²Ian Young discusses this development in an essay "The Flower Beneath the Foot: A Short History of the Gay Novel" in The Gay Male in Literature (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1975). See also, Levin The Gay Novel in America, (New York: Garland, 1991).

²³For example Larry Kramer's Faggots, (New York: Warner Books, 1984) and Armisted Maupin's epic Tales of the City, (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).

Less clear maybe is the fact that literature generally has played a considerable part in the legitimation of homosexuality, not only because of the influence of novels [...], but because many of the positive identifications appropriated for the reverse discourse of homosexuality come from within literature. But the reverse is also true; modern fiction especially has not only perpetuated negative images of the homosexual but actively participated in their creation. (Dollimore, 186)

Gay writers have used and continue to employ coded language to represent themselves, partially perhaps due to oppression and self-censorship, but also due to the lack of language with which to meaningfully express homosexual desire.²⁴ This lack of language constitutes part of the gay identity since there is the constant quest for the appropriate, meaningful sign.

For to be homosexual in Western society entails a state of mind in which all credentials, however petty, are under unceasing scrutiny. The homosexual is beset by signs, by the lure to interpret whatever transpires, or fails to transpire, between himself and every chance acquaintance. He is a prodigious consumer of signs--of hidden meanings, hidden systems, hidden potentiality. Exclusion from the common code impels the frenzied quest:

²⁴Ruitenbeek discusses the notion of gay artistic production by exploring various psychoanalytic theories of creativity ranging from libidinal repression, to neuroses, to an escape from an intolerable reality. His study tends to reveal aspects of the creative "instinct," and are in no way purely indicative of homosexual creativity, but rather creativity in general.

in the momentary glimpse, the scrambled figure, the sporadic gesture, the chance encounter, the reverse image, the sudden slippage, the lowered guard. In a flash meanings may be disclosed; mysteries wrenched out and betrayed. (Beaver, 104-105)

This constant search for identity becomes integrated into behaviour as gay men attempt to find love and sexual fulfilment in a world which forces potential partners to make themselves unknown. Gay writers also must contend with this same lack of identity and representation, which manifests itself as the absence of language, an absence which may contribute to the preferred literary genre of many gay authors, the novel. Gay authors employ the novel both to reveal and to hide identities. Foucault questions this choice, pondering whether this is the most suitable form for gay literary expression (Gallagher 27). The gay novel creates a narrative which must not reveal too much of itself; if such a revelation becomes necessary it must be countered by heterosexual affirmation.

[G]ay writers seem often to have found literature less a matter of self-expression and more a matter of coding...the consistent locus of parody in gay texts suggests a self-consciousness about what texts may and may not do.... (Yingling 25)

The necessity of creating a gay sub-text to communicate a positive gay identity has until recently been greatly

diminished with the acceptance of affirmative literature. Fichte, as a gay author, can write about his own sexuality, but there still remains the problem of language. The representation of gay desire is still limited by a language constructed around dichotomous configurations of power, and the ability to accurately express gay experience remains restricted.

We have felt a need to authorize our own images,
to speak for ourselves, even while we have
known that those images don't quite get what
any one of us is or what all of us are. (Dyer
200)

The absence of authoritative images is accommodated through the sub-text--so called reading between the lines--since silence and censorship are a way of life for gay people. For literary criticism of gay texts means

daß es darum geht, Homosexualität und Homoerotik
als Thema und in ihren Ausdrucksformen bzw.
Aussagestrategien inklusive der des
Verschweigens gerade in der sogenannten
mainstream-Literatur aufzuspüren, ihre
Funktion dort aufzuzeigen. (Keilson-Lauritz
17)

It is the precarious dynamic between the text and sub-text or more clearly the power politics of the heterosexist assumption versus the homosexual subversion which forms yet another aspect of gay identity.

In her diffuse explanation of the function of the opposition between heterosexuality and homosexuality, Kosofsky-Sedgwick attempts to come to terms with the relationship dynamic inherent in this binary opposition and concludes that the end result constitutes instability:

[T]he analytic move it [deconstruction] makes is to demonstrate that categories presented in a culture as symmetrical binary oppositions-- heterosexual/ homosexual, in this case-- actually subsist in a more unsettled and dynamic tacit relation according to which, first, term B is not symmetrical with but subordinated to term A; but, second, the ontologically valorized term A actually depends for its meaning on the simultaneous subsumption and exclusion of term B; hence, third, the question of priority between the supposed central and the supposed marginal category of each dyad is irresolvably unstable, an instability caused by the fact that term B is constituted as at once internal and external to term A.
(Epistemology, 10-11)

This instability or decentring of meaning poses a threat to the concept of universal truth, since the patriarchy has maintained this concept for its own political purposes. If this universal truth is questioned or placed in the realm of the unknown, the patriarchy must retaliate to preserve its power. Society has only initially investigated this unknown area of sexuality and has mostly sought out ways in which to convert the homosexual and ally homosexual experience with heterosexual terminology. Baldwin's character Eric accommodates the representation of this convention since his behaviour deliberately counters

the stereotypes and mimics heterosexual behaviour. Fichte, on the other hand, emphasises the difference between homosexual and heterosexual behaviour, though unfortunately depicting primarily one element of deportment, desire, rather than expressing a totality. This process of "normalisation" becomes apparent in more recent fiction such as David Leavitt's popular novel, Lost Language of the Cranes, the story of a New York "guppy" (gay urban professional), which appeals to a relatively large heterosexual audience through the adoption of this strategy.

The challenge of the plurality of meaning in its decentred form becomes the impetus for a new exploration of established categories of sex and gender arrangements.

[With] both the meanings and the sexes pluralized: meaning will tend toward its multiplication, its dispersal (in the theory of the Text); and sex will be taken into no typology (there will be, for example, only homosexualities, whose plural will baffle any constituted, centralized discourse, to the point where it seems to him virtually pointless to talk about it).... (Barthes 73)

While the dominant culture offers "a vision of a world of free and independent individuals," this apparent freedom warrants further consideration since it is "in conflict with the sex-role division" (MacNair 158), allowing little individual freedom in this realm and consequently mandating a familial structure with any aberration punished by the laws of patriarchal favouritism.

The private and public dichotomy, one of the components of the closet, exemplifies the relationship between the individual and society on a more universal level. The interaction of the public and private realm becomes more distinct in that a private matter, namely sexuality, can be made public for political reasons, and, conversely, the necessity to privatise that knowledge of sexuality can operate from an opposite political agenda, survival.

[T]he self a homosexual constructs must resist multiple pressures of erasure, most of which he is conscious of; and even when it is recuperated into political conservatism, the homosexual's subjectivity is always already poststructural, a personal narrative experienced as absence and denial. (Yingling 36)

This denial of the private by the public is the conditioning of a patriarchal construct, where the private must always be under control to protect any perceived weakness or deficiencies in the public display of power. Fichte supports this notion in providing depictions of characters whose sexuality remains private. When their sexual orientation is revealed, they are met with the consequences of prejudice and discrimination. Eric, though he too is open about his sexuality, divulges scant information about his past sexual encounters. Hocquenghem conjectures that the relationship of this notion of privatisation with respect to the body underpins the traditional perceptions of

phallic/anal contention. The phallic representation of power maintains the public presence, but the anus remains the private source of shame and any lapse in control releases that shame to the watchful eye of the phallus.

Every man possesses a phallus which guarantees him a social role; every man has an anus which is truly his own, in the most secret depths of his own person. The anus does not exist in a social relation, since it forms precisely the individual and therefore enables the division between society and the individual to be made. (Hocquenghem 83)

The symbolic gesture of social control lies in the anus, but upon revelation of the loosening of that sphincter comes the ultimate betrayal, the most degrading and humiliating act of entry--or the less degrading act of elimination. Control of the anus is the precondition of taking responsibility for property, the body (Hocquenghem 85); and the argument that the anus is a substitute vagina exemplifies the singularity of phallic thought, that sexuality can only exist in heterosexual terms.

The anus is not a substitute for the vagina: women have one as well as men. To reinvest the anus collectively and libidinally would involve a proportional weakening of the great phallic signifier, which dominates us constantly both in the small-scale hierarchies of the family and in the great social hierarchies. (Hocquenghem 89)

Since the devalued anus figures prominently in the theoretical operation of gay identity--though probably to a surpris-

ingly lesser degree in reality--the insignificance of non-reproductive desire precludes any status within the heterosexual system. In deconstructing the illusion of phallic supremacy, that is to disclose the fallacy of gender differentiation, Hocquenghem points out that "[o]nly the phallus dispenses identity; any social use of the anus, apart from its sublimated use, creates the risk of a loss of identity. Seen from behind we are all women; the anus does not practise sexual discrimination" (Hocquenghem 87).

Therefore, a society supported by authoritative politics cannot overtly invest in the anus any notion of power.

The proscription of anal legitimacy demonstrates the existence of a threat to primacy of the phallus. This threat translates into power whenever the anus fails to keep an intruding phallus at bay or conversely, whenever the phallus falls victim to the lure of the anus. The anus consumes the phallus, temporarily becoming the subverter of power, until, and as is always the case, the anus is penalised through humiliation.

As Gregory Woods sees it, "we are the men-not-men who can fuck and be fucked" (182); this contradictory duality allows the appropriation of power and the submission to it.

Society cannot allow such an unfixed desire to exist since it would make men powerless against each other and decentre the hierarchy. This would affect the whole gay condition, even language, as Woods is inclined to believe.

From the myth that we are double-sexed, we have derived a duality of speech, a habit of self-contradiction: to the extent that we are physically bi-sexed, we are also bi-lingual, double-tongued. While sticking out one tongue contemptuously at the homophobe, we apply the other, in depth and at length, to the bodies of our lovers. (Woods 194)

This duality denotes a dynamic exchange which occurs in a text such as Fichte's, where meaning is ascertained through the ironic juxtaposition of words or phrases. It remains difficult to discern just who retains the hegemonic authority throughout this transaction. Gay writing--though not writers who happen to be gay--may be more adept at trickery, but it certainly has not attained legitimate voice in the canon.

Legitimacy cannot even be attained when gay men act straight, for in doing so they behave even more deviously, subverting the system from behind the mask. Donning the masculine stance and attitude, gay men can manoeuvre about freely and powerfully until the mask(uline) falls. Irigaray questions the phenomenon of masculine homosexuality in her "Commodities among Themselves."

Why is masculine homosexuality considered exceptional, then, when in fact the economy as a whole is based upon it? Why are homosexuals ostracized, when society postulates homosexuality? Unless it is because the "incest" involved in homosexuality has to remain in the realm of pretense. (192)

The pretence is one constituent of the closet. The

normalisation of the gay male identity has gone this route in an attempt to gain acceptance; this, however, has had limited success, since the mask is unmasked and re-mask-(ulat)ed with a conscious comportment.

According to Gough, the self-consciousness of this appropriation of heterosexual masculinity has precipitated the opposite effect. Such mannerised styles actually identify a person as gay. Fetishising masculinity has further created a revival of misogyny, venturing to eradicate the femininity that has been a part of gay culture. The difference between camp²⁵ parody and hyper-masculine styles, though they both conform to stereotypical views of what an individual should or should not be according to their anatomy, is that camp is a conscious subversion of traditional gender configurations, whereas the adoption of masculinity reaffirms these configurations. "Masculinity as a sexual fetish is, therefore, oppressive not simply for dictating a certain norm, but for demanding something which cannot be achieved" (Gough 121-2).

Gough attempts to prove that the way gay men identify with femininity differs between those who are socialised within a gay milieu and adopt feminine characteristics, and those who gain identity from that milieu although they have

²⁵Camp is characterised through an exaggerated and dramatic behaviour and speech pattern, usually an imitation of women. Susan Sonntag presents some interesting insights in her "Notes on Camp."

been socialised externally. This difference "shows that homosexual identity was indeed a sexual identity and not essentially a gender one, even though the gender style was very marked..." (Gough 127). The explosion of rigid gender constructs allows the freedom for the masculine and feminine to intermingle so that the subject becomes both subject and object at once, and the desired becomes the desiring one in a narcissistic metaphor of psychoanalytic interplay. If subject and object are interchangeable, then sexual roles, too, come under this same sort of scrutiny so that the active subject can act as the passive object. In "refusing the categories of grammatical subject and object just as homosexuality refuses the easy sexual categories of activity and passivity, the possessor and 'his' possessed" (Yingling 39), language and meaning are released from constructed restraints. Yingling rejects the idea that identity can be attained through alliance with traditional masculine power; since "the phallic cannot be the locus of a liberated homosexuality, that masculinity is too compromised in its current cultural construction to provide any answer to the problem of identification that the homosexual finds himself enforced to enact..." (53). The truly liberating force of gay identity is the allowance for the adaptation of different roles and the development of new ones.

Gay liberation goes to the heart of all of these separations. It offers a life-affirming vision of sexuality, gender, and personal

freedom that is not only a radical critique of the state of the culture, but also a signpost to the way out, the road to change.

The vision that gay liberation has to offer goes beyond freedom from sexual repression, escape from the tyranny of gender roles, or movement towards connecting culture and politics. At its most basic, it offers the possibility of freedom or pleasure, for its own sake. Until we accept the role which pleasure must play in all aspects of our lives, we will never be free. (Bronski 213)

The embrace of difference conveys with it the problem of an inadequacy of understanding and meaning. If difference obscures meaning and if difference is then allowed to prevail, new methods of communication could develop which would validate multiple meanings and changes in power relationships. The juxtaposition of words through time and space--changing, evolving, revolving with no fixed or inherent value--assumes that meaning is granted for one moment and loses its significance in the next. The power structure inherent in patriarchally constructed binary oppositions would then be transferable and would elude the dynamic of violence and domination.

For if we can begin to gather together on the basis of constructions that "we" are constantly and self-consciously in the process of inventing, multiplying, and modifying, then perhaps "we" can obviate the need for continuing to reiterate the fragmenting oscillations between identity and difference that have been the legacy of post 1960s progressive politics. (Cohen, Inside/Out 88)

The project necessitates the deconstruction of gendered

identity, hence meaning, so that difference is recognised for what it is and not for what it can accomplish. It is precisely the abhorrence of a non-differentiating speculation about gender which is essential in order to preserve the phallic dominance that perpetuates the myth of rigid gender constructs.

[G]ender politics entails the organization and (re)production of critical enactments that at once defamiliarize and destabilize those processes through which the differentiating forms of "difference" are naturalized.
(Cohen, Inside/Out 83)

This process of naturalisation, or preferably the neutralisation or castration of the significance of difference, requires that identity undergoes a radical transformation so that it does not imitate the heterosexual pattern under which all gay men are reared, but instead a new identity is constructed. This identity would be ideally fluid and in accordance with gay sexuality, one which oscillates between activity and passivity, masculinity and femininity, sameness in difference. For gay men, subject is object and this just seems to make sense in a world predisposed to paradox.

Indeed, part of what I would like to suggest is that by incorporating ("self"-)contradictions into the processes of political transformation as moments/sites of possibility, movements may be able to consciously affirm the political significance of their own complex (e)motions rather than be driven, and riven, by the struggle to

"fix" identity. (Cohen, Inside/Out 88-89)

iii) The Role of Literature in Constructing an Affirmative Identity

Identity, however illusive, remains one of the most important factors in the lives of lesbian and gay people since there is a scarcity of representative affirming signs that support their behaviour and their beliefs. In formulating a relationship between self, other and society, many traditional theories have attempted to limit the description of sexuality. The labelling theory attributed identity to a label imposed by society and accepted by the individual as truth. Such labels, however, failed to achieve universal acceptance by either the labelled individuals or other social scientists, not to mention society. The analogy of ethnic identity, which overlaps with and is comparable to gay identity, could provide only limited insight into the problematic relationship of tradition and history to identity development. Looking back into the historical formation of identity continues to be an ongoing project and also facilitates the process of disclosing further evidence and information about the meaning of sexual identities. The effect of the closet, that self-imposed/societally sanctioned censoring of desire and identification, has caused immeasurable harm,--though some would claim it has given rise to creativity--and has irrevocably fabricated gay

existence. The reaction against the closet, the self-affirming notion of gay pride and the reappropriation of derogative terminology incorporate a more positive self-image and foster continued community development.²⁶ These initiatives continue to stimulate an expectant discovery and liberation, though they are inhibited by an inadequate language.

The persistent misogyny and elitism of the male cult and the participation in traditional gender configurations pose difficult obstacles in the attainment of a positive identity. The fundamental dichotomy of the public and private also constitutes a serious menace since the destabilising force of homosexual exposure appears certain to encounter continuous resistance.

The constant reference to contrary expressions of sexuality remains a celebration of difference, a difference without conflict or, at least ideally, a manageable conflict where power becomes illusive and the categories of race, sex, gender and sexuality are mere descriptions of personal attributes whose meanings and values fluctuate throughout

²⁶Gay pride and the reappropriation of derogative terminology comprise strategies to raise self-esteem. Taking pride in being gay becomes a necessary and difficult process when confronted with a contradictory reality. Most heterosexuals do not need to submit to this process since procreative sexuality is continuously supported through societal institutions. Gay people who use derogatory terminology to refer to themselves often attribute a very positive meaning to these words. This dispels the hateful effects of these "insults" and creates an affirmative term where none had existed.

time and whose inherent powers remain equal. This does not form the present reality and many disparate power relationships endure, so that the reasons for the deficiency of positive representations of minority groups warrant investigation.

It is precisely the almost complete absence of images and signs of homosexuality that enhances the importance of the few existing images and signs. Furthermore, the access to existing affirmative images and signs of lesbians and gays is subsequently diminished both by the closet that effects the homosexual and heterosexual writer--this is not to say that straight writers do not write positively about this topic--and by the minority status of lesbians and gays in a population. In fact, the infrequency of these empowering images illustrates the pertinence of such existing images as paramount to lesbians and gays and also reveals the strict censure of these positive images by a homophobic society.

Throughout history, literature has contributed in a very important way to the establishment of gay identity through its perpetuation of gay images and signs. In the writings of ancient Greek poets, in both religious and bawdy poetry of medieval and Renaissance Europe, in the ambiguous language that relies on the heterosexual assumption to escape censorship, through representations based upon theological and legal interdiction, and in the acceptance of

medical and psychological models, homosexuality has been a mainstay in literature. Since literature aspires to mimic aspects of reality, the theme of homosexuality has survived a myriad of assaults and has flourished to the present.

It is, then, also not surprising that the first images and signs that lesbians and gays experience occur in literature since homosexual representation is not considered an acceptable conversational topic and still is met with great opposition in most familial and social situations. For some, literature provides the first identification and validation of their existence as a lesbian or a gay man, which can lead to further self-discovery and self-identification.

In choosing James Baldwin's Another Country and Hubert Fichte's Versuch über die Pubertät, I have attempted to consolidate various portrayals of homosexuality as seen by the homosexual character and by society in the novels. Both authors can be considered social activists in their own right, though their personal politics may not feature an affirmative stance on the question of homosexuality. The novels span an important period of the Gay Rights Movement, Baldwin writing before the Stonewall riots of 1969 and Fichte writing afterward; and though this event may not have had a personal effect upon their lives, it certainly has affected the reception of their work and the

subsequent impact of the movement. Being male and exhibiting homosexual behaviours, Fichte and Baldwin present a particularly fascinating view of men and women and their relationship to masculine and feminine comportment. Both Baldwin and Fichte, as members of persecuted racial groups, also have a unique perspective on identity and positive imagery since they have experienced the effects of social injustice. **III. OTHER SEXUALITIES IN BALDWIN'S ANOTHER COUNTRY: GAY IDENTITY AS A RESPONSE TO OPPRESSION**

In Another Country, James Baldwin presents various interpersonal relationships which illustrate the effects of oppression resulting from ethnic, gender and sexual differences. The cause of this oppression as portrayed in the novel is an apparent lack of love and understanding. Baldwin's solution to the oppressive nature of these human relationships seems to be an affirmation of an idealised love; however, this type of love is only achieved through homosexual relations. Though some of the individual characters in Another Country are able to experience love for one another, they never achieve an understanding of oppression in its cultural context.²⁷ Baldwin's narrator

²⁷ Baldwin relies on individual understanding as a means toward social change. Bigsby points out that "[t]he problem which Baldwin fails to engage is precisely how that integrity of the self can be projected into a social scale;

does, however, interrupt the narrative with commentary and insights on the nature of oppression in American society.

This chapter will begin with a review of the critical literature on Baldwin, especially the literature which deals with Baldwin's homosexuality and with homosexual themes that he presents his novels. I will then discuss the effects of oppression on ethnic, gender and sexual identities. The section on gender will be subdivided into a consideration of male roles and masculinity and of female roles and femininity. In each of the three categories of ethnicity, gender and sexuality, I will elaborate on the function of the closet, stereotyping and the affirmation of identity as they relate to Baldwin's exposition of oppression and his subsequent "solution" to this problem.

Baldwin's homosexuality had a great influence on his personal, literary, and political life. The first novel to deal with homosexuality, Giovanni's Room was Baldwin's public attempt understanding his own sexuality. James Campbell's Talking at the Gates (1991) discusses Baldwin's sexuality and its relationship to his work. Baldwin included homosexual themes in his writing to "pre-empt the shame which was usually attendant upon a homosexual life in those days" (Campbell 33). The success of Giovanni's Room

why the withdrawal into love should be seen as an adequate model for social action since it is frequently born out of a denial of that social action" (97). Baldwin does not explain the process of transferring individual love and understanding to the social sphere.

allowed Baldwin to continue to explore the relationship between sexuality and racial issues in America.

Another Country the second novel to deal with homosexuality, subtly protests against racial and sexual disharmony.

Although Baldwin would emphatically deny that this is a protest novel, it is a bitter recital of mistreatment, humiliation, and rejection of the Negro by white America. But it is not a plea for mercy. It is rather a warning to the white man of the explosive power of revenge that lies below the surface of the Negro's exterior passivity. It is an explanation of the devious ways in which the wronged blacks can seek sardonic satisfaction. (Ford 124)

Ford focuses on the novels subversive potential while dismissing Baldwin's plea for understanding by both Blacks and Whites. The sermon-like passages in the novel which contain Baldwin's explicit protest message are more typical of the Christian ideology he embraced as a childhood preacher, than of an advocacy for racial violence.

Some critics cited the aesthetic flaws in the novel to attack Baldwin's strong statement on racism and sexuality. Harold Bloom rejects the value of the novel as a protest against oppression and sees Baldwin as engulfed in his own self-pity. Bloom asserts that "Baldwin lacks the luxury of detachment, since he speaks, not for a displaced Yankee majority, but for a sexual minority within a racial minority, indeed for an aesthetic minority among black homosexuals" (1). Bloom's statement conveys with subtlety the

prejudices that surfaced because of Baldwin's openness about sexuality and his views on race in America.

The most virulent assault that Baldwin endured because of his position on homosexuality came from within the black community. Eldridge Cleaver attacks Baldwin's sexuality in his Soul on Ice, criticising Baldwin for his portrayal of weak black characters. More importantly, Cleaver personally defames Baldwin because of his sexual orientation. Cleaver writes that "[h]omosexuality is a sickness, just as are baby-rape or wanting to become the head of General Motors" (110). Many supporters of Baldwin within the Civil Rights Movement denounced him because of Cleaver's remarks, as Baldwin relates in an interview:

My real difficulty with Cleaver, sadly, was visited on me by the kids who were following him, while he was calling me a faggot and the rest of it. I was handicapped with "Soul On Ice," because what I might have said in those years about Eldridge would have been taken as an answer to his attack on me. So I never answered it, and I'm not answering it now. (Elgrably 252)

Gay literary critics treat Baldwin's work less harshly.

Claude J. Summers discusses the development of Baldwin's thematic use of homosexuality and race, which began more specifically with Giovanni's Room and continued throughout Baldwin's career.

In his subsequent novels, issues of racial and sexual identity are consistently linked. The

Negro and homosexual are both exposed as artificial concepts, social constructions designed to fulfil the needs of the white heterosexual majority. In the shape of his career, there is a distinct pattern of increasing attention to homosexuality's function as a means of redemption, both for individuals and for communities. (172)

Summers continues with his criticism, however, arguing that Baldwin was not explicit enough about homosexuality in his novels. He compares Baldwin's Giovanni's Room with the works of one of Baldwin's contemporaries, the gay Latino author John Rechy.

[Baldwin] also played it safe by creating sufficient ambiguity in the depiction of homosexuality to allow multiple interpretations. By telling the story through the first-person voice of a sexually confused, unreliable narrator, by depicting the homosexual milieu as unattractive and decadent, and by framing the story with the melodramatic plot devices of a murder and an execution, Baldwin permits an anti-gay interpretation. (173)

Though Summers points to the negative portrayals of homosexuality in this previous novel, the inclusion of a positive, undeniably gay character marks Another Country as a turning point for Baldwin.

Admittedly, the novel presents an idealised view of homosexuality. As Macebuh points out in James Baldwin: A Critical Study (1973), "Homosexuality was in Baldwin's latter novels to be presented often as the exclusive category of love..." (52). Though this appears true in the case of Another Country, Kent argues that "Baldwin is

too concerned about whether the sex experience provides a transcending love to make distinctions between heterosexual and homosexual experience" (27). In Baldwin's words:

It seems to me an incredible way to live to glory in the fact that one is heterosexual because it proves that you're not something else, or vice versa. It seems kind of suicidal. Of course, a writer who is bisexual or homosexual is probably but not surely going to identify himself with other minorities, but it's perfectly possible for him to become a fascist or a sadist, too.
(Mossman 59)

Baldwin, having ostensibly rejected the labels of homosexuality and heterosexuality in his personal life, focuses his attention on the attempted dissolution of the barriers of race and sexuality in the Another Country.²⁸ Despite Louis H. Pratt's assertion in James Baldwin (1978) that the characters in the novel have "rejected traditional barriers of family, race, country, religion, and sex" (71), Baldwin reaffirms the traditional roles of women and condemns deviation from conventional gender behaviour. Carolyn Wedin Sylvander's James Baldwin (1980) supports Pratt's position. She posits that "Eric's importance in the novel lies in his exclusion from the standards of the world

²⁸Curiously, Baldwin uses the label "gay" only with reference to an effeminate behaviour or the behaviour of what could be considered the "gay sub-culture." Lash notes that "references to transvestism, sodomy, and other obvious forms of flagellation are uniformly scornful, so that there can be no doubt of the contempt of the phallicists for 'perversion'" (52-3).

and the subsequent need for him to develop his own code of honour" (58). Although Eric does transgress traditional sexual boundaries, he rarely crosses into the realm of the homosexual "sub-culture."

Baldwin's conceptualisation of masculinity and manhood figure highly in his analysis of racial and sexual discrimination. Critics have not fully explored the theme of masculinity in the novel and its impact on race and sexuality. Baldwin denounces the archetype of the American cowboy in the novel as the cause of racial violence, yet other aspects of masculinity in men are continuously reinforced. The concept of masculine identity remains problematic in Another Country, though the novel does offer some reflections on the struggle to develop a new vision for men. "[I]dentity' is by all measure [Baldwin's] favorite word, but on occasion the word is 'manhood' or 'maturity'" (Klein 17).

The effects of oppression on sexual and racial identities are apparent in the novel. Critics have not considered the effects of gender and its relationship to the oppression experienced by the characters in the novel, nor the role of the narrator's perspective on masculinity. Similarly, no study has investigated the relationship between the constructs of the closet, stereotypes and the affirmation of identity and the categories of ethnicity, gender and sexuality.

This chapter examines the oppressive forces of the closet and stereotyping and the attempts at forming an affirmative identity within the categories of ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. I will demonstrate that Baldwin's notion of love temporarily resolves conflicts between individuals while inadvertently exposing the primacy of masculinity as an underlying cause of oppression. Hence, this solution does not create Baldwin's anticipated universality of love, but rather relies on adherence to traditional gender behaviours and preserves the devaluation of femininity in individuals and in society.²⁹

²⁹The solution Baldwin provides remains suspect since the goals of women are not recognised. Mead discusses the situation where groups have conflicting goals and indicates the difficulties involved in generating harmony between antagonistic groups. "[S]uch situations are so complex that the various individuals involved in any one of them either cannot be brought into common social relations with one another at all or else can be brought into such relations only with great difficulty, after long and tortuous processes of mutual social adjustment; for any such situation lacks a common group or social interest shared by all the individuals--it has no one common social end or purpose characterizing it and serving to unite and coordinate and harmoniously interrelate the actions of all those individuals; instead, those individuals are motivated, in that situation, by several different and more or less conflicting social interests or purposes" (Mead 323).

A. RACIAL ETHNICITY IN ANOTHER COUNTRY

The depiction of racial ethnicity in Another Country relies heavily on Baldwin's experiences growing up in Harlem, where he observed the injustices that were routinely inflicted on Blacks by Whites. Baldwin translates these observations into a sentiment of helplessness inherent in the Blacks portrayed in the novel.

Baldwin exerted his influence as an up-and-coming black writer to establish himself among the avant-garde of the time as an arbiter of black rights, and he was one of the first Blacks to publicly criticize other black writers. His Notes on a Native Son, an attack on Richard Wright, his friend and mentor, created a scandal within the burgeoning black identity movement and a rift in his friendship with Wright.³⁰

Baldwin's views on race have situated him in a position

³⁰Baldwin promoted his own vision of black identity, disregarding the many who valued Wright and his work. "Baldwin objects strongly to sentimentality in the 'Novels of Negro oppression', and in addition claims that they become mere catalogues of violence, are close to overt pamphleteering and do not adequately define their premises.... Further in his argument Baldwin claims that outside of the fact that protest writing does violence to the language it also makes excessive demands on credibility.... Another objection Baldwin raises is that the protest writer desires to reduce the black to a bloodless, faceless entity, so that by losing his individuality and ethnicity he ends up as invisible as the rest of American society" (Rive 62-65). Perhaps Wright's work is just as constructive in revealing the oppression of Blacks as Baldwin's is in exposing the oppression of gender.

of controversy within the black communities, many Blacks believing that he was colluding with the white-dominated system. He has been unduly criticised for his strategy of working with the white system, though he in fact remained devoted to the principles of the black movement.³¹

In Another Country, Whites appear to be less motivated by anger and hatred than Blacks and more inspired by compassion and understanding.³² Despite the arguable

³¹Baldwin most certainly was functioning within the white system, yet he maintained a critical viewpoint. This can be seen in his indictment in The Fire Next Time (1962), where he states: "The American Negro has the great advantage of having never believed that collection of myths to which white Americans cling: that their ancestors were all freedom-loving heroes, that they were born in the greatest country the world has ever seen, or that Americans are invincible in battle and wise in peace, that Americans have always dealt honorably with Mexicans and Indians and all other neighbors or inferiors, that all American men are the world's most direct and virile, that American women are pure" (136). And in 1987, shortly before his death, these sentiments are reiterated in the introduction to Michael Thelwell's book Duties, Pleasures, and Conflicts: Essays in Struggle, where Baldwin says: "The history and the situation of black people in this country is totally immoral and totally illegal. It is perfectly clear that the whites of this country do not have--and, now, will not find--the will, the stamina, or the grace to recognize themselves in their victim or their victim in themselves....The citizen is defined by the State as white and the justification for these crimes is the presence of the nigger--the nigger, who has never been, and is not now, conceived of as a citizen" (xxi-xxii).

³²This assertion is further developed by Redding: "In Another Country, for instance, while Baldwin steps with authorial warrant into the hearts and minds of his white characters, and is at pains to point to this referent and that in the structures of their lives, their values, and their thoughts, he takes no such trouble with his Negro characters. His examination of their inner lives is perfunctory. It is as if the author grants the validity of the common assumption that whites react but Negroes only

appearance of some degree of internalised racism in his work, Baldwin generally presents a sympathetic portrayal of his black characters. He does not, however, reveal much information about their behaviour nor provide an understanding of the complexities of their motivations.

This study illustrates the effects of oppression on black identity through Baldwin's portrayal of the ethnic closet, black stereotypes, and an affirmative black consciousness. The ethnic closet which cannot conceal the racial trait of skin colour for Rufus and Ida becomes a poor defence against the oppressive forces of white dominance. As Baldwin attempts to dispel black myths, his black characters seem to perpetuate them. For Whites--even some of the more "liberal" white characters, stereotypes become weapons of hatred. Baldwin affirms black identity, however, by contrasting the emotionally expressive and understanding capacity of Blacks with the rigidity and reserved nature of Whites. Black identity is rooted in the oppression experienced in American society. Baldwin promotes the acceptance of this reality through his character Ida and describes the overwhelming effects of oppression through her brother Rufus.

The Ethnic Closet

Two opposing methods of defense against the oppressive

act" (67).

forces in society are a retreat into the ethnic closet or an immersion into culturally affirming situations. The closet provides an illusory refuge from oppression and creates a false sense of identity. As Epstein asserted in his comparison of gay and ethnic identity, developing cultural support can be an effective strategy to reinforce identity, thus minimize the effects of oppression (257-58). The two black characters, Ida and Rufus, cope with their anger and hatred of white society by adopting different strategies. Ida closets her racial rage and integrates herself into white society while Rufus depends on the bond of his culture.³³ Neither strategy proves successful until they achieve an understanding of their situation, which Rufus cannot.

The utilisation of the closet to obscure ethnic identity appears to be an ineffectual solution in the novel.

Ida's prime motivation for her assimilation into white culture is to take revenge against white people for destroying her brother. She conceals her rage and attempts to closet her blackness through aspiring to become a success in the white-dominated world of Hollywood. Ida's appearance is striking, and she is a gifted though inexperienced singer. She exploits these two assets to compensate for her

³³Ironically, Baldwin does not create a particularly supportive black community as he does in some of his other novels such as, Go Tell It on the Mountain and Just Above My Head.

blackness as she strives to accommodate the white majority.

Ida is dissatisfied with singing in Harlem bars since she realises that she cannot attain power over Whites in this milieu. She continually endeavours to escape from her blackness and other black musicians note her betrayal, treating her as an outsider:

...the bass player whispered to [Ida], he said, 'You black white man's whore, don't you never let me catch you on Seventh Avenue, you hear? I'll tear your little black pussy up.' And the other musicians could hear him, and they were grinning. 'I'm going to do it twice, once for every black man you castrate every time you walk, and once for your poor brother....And he slapped me on the ass, hard, everybody could see it and, you know those people aren't fools, and before I could get away he grabbed my hand and raised it....And he dropped my hand, hard like it was too hot or too dirty, and I almost fell off the stand.'³⁴ (AC 357)

Possessing the inferior social status as a poor, black woman, Ida is compelled to use her only weapon, her sex. Her quest for revenge and power entices her to prostitute herself with Ellis, a talent scout, who furthers her career in return for sexual favours. Only at the end of the novel

³⁴Ida's chastisement aptly comes from her peers and immediately diminishes her star status. "The slap is the ultimate reminder that Ida is not only black and a woman, but that her attempts to rise in the white world are transparently childish. Ida has placed everything she has into her battle for supremacy, but it all adds up to a wry joke at her expense, for the racial and sexual attitudes have been stacked against her from the start" (Cederstrom 182).

does she realise that Ellis maintains control of her.³⁵ She is contemptuous of him and of the instrument of his power: his white "little piece of meat." Ida wants retribution from Ellis, and she explains her loathing to Vivaldo:

I couldn't stand Ellis. You don't know what it's like, to have a man's body over you if you can't stand that body. And it was worse now, since I'd been with you, that it had ever been before. Before, I used to watch them wriggle and listen to them grunt, and, God, they were so solemn about it, sweating yellow pigs, and so vain, like that sad little piece of meat was making miracles happen, and I guess it was, for them--and I wasn't touched at all, I just wished I could make them come down lower. Oh, yes, I found out all about white people, that's what they were like, alone, where only a black girl could see them, and the black girl might as well have been blind as far as they were concerned. Because they knew they were white, baby, and they ruled the world.... (355)

Ida also attempts to escape her social status (and evade her black heritage) through her relationship with the white Vivaldo. The relationship serves to deny her foreordained status as a black whore, for she is respectable enough to be seen in public with a white man. Ida would

³⁵Leona's relationship with Rufus begins with her rape, which sets the tone for her continued abuse and subsequent demise. However, this notion of the destructive force of rape has been regarded as a specifically Euro-American response to rape: "...the Euro-American tradition has informed a rape victim that her options were to be decently killed in the experience itself, to commit suicide, or to go mad" (Kubitschek 46). She continues: "The Afro-American tradition includes a wider range of options, many of which grant the woman an identity beyond that of rape. Afro-American literature is replete with women continuing their lives after a rape. Indeed, rape often sets the conditions under which the characters function" (46). This is precisely how Ida leads her life, confidently submitting to rape in order to attain her revenge.

have ample opportunity to meet black men, but she apparently rejects this option and chooses Vivaldo who provides her with a means for revenge--for in her mind he too has killed her brother. Despite Ida's attempts to escape from her blackness and conform to white standards, Baldwin's male characters constantly refer to Ida as a black whore. She is condemned since her relationship with Ellis supports the validity of this innuendo.

Unlike Ida, the closet is not an option for Rufus since his identity is inextricably connected to his blackness. This connection leaves him emotionally and spiritually defenceless in a white dominated world against which he can not fight and survive. His blackness is visually inescapable and his devotion to jazz music demonstrates his loyalty to his ethnic background.

Rufus cannot evade the pervasive rivalry between black and white. A "boy looked at him with hatred" (AC 31), and Rufus mutters "[c]lock sucker" (AC 31) in an attempt to defend himself. He realises that even the poorest white man attains more respect than any black man: "You got to fight with the elevator boy because the motherfucker's white. Any bum on the Bowery can shit all over you because maybe he can't hear, can't see, can't walk, can't fuck--but he's white!" (AC 62). Rufus understands that he can never operate on white man's terms under the American hegemony, and shortly thereafter feels the need to escape to some

place where a "man could be treated like a man" (AC 62). He cannot bring himself to accept his position in American society as an inferior to Whites since he equates power with his manliness. His racial identity limits his power and therefore his sense of his manhood.³⁶ He cannot effectively utilize cultural identification to support his personal identity.

The ethnic closet remains an enigma for both Rufus and Ida. Ida attempts to mimic white ideals and enlists her sexuality in order to achieve success, power and ultimately revenge. Rufus refuses to reject his black identity, but instead mistakenly allies his race with his masculinity. Ironically, the closet assists Ida in the process of accepting her blackness and rejecting her vengeful quest. Rufus's blackness deprives him of power and he never accepts the reality of being black in an unjust society.

Baldwin condemns the futility of Ida's revenge and her attempt to forsake her blackness, since she ultimately loses herself in this quest. Like the gay closet, the retreat into the ethnic closet represents a denial of personal and group identity and the presentation of a false self.

³⁶Bell Hooks, Michele Wallace, and Patricia Morton outline the mythic view supported by the Moynihan Report that black women, who because of their experiences as slaves, often separated from their husbands, had somehow developed strength, and that this resulted in a matriarchal black society in America. Black women therefore emasculated black men. According to Hooks et al., this conspiracy was created by men in order to scapegoat the black woman for their own shortcomings.

Black Stereotypes

Another Country exposes the oppressive power relationship between racial stereotypes and a mythologized black sexuality. Black men are invested with a hyper-sexuality which constitutes a threat to white men's masculinity. This threat often results in violence directed at Blacks, but also causes Rufus Scott to defend his own masculinity through a similar display of brutality. We may first examine this myth as it is represented in the novel and then focus on the extent to which Rufus integrates stereotypical behaviour into his identity. Baldwin exposes the resulting negative consequences of racial stereotypes for the oppressed and the oppressors. It will become clear that the same social control of sexuality which oppresses Blacks oppresses gay men.

The representation of black men as the polluters of the white race has its historical origin in the first encounters of Whites with Blacks during the slave trade. Blacks were stereotyped as sexual animals, capable of the most amazing feats of libidinal stamina.³⁷ This fabrication posed a

³⁷Fredrickson discusses the development of this phenomenon in post-colonial America. He points out that "[t]he notion that blacks could be seized by uncontrollable fits of sexual passion was derived in part from the traditional picture of Africa as a land of licentiousness. As early as the 1840's, Josiah Priest, one of the antebellum proponents of the Biblical argument for slavery, attempted to prove from Scripture that the descendants of Ham had overdeveloped sexual organs and were the original Sodomites

double threat to white men. In attributing this heightened sexual response to Blacks, white men become inferior in this capacity and must retain their manhood through the continual destruction of the black man. This myth also allows black men to avenge themselves through sexual relations with the symbol of white purity, white women. The narrator illustrates the legacy of black stereotypes in American society and their relationship with black sexuality.

Vivaldo compares his penis size with that of his black army buddy in the romantic setting of a German cellar, as the narrator recounts: "Laughing, they had opened their trousers and shown themselves to the girl. To the girl, but also to each other. The girl had calmly moved away, saying that she did not understand Americans.... She had understood that their by-play had had very little to do with her" (AC 117). This sexual competition generates feelings of envy and wounded pride among its participants, but also allows the admiration of something beautiful, the possessor of the desired object, a large penis.

The black male, who is perceived as the possessor of the desired object, is metaphorically castrated by his lack of power in society. There is evidence enough of the literal manifestation of this act in the history of the South. However, the effects of the metaphor are infinitely

of the Old Testament, guilty in ancient times of all conceivable forms of lewdness" (276).

more serious. Rufus is continually deprived of his male power by white people, and power in the novel often means sexuality. In the bar brawl which Jane, a white woman and Vivaldo's current lover, incites, Rufus "crouched, trying to protect his private parts," almost as a culturally inscribed reaction to the threat of castration by Whites.³⁸

Rufus also remembers, when he encounters Leona, "his days in boot camp in the South and [he] felt again the shoe of a white officer against his mouth" (AC 17), while the officer "had gone forever beyond the reach of vengeance" (AC 17). Not only must Rufus submit to the cruelty and cowardice of white men; Leona inflicts an even more insidious cruelty, misunderstanding. She reveals her position-- "[p]eople's just people as far as I'm concerned"³⁹ (AC 17)--and Rufus retorts to himself, as he strikes at her feminine vulnerability, "[a]nd pussy's just pussy as far as I'm concerned" (AC 17). Rufus therefore experiences the emasculating fear of the South in both its

³⁸Harris argues in her "South as Woman": "If the South is painted in Baldwin's fiction as a female image which emasculates black men, and yet it is the males in that environment who most frequently carry out that gruesome emasculation, the logical extension of the argument is that Southern white men are 'faggots'" (108). Rufus protects himself from both physical and sexual aggression by hiding his most vulnerable attribute.

³⁹Boyd, like the character Leona, fails to see that one can only view people thus from a position of privilege. He urges readers to "think of Baldwin's Negro characters as men not Negroes" (286) in order to see their human failures, but these failures cannot be separated from their oppression as blacks.

physical and metaphorical connotations. "For a man like himself, who is reduced to identifying himself almost totally from the point of view of his penis, the threat of a woman and the South is doubly terrifying" (Harris, "South as Woman" 93).

For all the potential power that Whites have invested in the black man's sexuality, the realization of this power for Blacks remains unfulfilled, since white men always maintain control. In the case of Rufus, he has accepted this white myth, telling Vivaldo to "quit trying to compete with me. You ain't never going to make it" (AC 19). It becomes apparent that Rufus cannot discern that part of his problem lies in identifying his ethnicity with his sexuality. Rufus employs his sexuality to establish an ethnic and masculine identity instead of using sex as an expression of love.

Aside from his sexual prowess with women, Rufus, who aspires to usurp white privilege through his sexuality, willingly becomes a sexual object by prostituting himself with other men. Rufus seems to have a proclivity for having sexual relations with men and reinforces the stereotype of black sexual promiscuity, for "this was not the first time during his wanderings that he had consented to the bleakly physical exchange" (AC 41). This in turn generates further self-loathing. It is less an act of external degradation than an act of self-hatred. Rufus prostitutes himself to

earn money, but the complex reasons for this choice are never explained. Presumably he would have had other options available to him, such as support from family or friends. Considering other black stereotypes of Harlem, trafficking drugs or pimping could have potentially been another source of revenue, rather than submitting to the ultimate in degradation of masculine identity. Baldwin's text leaves Rufus's motivation unclear, but it is evident that his sexual confusion must have contributed to his downfall and suicide.⁴⁰

In an American society which has abundantly invested in a mythic representation of black sexuality, the concept of black homosexuality is further removed from any expected reality. If Rufus has not sufficiently come to terms with discrimination as a black man in a white dominated society,

⁴⁰Weatherby attributes Rufus's suicide to racial rage: "The novel's main character, Rufus, for example, had killed himself because he had failed to control his racial rage, his hatred, and had destroyed the white southern woman he loved" (191). Saunders Redding has cited the lack of introspection by the characters in Another Country as a deficiency in the portrayal of Blacks. Baldwin's "Negroes' behaviour has nothing behind it or beyond it, no analyzed causative dependence on the past and without subsequence in the future. It is not only capricious, but impulsive. Rufus Scott's abandonment of his career, his desertion of his friends and family, and his suicide are explicable on no other grounds, and consequently Rufus enkindles no spark of sympathetic understanding, arouses no pang of pity" (Redding 67-8). Though the suicide may not evoke pity in Redding, the general conditions of blacks in America is reason enough to empathize with the plight of Rufus, and the number of suicides among lesbian and gay youth--one-third of all attempted suicides in the United States according to the U.S. Department of Education--is also reason enough (see Gibson).

he most certainly has not achieved any level of comfort with his sexuality.⁴¹

These issues are inextricably intertwined, and once his sexual power is shattered, Rufus reacts by exhibiting the stereotypical black, male affinity for physical violence:

It was not love he felt during these acts of love: drained and shaking, utterly unsatisfied, he fled from the raped white women into the bars. In these bars no one applauded his triumph or condemned his guilt. He began to pick fights with white men. He was thrown out of bars. The eyes of his friends told him that he was falling. His own heart told him so. But the air through which he rushed was his own prison and he could not even summon the breath to call for help. (AC 50)

The act of resistance to oppression reduces Blacks to the status of savage, which only further vilifies them.

The use of violence is obviously not unique to black revenge.⁴² Richard, Cass's white husband, alludes to the

⁴¹Klein notes that identity, according to Baldwin, remains an aspiration particularly for Blacks. "Identity, Baldwin is to be found saying often enough, is something to be attained or achieved, especially in America, most especially by a Negro, and that is to imply that 'identity' is dynamic and progressive" (19).

⁴²Ironically, the savagery of the slave trade attests to the atrocities committed by white colonialists against Blacks. Baldwin commented on the oppression of the black colonial worker in South Africa during an interview, demonstrating the threat of the power of blacks: "When Lord Caradon [British Delegate to the United Nations in 1968] was asked why the West couldn't break relations with South Africa, he brought out charts and figures that showed that the West would be bankrupt if they did that: The prosperity of the West is standing on the back of the South African miner. When he stands up, the whole thing will be over" (Gates 602).

mistake of colonisation after his children are attacked by black youths. He flippantly remarks, not realising the full implications of his observation:

"This kind of thing's been happening more and more here lately," Richard said, "and frankly, I'm willing to cry Uncle and surrender the island back to the goddamn Indians. I don't think that they ever intended that we should be happy here." He gave a small dry laugh... (AC 206)

Richard refers to the youths as "little black bastards." Again, Blacks are implicitly condemned as sexually irresponsible, as the black children are relegated to the level of bastards, having a whore for a mother and an uncommitted, sexually meandering father. The absence of a father figure also perpetuates violence since the sceptre of manhood is not passed on to black, male children and they must fight for their position in the world.

As a means of deliverance from the inflexible stations of black and white in America, Cass suggests that "there are other countries" (AC 294). This revelation occurs only after she has been unfaithful to her husband and relinquishes her position as the white goddess. Being black constitutes a loss of status in America, an absence of power, and Cass had to experience a similar loss before she could arrive at this discovery. She experiences the violence which ensues from betraying her pre-defined identity and begins to recognize the obstacles that limit the process of defining herself. Cass's love for Eric, the

homosexual, acts as the impetus for her insight into the problems of black America.

For Baldwin, stereotypes become a potent force in the oppression of Blacks in America. Baldwin explores the relationship between racial prejudice and sexuality while exposing the childish sexual rivalry among men. On the narrative level, the novel is infused with descriptions of the cultural inscription of racism; however, the characters lack this insight. Baldwin elucidates the effects of stereotype on individual identity through the violence and hatred of Whites and through the integration of these stereotypes into individual identity. Since Blacks, like gay men, were stigmatised as sexually promiscuous, and therefore a destabilising force against the family, Blacks must be controlled in society.⁴³

Affirmations of Black Identity

Baldwin attempts to provide an understanding of black identity at the level of individual characters and in a cultural context. He validates a positive black identity through the moral strength of his characters and promotes

⁴³Fredrickson provides evidence to support this claim when he quotes Thomas R.R. Cobb's An Inquiry into the Law of Negro Slavery in the United States of America of 1858. Cobb concludes that the black man does not possess "strong natural affections and consequently he is cruel to his offspring, and suffers little by separation from them" (58).

black culture through glimpses of black musical and linguistic contributions to American society. This section considers the positive attributes bestowed on individual black characters, namely Ida and Rufus, and the positive cultural images of black expression, music and speech in the novel.

The affirmation of Blacks in Another Country often takes the form of a criticism of white rigidity and lack of emotion. Blacks are portrayed as rhythmic and musically gifted, Whites as awkward and stilted. As the "ginger-colored boy" dances with the "tall, much darker girl," "the girl was, in no sense, appalled by the boy and did not for an instant hesitate to answer his rudest erotic quiver with her own" (298-99). While Ida savagely dances and takes the lead, the foolish looking Ellis remains "tangled in her train." Baldwin champions the superior capability for emotional expressiveness within the black culture,⁴⁴ and

⁴⁴"I would like to believe that this is one of the things that will happen, that there is some kind of residue of emotional energy, of passion, of sensuality in the Negro people which will have the power to save an extremely sterile republic. But one can't be sure that the emotional qualities of the Negro people to-day will persist in the future" (Mossman 57). This reaffirmation of the positive qualities of being black is attacked by Prasad: "Another pet theory of Baldwin's boils down to one of racial superiority in the reverse. He believes, for all practical purposes, that the Black is beautiful, that the Negro intelligence is more subtle than the White, as is proved by the failure of the whites to apprehend the true nature and ironic import of the jazz and the blues and the Negro is really more rich and powerful than the white" (307-8). This is refuted by Herbert Aptheker, who rightly notes that such an affirmative image "rings, frequently, with a kind of

arguably promotes self-love for Blacks at the expense of Whites.

Baldwin's novel also intersperses glimpses of black culture as it has been defined from within black communities. Baldwin employs jazz, the music that embodies the spirituality, vitality, and oppression of black people, to symbolize the contribution of his race to the Western aesthetic, and it is no coincidence that both Rufus and Ida are jazz musicians.

The use of black idiom is also prevalent throughout the novel. Curiously, idiomatic language is often interrupted by prosaic passages, which occasionally create linguistic inconsistencies in the portrayal of characters.⁴⁵ These inconsistencies do not interrupt Baldwin's message, but more clearly reveal Baldwin's presence.

Baldwin's introduction of black speech patterns into the text gives the novel a jazz-like rhythm. The

national pride or consciousness but it is not racial; i.e., it does not affirm and at times explicitly denies, anything smacking of the biological or genetic and so, in that sense, too, is the negation of racism" (337).

⁴⁵"Curiously, however, the language of the storefront church persists. For the hipster idiom is really Baldwin's second language, and in moments of high emotion he reverts to his native tongue. This occurs primarily when he tries to heighten or exalt the moment of sexual union. In the vicinity of orgasm, his diction acquires a religious intensity; his metaphors announce the presence of a new divinity" (Bone 19). Fichte also integrates religious ritual into his depiction of sexual activity. Fichte, however, utilizes voodoo and Candomblé religious rituals instead of Christian metaphors, providing a similar exultation and also containing the same violent dimensions.

punctuation in the following passage establishes the rhythm, as the content reflects the "down and out" themes of the Blues. The repetitive refrain is once again a reminder of Baldwin's faith in love.

And yet the question was terrible and real; the boy was blowing [the saxophone] with his lungs and guts out of his own short past; somewhere in that past, in the gutters or gang fights or gang shags; in the acrid room, on the sperm-stiffened blanket, behind marijuana or the needle, under the smell of piss in the precinct basement, he had received the blow from which he never would recover and this no one wanted to believe. *Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?* (AC 13-4)

This conscious experiment was an attempt to develop a "black" writing style. Black American-English enhances the atmosphere of the Harlem setting. White characters also use this hipster argot as an imitation of black culture, which is seen in terms of its music as rebellious and youthful.⁴⁶

Both Rufus and Ida advocate the black cause, since they both attempt to resist white domination. Ida becomes a heroine for her unwillingness to give up her struggle to survive in a white dominated world. After concluding that

⁴⁶Baldwin's friend Norman Mailer comments in The White Negro on the use of the black culture by whites as a rejection of the values of the establishment. Mailer appropriates black culture in order to satisfy his rebelliousness and establish himself as part of the avant-garde. The Beat Generation also used black expression as a model for their artistic revolt. Fichte, in turn, looks back to the Beatniks for their apparent rejection of white values.

she cannot attain what she wants through revenge, she finally also understands that she does not possess the social power to supplant her white rivals. She realises that her involvement with Vivaldo was for revenge, but recognises also that the relationship features another dimension. She does harbour some feelings for Vivaldo. Ida asserts that she would never marry Vivaldo and thus completely betray her black heritage and pollute her lineage with a child of mixed race. She attempts to maintain solidarity with the black community, though she is entangled in the white world. Baldwin exposes her dilemma, illustrating that her involvement with Whites assists her in gaining status, but also denies her the support needed to reaffirm a black identity.

Rufus, who can be described as a pathetic figure, cannot, as we have seen, come to terms with his colour in a white dominated world and commits suicide. Critics judge him severely and without much compassion: somehow, in the midst of all his emotional turbulence, Rufus should simply ignore his pain and continue with his life. For Rufus, however, the pain had become too much to bear. His inability to separate himself from the agony of his life is an entirely understandable response, as he struggles to maintain a positive black identity while the white majority constantly conspires to thwart his efforts. He feels that this proposition is impossible to endure, and instead of

submitting to becoming an "Uncle Tom"--something Rufus would find intolerable--he kills himself.

Rufus, indeed, can be seen as a hero, since he is unwilling to surrender himself to his enemies even if the consequence results in taking his own life. Baldwin never criticises this act as unmanly or cowardly. Baldwin may have viewed Rufus's suicide and Ida's prostitution as a demonstration both of the degree of the oppressive control placed upon Blacks and of the strength of a black identity which will not be dominated by Whites.

Baldwin utilises cultural validation to affirm identity, the importance of which has already been discussed in Chapter II, combating oppression on both individual and cultural levels in an effort to provide an understanding of black identity. He promotes love and understanding through affirmative images and not through homosexual experience.

The theme of the closet, the use of black stereotypes and the portrayal of the affirmative representations of Blacks demonstrate the role of oppression in the formation of a personal and cultural black identity. The narrator presents the dilemma of Ida, who attempts to assimilate into white culture, who temporarily uses the closet to attain her goals, and realises the importance of self-respect. The closet provides a means to her salvation. Of the negative stereotypes of Blacks which appear in Another Country, the references to sexuality are the most significant. Baldwin

explores the cultural causes and individual effects of - racial oppression and its dependence on sexuality through his presentation of stereotypes. This important relationship figures highly in the discussion of the oppression of sexuality. The narrative elevates the status of Blacks by representing them as emotionally expressive and astute and as having a greater capacity for love. Baldwin uses the narrative to promote black culture and provide positive black characters.

B. GENDER IN ANOTHER COUNTRY

The characters in Another Country often conform to prescribed gender roles although traditional representations of masculinity and femininity conflict with Baldwin's message of love and understanding. I will address female and male roles and the depiction of femininity and masculinity in the novel. The initial discussion concentrates on Baldwin's negative depiction of femininity while considering the role of the closet in the relinquishment of women's identity, the portrayal of sexual stereotypes of women, and the representation of affirmative images of women. The subsequent section will then survey male roles and masculinity in the novel. Since Baldwin has presented masculinity as a more advantageous attribute, the male characters do not relinquish their privilege as men and vigilantly protect their masculinity against any accusation of inadequacy. Although this apparent position of power would seem to shield male identity from the effects of oppression, the same features of gay identity (the closet, stereotype and affirmation of identity) continue to shape the behaviour of the male characters. The portrayal of gender becomes even more complex since Baldwin imbues some of his male characters with the ostensibly feminine traits of understanding and love, while constantly reenforcing their masculinity. Predictably, the women who possess

masculine characteristics earn only contempt for their behaviour and eventually conform to societal norms.

i) Female Roles and Femininity

The effect of the oppressive forces of masculine dominance which mould the female characters' identities in the novel most closely parallels the effect of oppression on gay men as discussed in Chapter II. This section of the thesis examines how the female characters in the novel closet their personal identities and assume their expected gender roles. The preservation of loving relationships between the women and men in the novel governs the actions of these women. In contrast to this subjugated role, the female characters are stereotyped as castrators--able to steal away male power. Like the men in Another Country, the women express their masculinity through their sexuality. Baldwin, therefore, reduces the role of women to love-struck victim or guileful seductress, though occasionally he tempers this fatalistic image with a more affirmative depiction of women as insightful and loving beings. The preeminence of masculine power renders the female characters --and some of the gay men--in the novel powerless victims of love and sexual desire.

Women's Closeted Identity

Baldwin scarcely differentiates between femininity and female identity, even though his women may display masculine traits. Christol observes that Baldwin differentiates between sex and gender with regard to men, but not women:

Baldwin's conception of male/female relations places women at their traditional place, at the bottom of the power structure, the victims not only of cultural, social or racial conditions, but also of some kind of biological destiny. In most of his theoretical developments on women, Baldwin seems to make no difference between sex and gender, a distinction that he is perfectly able to make when dealing with manhood and masculinity. (Christol 80-81)

The consequence of Baldwin's lack of distinction between femininity and womanhood in the female characters in the novel parallels the effects of denying gay identity the dimension of manhood. The previous chapter examined the assumption that gay men are inherently feminine. The effect of this generalisation on gay identity causes some gay men to accept this role and behave in an overstatedly feminine manner, while other gays attempt to disprove this feminine role through concealing their femininity. Similarly, some of Baldwin's women overstate their own femininity, while others use their sexuality to defend their identity. Leona, Ida and Cass sublimate their identities to support their men. If their men deviate from their "masculine" role, the women exact retribution through sexual infidelity. Eventually the female characters reaffirm their allegiance to their men, if these women have survived the resulting

abuse.

Though the female characters seem to express themselves as individuals in the novel, their personal identities remain closeted. Their relationships with men define their sense of identity and their self-assertion appears to be denied to them. Leona, a pathetic victim of her feminine circumstance, eventually succumbs to hysteria after being subjected to physical, psychological, and emotional cruelty.

Rufus, her boyfriend, repeatedly humiliates her by calling her a whore in an attempt to control her sexuality. He always suspects that she might be attracted to other men, and he is intensely jealous of her. Leona vehemently denies this accusation, but Rufus refuses to believe her. In order to prove her loyalty, she becomes so emotionally reliant on Rufus that she cannot escape from him until he has beaten her so severely that she is forced to obtain sanctuary in a psychiatric hospital.⁴⁷ Leona is further victimised since she is compelled to return to the South, the place from which she had previously fled. She believes that she cannot survive without a man to love and her identity is consequentially destroyed.

⁴⁷Baldwin seems to condemn Rufus's violent behaviour since Rufus is consumed by his guilt over his actions, and this guilt leads directly to his death. "In James Baldwin's Another Country, this power [white power], and the love-hate ambivalence toward it, finally drives the character Rufus, whose girlfriend is white, to suicide. These attitudes were even seen as a justification for the rape of women" (Giddings 322). Giddings erroneously sees this power relationship as Baldwin's justification for Rufus's actions.

Ida becomes the victim of her own revenge. The anger resulting from her brother's death and her obsessive love for her brother compel her to closet her feminine identity.

She is infatuated with Rufus and cannot separate herself from this fixation. Unlike Leona, her sisterly devotion forces her to use her sexuality in a very masculine manner to avenge Rufus's death and her race in general for this crime. She hides her anger from her friends. Only when she concludes that her quest for revenge is futile does she attain any sense of selfhood. The masculine behaviour that she adopted was only a charade, a guise she could not maintain without totally consuming herself. Though Ida reveals her infidelity to Vivaldo, she never realises that her struggle was not just black against white, but male against female.

Even the self-assured Cass is reliant on her husband's achievements for self-worth. She expects him to accommodate her idealised standards and lead a more Bohemian existence.

Her idealism--an idealism which she imposes upon Richard--jeopardises her happiness and success in a male-dominated society. Because of her wealthy background, Cass possesses the luxury of avoiding the financial risk inherent in rigidly maintaining such a non-conformist ideology. Since Richard's commercially successful novel appears to have been written for a popular rather than an erudite audience, Cass can no longer hold either herself or him in esteem.

Consequently, she forms a relationship with another man, Eric, to achieve her self-respect. Cass, a devoted mother, risks losing her children through this act, which demonstrates her compulsion towards securing an identity through a relationship with a man. In spite of the advantage of her social status and skin colour, she remains a victim of her femininity. She is, however, conscious of her needs, unlike Leona and Ida.

Baldwin ultimately sacrifices Leona's, Ida's and Cass's individual identities since they conform to the feminine role. When these women attempt to diverge from their expected role (Leona's apparent sexual insatiability, Ida's infidelity, and Cass's wealth), they are punished for their transgression. Although they attempt to escape from the confines of their feminine destinies, they cannot. The women whose identities are not completely destroyed eventually relinquish their attempted intrusion into masculine territory and remain faithful to their men.

Feminine Stereotypes

Baldwin creates a strongly male-centred view of women in society as his female characters fluctuate between the stereotypical categories of goddess and whore. Despite Baldwin's distaste for labels, he seems unable to circumvent this mythology of women. His women enact dual roles in the novel, as at once loving partner, sister or mother and

emasculator. Women symbolize the horrific black hole into which men are unwittingly enticed, and the locus where their manhood is destroyed.⁴⁸ Men emerge as quite powerless over women's sexuality, the power of their male identity appears to be subsumed by their own sexual desire. The violence and hatred directed toward women in the novel neutralise any advantage of the sexual power granted to women. Unlike the use of stereotypes to expose racial intolerance in the novel, Baldwin's portrayal of women supports conventional gender stereotypes.

According to the author's apparent assessment, if a woman strays from a relationship, her male partner's honour is jeopardised since he obviously cannot satisfy her. Women display cunning and devious traits, always aspiring to defraud men of their masculinity as "the guy feels chilly between his legs and feels around for his cock and his balls and finds she's helped herself to them and locked them in the linen closet" (AC 208-09). Ida's infidelity or presumed sexual promiscuity emasculates her lover Vivaldo. Ida, being black, fulfils her role as whore since she has been Ellis's mistress and also has had sex with other white men. She is portrayed as a bitch ready to consume any white

⁴⁸Charlotte Alexander, in her article, "The 'Stink' of Reality: Mothers and Whores in James Baldwin's Fiction," strives to explain this fear of women's sexuality as the desire for the return to the womb. The gaping, bleeding wound from which men were born apparently demands their return in order to repossess the male soul. Imbued with heavy Freudian overtones, her argument remains unconvincing.

penis to which she has access. Vivaldo's manly pride is wounded and he feels doubly betrayed by her infidelity since he has deluded himself into thinking that he could sexually fulfil a black woman. Ida has destroyed his idealised vision of the faithful "wife" and she perpetuates the stereotype of the promiscuous black woman. Baldwin stresses that Ida's womanly scorn provokes her infidelity and once this motivation diminishes her power fades into uncertainty.

Even Cass, the sacred, white madonna commits adultery. It is Richard, the straight white Polish-American, who ironically emerges as a defenceless coward against women's castrating power. Richard's violent response to Cass's confession of her infidelity exemplifies this typically male reaction. As Vivaldo points out, Richard has "been wounded, man, in his self-esteem" (AC 329), and Cass's choice of Eric as a sexual partner only exacerbates Richard's ire.

Richard, in order to alleviate his loss of masculine pride, suspects that Eric must know of special sexual tricks. Cass later confesses that Richard would never divorce her since he would have to admit that he could not fulfil his wife's desire as satisfactorily as a homosexual. Baldwin emphasises that all women are capable of infidelity, especially if they do not feel loved.

The hatred of women precipitated by their role as emasculating whore emerges ubiquitously throughout the novel. Yves's contempt for women is demonstrated through

his adversarial relationship with his mother. He assumes the stereotypical perspective that women are sexual competition for gay men. Yves cannot forgive his mother for utilising her sexual allure as a survival mechanism during the war, as he explains to Eric: "Later, she says that she do it for me, that we would not have eaten otherwise. But I do not believe that. I think she liked that. I think she was always a whore" (AC 160). In Yves's case his hatred of all women, however, is not based on the expected homosexual paradigm of an obsessive attachment to his mother, but seems rooted in an utter disdain for femininity.

Violence and hatred continue to be the typical defence against women's transgressions when they endeavour to encroach on male power, as demonstrated by Rufus and Richard. Eric experiences this same dilemma of emasculation with men, since he cannot tolerate the thought of another man dominating him and therefore diminishing his manhood.

Throughout the novel feminine love appears tainted with deception and betrayal. Baldwin predictably represents symbols of feminine love with jewellery. The earrings which Ida was wearing the night she met Eric were given to her by Rufus. They in turn were fashioned from the cufflinks that Rufus received as a gift from Eric and connote the significance of Eric's and Rufus's relationship. Her ruby serpent ring, the other piece of jewellery she wears, reflects her position as simultaneously goddess and whore.

She is referred to as an African goddess when she receives the ring. Then, as Rufus thinks about all the whores on Seventh Avenue, Ida "twist[s] the ruby-eyed snake ring which he had brought her from another voyage" (AC 12). The ring also proclaims her exotic allure and her sexual retaliation against Vivaldo, since she can only remove the ring from her finger when she confesses her adultery to Vivaldo.⁴⁹

Baldwin's insistence on the differences between women and men situates his female characters at the dubious mercy of gender stereotypes. The value of femininity lies in the characteristics of love and understanding as mother, sister and lover.

Affirmation of Women

The affirmative images of women introduced into Baldwin's narrative arise in a rather ambiguous form, since none of the characters, men or women, possesses a pristine morality, save perhaps Eric.⁵⁰ Cass is presented as an idealised woman who can maintain male friendships without

⁴⁹For a more detailed analysis of the function of the ring and earrings see Trudier Harris, Black Women in Fiction.

⁵⁰Michele Wallace feels that Baldwin "paid more attention to black women, to the actual mechanics of the black male/female relationship and to the myths that have been working on it, than any other black male writer (except Tomas Wideman and, perhaps, John A. Williams)" (56). She attempts, however, to demonstrate Baldwin's affiliation with the patriarchy through his Christian moralism which is reflected in his works.

becoming sexually involved--at least not until Richard disappoints her.⁵¹ She becomes a mother figure to Vivaldo and initially also to Ida, until Ida discovers that Cass's experience is limited. She cannot offer Ida the insight necessary to contain her hatred and anger.

Cass is also the mother of two male children. The penalty for her adultery includes the loss of her children, whom she cherishes as the single most important thing in her life. She appears willing to sacrifice her happiness by remaining with her husband in order to be with them. Her image as a "fallen woman" does not detract from her commitment to motherhood; after all, she only solicited the tenderness and love her husband could not provide, and she redeems herself, her sex, and her race through this act.

Although Ida is portrayed as a whore, she finally reconciles herself with Vivaldo in order to absolve her guilt. Ida ultimately realises that her behaviour was self-destructive and aimless. Baldwin's narrative provides inadequate information to explain Ida's adoption of the role of whore, though a glance at the social conditions of Blacks in America would disclose the justification. Ida appears to

⁵¹Harris explains how Cass's oppression as a woman allows her to better understand Ida. "Her [Cass's] descent from her middle-class pedestal opens her eyes to what women experience who have never had the pedestal available to them. As the moment of enlightenment continues, Ida and Cass respond to each other more as women, not as females connected through their men, and Cass begins to see into another country" (Black Women 111).

be caught in a ghetto of perpetual victimisation, along with her black sisters who earn their money from the likes of Vivaldo.

The female characters, in summary, closet their power as women, act out feminine stereotypes and affirm themselves through their devotion to men. The irony is that this devotion does not allow the women to realize their full potential, and consequently, they continue to be controlled by men. Their power over men lies in their sexuality, a sexuality which can purloin a man's masculinity. Baldwin outlines the relationship between sexuality and race, but does not investigate the oppression which results from the relationship between sexuality and gender. Having considered the danger that women pose to masculinity and manhood, we may now attempt to survey the threat posed by gay men to masculinity.

ii) Male Roles and Masculinity

A conflict exists within the novel between masculinity in an American mythic context and Baldwin's conceptualisation of masculinity. Though Baldwin's concept is not entirely clearly elucidated in the novel, glimpses of his ideal are evident in the novel's moralistic tone. Men exhibit traditional masculine traits though they are criticised for their child-like competitiveness and their

inability to express emotions. This section will focus on the affinities and contradictions between Baldwin's perception of the male role and masculinity in America and his portrayal of an idealised concept of masculinity.

The Male Closet

Since masculinity has privilege, men do not closet their masculinity but rather, predictably, their femininity.

The American cowboy becomes a metaphor for the stereotyped behaviour of the male characters which permeates the masculine milieu of the novel. Baldwin condemns this macho performance of racial, economic and sexual dominance. Only when he interjects loving and understanding characteristics into male behaviour is "real" masculinity affirmed. This apparent "feminisation" of male behaviour, which Baldwin allies with gay identity in the novel, undermines the achievement of his masculine ideal. Men are only able to demonstrate love for other men through homosexual experience which they fear. The constant loathing of femininity in men inspires their homophobic attitudes towards other men.

In spite of this idealisation of love, Baldwin's male characters closet their femininity. Even the narrator insists that most homosexual men are not like women.⁵² It

⁵²The threat of being perceived as a woman extended into Baldwin's personal life. "As a writer and as a man, Baldwin was trapped to a certain extent by his personal history and the threatening pressures of society, which forced him to emphasize his manhood by constantly proving

is crucial that sex between men must not become feminised in any way, and Baldwin's narrator emphasizes this by clearly stating as Eric and Yves make love that Yves is "not like a girl--like a boy" (AC 191). They are wrestlers locked in battle and as Yves begins the love-making he is "tentative and tremulous" (AC 191). Curiously, such attributes would normally be classified under patriarchal dispensation as feminine.

Contrary to this masculinization of homosexuality, Rufus associates gay sex with being feminine or woman-like and uses this against Eric when he delivers the ultimate insult: "You act like a little girl - or something" (AC 43). This reference appears problematic since Baldwin otherwise promotes Eric's manliness. Rufus, who apparently has sex with Eric, "had despised Eric's manhood by 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" (AC 44). Rufus demonstrates the need to conceal from himself any perception of feminine behaviour in men. Baldwin reaffirms the violent consequences of Rufus's inability to love another man in his treatment of Eric and his subsequent suicide.

Through equating love with homosexual experience Baldwin closets effeminacy in men. When engaged in the sex

and asserting that 'he was not a woman' to quote Mead" (Christol 86).

act, men are almost always portrayed as brutal throughout the novel in an attempt to dispel male femininity. Men who love other men simply display their phallic allegiance.

Masculine Stereotypes

Baldwin criticises the mythological aspects of American masculinity which forms the basis of both racial and sexual hatred.

Baldwin subliminally conflates race and homosexuality...[in] an explicit exploration of the homosexual as Other, to be either granted or perpetually refused the golden promise of America's democratic dreams. To Baldwin, sex and race, in America, are hopelessly intertwined. (Porter 153)

He displays this mythologized masculinity as an adolescent trait since the male characters cannot come to terms with themselves as sexual beings.

Since male identity is contingent upon the ability to prove one's manhood through a display of masculine prowess, several factors contribute to emasculate the male. Aside from women's ability to emasculate men, Baldwin reveals that anyone who lacks the status of being a rich, white, heterosexual male is relegated to a position of inferiority in society. This paradigm ironically establishes the valuation of competing inferiorities and permits a hierarchy in which one oppressed group can use their position in a higher station to denigrate another group with a lesser status.

Vivaldo is not yet at the apex of the patriarchal hierarchy since he has yet to achieved fame and fortune as a writer, though he clings to a Bohemian ideal as a defence. He boasts to Richard that he intends to buy "the biggest [television] screen on the market" when he becomes a success. Since the view from his trousers remains hidden from other men, Vivaldo must demonstrate his masculinity through the material tokens of his anticipated wealth. Powers states that

Vivaldo has felt the need to prove himself since a boy, and especially to prove his manhood. He feared comparing his manly measurements with Rufus and with other black men; his whoring in Harlem is another aspect of his attempt to prove himself-- both his manliness and his absence of racial prejudice. (Powers 660)

Masculine stereotypes in the novel are founded upon power, that is wealth, status, and most importantly in the novel, sexual power. Ellis, Vivaldo and Richard exert their own phallic power over their economic and social inferiors by ritually exploiting and abusing women. Vivaldo's use of women, especially black women, as a paid sexual outlet in support of his masculinity apparently is condemned only on racial grounds. This manipulation of women is, however, implicitly accepted as a natural expression of male behav-

our.⁵³

Vivaldo roams freely through the air of this prison, since his whiteness allows him unlimited access to this black, carnal domain that in Another Country manifests itself as Harlem. The challenge of Harlem fuels Vivaldo's sense of manhood:

He enjoyed this, his right to be being everywhere contested; uptown, his alienation had been made visible and, therefore, almost bearable. It had been his fancy that danger, there, was more real, more open, than danger was downtown and that he having chosen to run these dangers, was snatching his manhood from the lukewarm waters of mediocrity and testing it in the fire. (AC 115)

Vivaldo had previously established this pattern of using sex to reinforce his masculinity, for he was under constant scrutiny by his father to prove his manhood.

Vivaldo has also employed physical violence to demonstrate his manhood against the homosexual threat. Vivaldo's sexual insecurity prompts him to direct his anger at someone in the ostensible position of inferiority, a gay

⁵³Harris rightly notes Vivaldo's abuses though she overstates her case. "For Vivaldo and Cass, Ida becomes a touchstone for racial understanding, and for Vivaldo she becomes the black woman through whom he learns more about himself. His sexual experiences before his liaison with Ida consisted primarily of clandestine visits to Harlem to deposit his white seed in black whores. Most black women have been whores to him, and he has not thought about the political, racial, or moral implications of his actions" (Black Women 108). As Vivaldo retells the story of his assault after one of his visits to Harlem, he does appear remorseful.

man. Vivaldo "gay bashes"⁵⁴ the man not as an act of spontaneous aggression, but as a premeditated act of violence, and he forces the young man to "go down on all of [them]" (AC 97). The very behaviour that Vivaldo seems to have found abhorrent enough to compel him to attack a man, he engages in himself, not surprisingly from the apparent position of control.

The most emasculating act for Vivaldo, worse than failure at sex with a woman, is the indignity of having sex with a man or, worse yet, being penetrated by a man. Vivaldo "associated the act [of anal intercourse] with the humiliation and the debasement of one male by another, the inferior male of less importance than the crumpled, cast-off handkerchief" (AC 323). In the opening scene, which is interspersed with recollections of sexual encounters, Rufus feels the same humiliation, but these feelings of inadequacy are compounded, for Rufus cannot subsist on earnings from his intermittent jazz gigs and relies upon his body for survival. He cannot continue having sex with men, since the sexual act apparently repulses him. This act serves as a dubious reminder that "[i]t is a man's world because the homosexual principle operates in it, and because the permanent presence in it of women is likely to lead to a corruption of the homosexual ideal of manly affection"

⁵⁴"Gay bash" denotes the perpetration of a physical assault upon a lesbian or a gay man, arising out of the fear and hatred of homosexuality.

(Harris, South as Woman 95).

In order to further counter the threat of homosexuality and manly affection, men attack each other with verbal "insults." The notion of men as cocksuckers denigrates manhood, which in heterosexist terms reduces men to the socially inferior level of woman. Men utilize this indignity as a protective shield to counter any insult with the ultimate derision for men--implicitly faggot--and degradation for women--explicitly slut. Rufus employs the term "cock sucker" to condemn white men, whereas Vivaldo wields the term especially when he feels sexually threatened by other males. During an angry exchange Vivaldo says to Ida: "Will you stop calling me sweetie? That's what you call every miserable cock sucker who comes sniffing around your ass" (AC 222). Sexual and racial denigrations provide Vivaldo's only defence against Ida's relationship with the rich and powerful Ellis.

Not surprisingly, little representation of overtly effeminate male behaviour is present in the novel since Baldwin himself had little tolerance for this stereotype.⁵⁵

⁵⁵As Harris explains: "Faggots, on the other hand, are loathsome to Baldwin; they are identified in their ostentatious imitation of women, particularly in dress and mannerisms. They are anathema to bisexuals and are despised because of the negative image they give to outsiders about other men who love men. Also, they are not true men because, through their dress and effeminate manners, they clearly show that they are more to be identified with women" (100).

The only other overtly homosexual character mentioned by name besides Eric and Yves refers to himself as "Mother Harold," though this feminine nomenclature may be attributed to the presence of hipster jargon.

The narrator introduces the encounter with the "fairies" almost as an aside to the action of the novel and comments upon such behaviour through his characters:

Coming toward them, on the path, were two glittering, loud-talking fairies. He [Eric] pulled in his belly, looking straight ahead.... The birds of paradise passed; their raucous cries faded.
(AC 222-3)

Eric assumes a masculine posture in order not to be associated with the fairies, attempting to accentuate his difference as "[h]e pulled in his belly, looking straight ahead."

Ida comments that she feels sorry for "people like that," explaining:

A couple of waiters on my job are like that. The way some people treat them--! They tell me about it, they tell me everything. I like them, I really do. They're very sweet. And, of course, they make wonderful escorts. You haven't got to worry about them. (AC 223)

Vivaldo reacts with jealousy and belittles both Ida and her sympathy for the "fairies" at work by suggesting that they acquire one for a pet. Vivaldo cannot abide that another man could please Ida, even if he is a "fairy."

Furthermore, Richard attacks Eric with this same, though in the context of his character, justifiable jealousy, asking Cass if Eric had anal intercourse with her, the act of "debasement." Richard also refers to Eric as asexual. "He's not even sure he knows what's between his legs, or what to do with it" (AC 315). The hatred Richard expresses for both Cass and Eric, at this moment, is provoked by the usurpation of his masculine position by neither another man nor an equal, but by a homosexual inferior.

Masculine panic in the novel almost attains the level of fetish, as described in the second chapter of this thesis. The consciousness with which Baldwin supports the masculine cause seems to promote Gough's claim that hyper-masculinity identifies homosexuality rather than conceals it. Though Baldwin had no intention of denying homosexuality, he certainly does not want the reader to view the male characters as effeminate. The constant concern with masculine identity subverts the male characters' ability to express love and understanding and impedes the achievement of Baldwin's ideal.

Affirmation of Male Identity

Male identity is consistently affirmed and supported throughout the novel. The narrator functions as the gatekeeper of masculinity since his interjections reinforce

masculinity in the male characters. Only Ellis remains contemptible for his unforgiving exploitation of Ida. Baldwin provides a sympathetic rendering of the male characters since most achieve some understanding of the emotional limitations of a purely masculine identity.

In an attempt to provide an enlightened vision of male relationships, the novel attacks one of the essential features of being male in American society, the absence of overt emotional expression. The righteous narrator defines the "true nature" of men, that is, men who are capable of expressing love.⁵⁶ In order to demonstrate that men have not co-opted womanhood, the narrator produces a sympathetic rendering of the dilemma of the homosexual in a homophobic society. In spite of the novel's sensitivity to the oppression of gays in society, the narrator tacitly supports the misogyny of the male characters. These misogynistic attitudes of the gay/bisexual characters directly relate to their internalised homophobia, and further enhance the more apparent signs of a homophobic American culture.⁵⁷

⁵⁶Critics of Baldwin have maintained that Baldwin lacked a political position. Daniels asserts that Baldwin's stance is reflected in his works claiming that "Baldwin does have a political theory. Though not explicit, it can readily be drawn from his works. His theory is that all men are estranged, though not estranged in nature, and that this estrangement is due to man's betrayal of his true nature" (Daniels 12).

⁵⁷One of the many examples of homophobia in the literary criticism on Baldwin's works comes from Carolyn Wedin Sylvander: "Even a reader cheerfully admitting the importance of sexuality in all forms is likely to find the

Though Another Country ostensibly promotes bisexuality, the novel nonetheless reaffirms traditional male and female roles through the behaviour of the protagonists.

Gender, for Baldwin, comprises a rigidly fixed, virtually incontestable axis of difference. In this sense he diverges little from the mainstream of traditional humanism; conventional gender roles thus appear practically naturalized in the novel. (Cohen, Genders 2)

In all cases the sexual decisions that each character has declared, are predictable. For all his criticism of American manhood, Baldwin seems to defend his own sense of masculinity throughout the text⁵⁸ as he supports a masculinization of love for "real" men and pities the misfortunes of "faggots".⁵⁹

weight of human identity carried by a homosexual affair not just simple, but simplistic" (52). Sylvander tritely uses the expression "cheerfully admitting" to sarcastically demonstrate her liberal ethic. She demonstrates little understanding of the implications of homosexual relationships, from the gravity of the possible legal consequences to the more insidious psychological ones.

⁵⁸"That is, to a degree, Baldwin, too, admired what was characterized as the brutal masculinity of the black man, also saw it as an affirmation of his existence. The biggest difference between Baldwin and the others [Black writers] really was that Baldwin saw in the black man as much potential for a sense of responsibility as any tendency toward brutal sexuality" (Wallace 60). This is further developed in subsequent works for the only glimpse of the black man is through Rufus, who accepts responsibility for Leona's madness, but not for himself.

⁵⁹The stereotype of femininity in the gay persona presents a problem for Baldwin's rigid conception of male and female. "He [Baldwin] testifies to the difficulties of achieving a satisfying personal identity in a society which superimposes its conceptions of the negro or the homosexual

C. SEXUALITY IN ANOTHER COUNTRY

This section will focus on gay sexuality in the novel examining the effects of the construction of the closet, gay stereotypes, and affirmative images of gay men on gay identity. Baldwin outlines Eric's coming-out process and exposes the self-hatred and denial inherent in the construction of the closet. Many of the gay male stereotypes discussed in the introductory chapter also appear in Another Country. Baldwin attempts to dispel some of these myths, yet others he validates, and furthermore condemns some homosexual men. The violence and hatred directed at gays in the novel--some of which comes from Baldwin's narrator--exposes a homophobic society in which the myth of masculinity still dominates. Finally, Baldwin provides an affirmation of gay identity through Eric. This idealised image of gay sexuality which allows straight men to experience love, fails to convince the reader that any lasting transformation has occurred. Furthermore, Baldwin relegates Eric to the role of saviour, which in turn places the burden of countering oppression on the oppressed.

upon individuals and which creates false images of people only to persecute them with those same images" (Biggsby 103). Though society does persecute homosexuals with false images, there is also ample evidence that what society terms femininity does exist in some gay as well as in some straight men.

The Closet

The acceptance of sexual behaviour and hence the rejection of the closet provides one of the most positive messages in the novel. The the closet is represented as a finite process in the novel where gay men accept their own homosexual behaviour, but do not maintain a separate gay identity. Contrary to Kosofsky-Sedgwick's assertion that the closet continually shapes gay identity, the closet appears to no longer have an effect on Eric. He becomes the well-adjusted homosexual who can now dispense his sexual panacea to the other characters.

The narrator attempts to provide an explanation for Eric's and Yves's homosexuality through their coming-out stories. During the recitation of these stories, the narrator often imposes a pseudo-psychoanalytic examination of their homosexuality.⁶⁰ This examination supports and rejects certain aspects of the established Oedipal myth. This section surveys the function of the Oedipal myth in the novel, outlines Eric's process of self-discovery and provides some insight into the gay dilemma of "coming out" in a homophobic society. Although Eric is confident about revealing his sexuality to his friends, the novel closets

⁶⁰Similarly, Wüstenhagen notes that "[e]s scheint Baldwin hier vielmehr um die Erforschung der psychologischen--wenn nicht psychoanalytischen--Motivation der Homosexualität zu gehen" (140).

the cultural dimensions of gay identity. For Baldwin, sexual orientation remains confined to the private sphere and overt public displays of homosexuality remain hidden in the novel.⁶¹

Baldwin, in a seemingly calculated manner, attempts to repudiate the conditions of the Oedipal myth. Though the narrative lacks an abundance of information about Yves and his coming to terms with his homosexuality, Baldwin features glimpses of Yves's relationship to his mother. Yves lacks the obsessive affection for the mother figure, as demonstrated when he states that he hated his mother. The absence of a close relationship between mother and son assists in dispelling the Oedipal myth and denying any adaptation of feminine behaviour. Yves condemns his mother for not providing him with a father. She did have one lover for a time, an American, "who liked to buy [Yves] things and take [him] on his shoulder everywhere" (AC 160). The lack of a father figure throughout most of Yves's childhood does, however, comply with the Oedipal model. In creating this ambiguity, Baldwin alludes to the precondition of masculine

⁶¹Baldwin is sceptical about whether political involvement can solve the problem of prejudice. In an interview he states his opinion on the matter of self-acceptance: "And if the so-called gay movement can cause men and women, boys and girls, to come to some kind of terms with themselves more speedily and with less pain, then that's a very great advance. I'm not sure it can be done on that level" (Goldstein, 183). Baldwin's concept of identity downplays the effects of society on the individual and coincides with his solution of universal love.

bisexuality. In fact, evidence suggests that Yves is more of an opportunist than sexually focused on men or women.⁶² Eric comments that some day Yves will abandon him. The reader can surmise whether Yves will pursue relationships with other men or other women, but one suspects that Yves will choose whatever will further him in life, and most probably that would be a married life.⁶³

Conversely, Eric's experiences during his childhood provide a "plausible" explanation for his homosexuality. His association with Blacks, his ostensible inferiors, furnished him with the love which his mother denied him. Blacks, according to Baldwin's depiction of them, readily display emotional tenderness and passion, something which is forbidden to males in the white masculinist American

⁶²Yves only mentions what Eric has given him, his escape from the streets. Powers contends that the relationship between Eric and Yves is a mutual loving relationship and that once Eric learned to love himself then Yves could fall in love with him. "The result of his grasping this truth, Baldwin's persistent equivalent of the second great commandment, is that Eric not only wins the love of Yves but restores Yves's sense of his own worth" (658). Although Eric loves Yves he does not feel secure about the longevity of the relationship and the narrator does not mention Yves's love for Eric.

⁶³Baldwin's depictions of older gay men, though present in Another Country, are much more vivid in Giovanni's Room. Jacques and Guillaume epitomize the stereotype as they pursue the younger Giovanni and David. "David fears the desire that Giovanni's love has awakened in him for other boys, and the images of Jacques's and Guillaume's perpetual and sordid seeking that the desire condemns him to" (Standley, "Another Country, Another Time," 48). This assumes that desire can be controlled neither in fiction nor reality--a common assumption for men, but especially for gay men.

culture.⁶⁴ The narrator suggests that Eric's homosexuality stems from his affinity to Blacks, especially to Henry, a family servant, and this closeness initiated his separation from conventional behaviour.

The process of coming-out includes isolation, fear, shame, self-loathing and denial. Eric knew that the love he experienced for Grace and Henry was improper because they are black and he is white and this awareness isolated him. This sentiment is reflected again in his early childhood fondness for other boys. The corruption of his thoughts separated him from other Whites as these boys became, for Eric, objects of adoration or scorn.

No, doubt, at school, the boy with whom he was wrestling failed to feel the curious stabs of terror and pleasure that Eric felt, as they grappled with each other, as one boy pinned the other to the ground; and if Eric saw the girls at all, he saw mainly their clothes and their hair; they were not, for him, as were the boys, creatures in a hierarchy, to be adored or feared or despised. None of them looked on each other as he looked on all of them. (AC 170-71)

Eric's sexuality remains confined to his own private understanding; however, the public forces of prejudice

⁶⁴In a Freudian analysis of the apparent "causes" for Eric's homosexuality, it is his mother who is at fault for she emotionally abandons her child, which somehow leads to "sexual perversity." Prasad explains: "It was Eric Jones's socialite mother who drove him out into the life of loneliness and perversion; the French boy Yves is forced into a career of perversity by his 'whore of a mother'" (302).

impact on his self-esteem and sexual decisions. It is therefore not surprising that he allied himself with another oppressed and isolated group, Blacks.

Eric retreats from his surroundings into a secret fantasy world, but even in his private sphere he has only deluded himself, since the narrator suggests that anyone can spot a faggot. Eric exists disengaged from the world around him, and even his fantasies contain no escape, for,

[h]ow could Eric have known that his fantasies, however unreadable they were for him, were inscribed in every one of his gestures, were betrayed in every inflection of his voice, and lived in his eyes with all the brilliance and beauty and terror of desire? (AC 170)

Eric remains convinced his feelings would not be accepted by his peers and further retreats into his fantasy world. His salvation from this predicament is initiated through the formation of a relationship with LeRoy, a poor black adolescent. The initial acceptance of his homosexual desire produced a sense of shame. Eric sensed that "what he felt was wrong" when he was with Henry and with LeRoy-- "there was something unspoken between them, something unspeakable, undone, and hideously desired" (AC 173). Eric's imaginings even "soured imperceptibly into fantasies of violence and humiliation" (AC 168). When Eric escapes from the oppressive South and flees to New York he advances into a more abusive self-repression. This persecution manifests itself through the inadequacy of love and respect

for the self and translates into a deficiency of love and respect for others. Eric's promiscuity in New York is intimated on several occasions as he reminisces about

the army of lonely men who had used him, who had wrestled with him, caressed him, and submitted to him, in a darkness deeper than the darkest night. It was not merely his body they had used, but something else; his infirmity had made him the receptacle of an anguish which he could scarcely believe was in the world. (AC 179)

Eric appears to be an innocent victim in his sexual meandering. Being used by other men, yet not achieving much satisfaction from these encounters vindicates Eric from Baldwin's condemnation. Baldwin does not acknowledge the very public attitudes toward homosexuality which may contribute to the pursuit of anonymous sex.

When Eric does fall in love with Rufus, however, the shame and denial continue. Rufus and Eric always have "lots of girls around." Eric is even contemplating getting married perhaps in order to demonstrate his heterosexuality to himself and to Rufus. The reason for Rufus's womanising is conspicuously excluded as is most information about Rufus's motivation for his actions. Pain and abuse permeated Eric's life with Rufus; it was a love not wholly explained. Rufus made Eric a scapegoat for his anger since Eric epitomises "whiteness," money and power; or perhaps he perceives Eric's homosexuality as a part of himself that he

despises. Conceivably, Rufus could not envision Eric as different from the other men that had exploited him.

Though Baldwin presents a self-assured and self-confident homosexual character, the narrator provides no public validation for Eric's actions or identity. The homosexual characters exist in separate spheres and it is only when they come together in a loving relationship that their lives have any meaning. Coming out does not include identification with the term "gay" or even "homosexual." For all Baldwin's distaste for public intrusion into the sexual arena, the act of writing about gay characters ironically shifts Baldwin and homosexuality into the public sphere.

Gay Stereotypes

Another Country contains ample examples of homosexual stereotypes including allusions to homosexual paederasty, promiscuity, and homosexuality as illness. I will examine Baldwin's use of stereotypes to address the problems of prejudice against gays in society. Baldwin attempts to refute or provide an understanding of some stereotypes, while denouncing others as destructive or immoral. The idealised homosexual manifested in Eric is a heterosexualized version of a gay man. Even so, the characters express their heterosexual bias as they comment on Eric's life. Baldwin limits his expression of positive gay experience and

he remains a victim of societal attitudes towards homosexuality.

Baldwin portrays gay men as exploiters of boys, or in this case a young man. The novel begins with the depiction of an attempt by an unknown man to fondle Rufus while he watches an Italian film. The film, produced in "another country," heightens the wrongfulness of this gesture since the possibility of sex between man and a "boy" could not exist if the film were, for example an American Western. Rufus is "awakened by caterpillar fingers between his thighs" (AC 9) not once but twice, and as the "film [is] approaching a climax" (AC 9), he leaves, realising that "his mouth [feels] filthy" (AC 9). Baldwin creates an illusion of oral sex, which is further reinforced through Rufus's desire to urinate or cleanse himself. After this episode, Rufus is emotionally distraught and the phrase surfaces in his mind: "*you took the best, so why not take the rest?*" (AC 77); this phrase is also reiterated shortly before his suicide. The degrading act of prostitution where "a boy can be bought for the price of a beer and the promise of warm blankets" (AC 40) further demoralises Rufus and contributes to his suicide. Rufus knows he cannot go "home any more" (AC 77). Baldwin includes this portrayal of the paederast to demonstrate the destructive nature of this behaviour while consciously dissociating it from Eric.

Baldwin as a precursor to the sexual liberation

movement⁶⁵ and allied with the Beat Generation⁶⁶, advocates, in essence, free love. He condones and praises intimate acts, if they are based on love, even if they are also temporary. Baldwin condemns, however, anonymous acts of sex, especially sex between men, when love is absent.⁶⁷ The "depravity" portrayed in the novel and the disapproving descriptions employed assure the reader of the unhappiness and unfulfillment of a supposed "gay lifestyle."⁶⁸ The gay

⁶⁵Baldwin subtly combines the notions of race and sex, heralding the belief of an affinity between oppressive experiences associated with minority status in America. See Porter, 153.

⁶⁶According to James Campbell's recent biography, Baldwin was friends with Norman Mailer--although they disagreed politically and especially with regard to Mailer's essay "Black Boy Looks at White Boy"--and certainly was acquainted with Jack Kerouac, Allan Ginsberg and the avant garde of the fifties and sixties.

⁶⁷Bigsby reiterates Baldwin's conception of Christian love: "At the heart of [Baldwin's] work is a Christian belief that grace is a gift of suffering and that love has the power to annihilate the primal space between the self and its perception of itself, between the individual and the group" (Bigsby 115).

⁶⁸Likewise, Heinz Wüstenhagen sees homosexual promiscuity as the downfall and degeneration of society. "Die Homosexualität ist aber typisches Merkmal der Dekadenzphase einer Gesellschaftsordnung, in diesem Fall der spätbürgerlichen Ordnung, und es ist gerade ein Kriterium für die Hohlheit der Moralkonvention dieser Gesellschaft, wenn die Homosexualität zwar als widernatürlich verdammt wird und in den USA auch gesetzlich strafbar ist, aber dennoch als unvermeidlich angesehen und sogar--gleichsam im doppelten Boden der offiziellen Moral--akzeptiert und gesellschaftlich sanktioniert wird" (151). Wüstenhagen's assertion that the "appearance" of homosexuality is characteristic of an historical moral decay in the social order imposes his own preconceived conceptions of decadence and social order as these perceptions are continuously

men become lonely, aging men in search of sex and youth with total abandonment of any emotional involvement.

The narrator elucidates the social intolerance of homosexuality in the novel. Apart from the difficulties Eric experiences growing up, he constantly encounters discrimination. Casual comments serve to reinforce traditional stereotypes, such as "[Eric is] not the fatherly type" (AC 272). Ida claims that she could recognize Eric as a homosexual from the "minute she laid eyes on him" and promptly calls him a "poor white faggot from Alabama" (AC 272). She continues to offer her sympathy, hoping that his family has not disowned him. However, Ida experiences sympathy for the poor, pathetic Eric only so long as he remains alone, for when she discovers that her brother was sexually involved with Eric she expresses her disgust and her disbelief that her brother was involved in homosexual acts. Eric is perceived as wanting to corrupt her brother and make him as "sick" as Eric was.

Vivaldo has his own curious notions about homosexuality. He becomes less homophobic and perhaps rather heterosexist, as the narrator appears to be. When Eric and Vivaldo discuss the sexual act, Vivaldo expresses his doubts about the ease with which the male anatomy might

perpetuated by a homophobic and heterosexist society. Baldwin does not further the cause as he attempts to refute this fallacious argument by portraying heterosexualised gay characters while at the same time condemning sexually liberating facets of gay life.

sexually accommodate another male. Eric explains to the naive Vivaldo that most men do not experience any problems and then retorts that the inability of two men to conceive a child does not invalidate their love. Eric continues:

"[I]f its children you're after, well, you can do that in five minutes and you haven't got to love anybody to do it. If all the children who get here every year were brought here by love, wow! what a bright world this would be!" (AC 285). Vivaldo continues his assault on the gay psyche by assuming that Eric is a miserable human being who wants to force his misery upon everybody else. Eric points out that he is sceptical whether heterosexuals are any happier and Vivaldo remains silent. Since Eric is the embodiment of love, he can explain the errors of Vivaldo's assumptions without the intrusion of the narrator.

Baldwin uses homosexual stereotypes to illustrate his concept of a gay identity. The homophobia within the novel both expresses the social realities of oppression and reinforces the stereotypical mythology that has surrounded homosexuality. As the narrator states, "relationships between boys are not taken seriously,"⁶⁹ and Eric's behaviour seems to support this. For all of Baldwin's

⁶⁹These relationships are not considered seriously by many literary critics. Bone remarks that "The male lovers, naked in the garden, are not to be taken too literally. What Baldwin means to convey through this idyllic episode is the innocence of the unrepressed" (Bone 15).

efforts to normalise homosexuality, he still maintains some stereotypical idiosyncrasies in his gay characters.

Baldwin's message, however, remains clear: love in any form is the solution. This remains problematic since Baldwin attempts to glorify male love through masculine behaviour, yet disregards the "feminine" tenderness in the male characters and invalidates anonymous sexual acts as exploitative and degrading.

Affirmation of Gay Identity

Baldwin affirms homosexuality through an idealisation of a gay character and introduces the possibility that two men can love each other both emotionally and sexually. Homosexual couples are able to establish intimate and mutually satisfactory relationships in an imitative gesture of the heterosexual relationship paradigm.⁷⁰ This becomes

⁷⁰Cederstrom curiously argues that "[i]n the successful homosexual relationships in Baldwin's books, the partners are equals and are essentially androgynous or asexual" (184). This, however, is not quite accurate since Baldwin vividly describes the sexual relations between Eric and Yves, whereas Cass and Richard never have sex in the novel. She continues her argument suggesting that "some of Baldwin's characters give up their male role altogether rather than accept the degrading sexual definition which society provides" (184). Though masculinity is criticized by Baldwin, he never comments on the degradation of the male role and in fact that role is maintained throughout this and other novels. Cederstrom's assessment is not correct when she maintains that Baldwin "has shown us, also, that by giving up ideas of dominance, by eliminating the false assumptions of masculinity and femininity and of black and white with which we have been indoctrinated, we may achieve at last 'another country' where genuine love is possible" (187).

an idealisation of Irigaray's homosocial society as already discussed in Chapter II, where straight men are now "enlightened" through homosexual experience. Men learn to love each other, which provides the solution to the problem of masculinity in America. This section considers the idealisation of Eric and the promotion of bisexuality in the male characters. Baldwin creates a pure, masculine love which operates on the principle of the universal accessibility of bisexuality. Women and effeminate men seem prohibited from bisexual experience. Unwittingly gender and sexual disparity intensify and force a compliance with gender "norms" in order to attain love.

Eric eventually comes to a better understanding of his homosexuality and his life:

There were no standards for him because he could not accept the definitions...this meant he had to create his standards and make up his definitions as he went along. It was up to him to find out who he was, and it was his necessity to do this, so far as the witchdoctors of the time were concerned, alone. (AC 181)

Eric's security about his sexuality and his willingness to talk about it candidly as he does on several occasions unnerves his friends. Vivaldo notes that Eric definitely has changed, stating that Eric had never talked that way before.⁷¹ During this exchange, it is the only time that

⁷¹Eric's coming to terms with his homosexuality means that he can now relate to his friends and offer more

the word "gay" is used. Interestingly, the word "gay" is connected to the "loveless" pursuit of sex by men. Yet Eric is not totally comfortable with his sexuality, he has to "accept--or decide--some very strange things" (AC 283).⁷² Eric's struggle with his homosexuality has been trying, his constant conflict would not simply disappear. His uneasiness is inherent in his fear of powerlessness, but he continues to admit that he must be truthful to himself even though a great temptation exists to lead the life one "should." Eric remains sexually ambivalent until his affair with Cass has ended and Yves is about to arrive.

of himself to them. Stanley Macebuh claims that "[h]is homosexuality is a cross he has to bear through life, but rather than deny it as Vivaldo tries, and fails to do, he learns, by the time he returns to New York, to accept it, and it is precisely because of his ability to come to terms with himself that he becomes so powerful an influence on his friends" (96).

⁷²Baldwin's remarks in "The Male Prison", where he talks about Gide's homosexuality, demonstrate his distaste for sexual "immorality" and the so-called gay underworld. "It does not take long, after all, to discover that sex is only sex, that there are few things on earth more futile or more deadening than a meaningless round of conquests. The really horrible thing about the phenomenon of present-day homosexuality, the horrible thing which lies curled like a worm at the heart of Gide's trouble and his work and the reason that he so clung to Madeleine, is that today's unlucky deviate can only save himself by the most tremendous exertion of all his forces from falling into an underworld in which he never meets either men or women, where it is impossible to have either a lover or a friend, where the possibility of genuine human involvement has altogether ceased" (131). Baldwin apparently does not refer to himself as a deviate, since he feels that he has adequately dealt with his homosexuality. With regard to homosexuality, Baldwin states that "nature helps us very much when we need illumination in human affairs" (128-9), which indicates his disavowal of cultural causes.

He had used her in the hope of avoiding the confrontation with himself which he had, nevertheless, and with a vengeance, been forced to endure.

He felt as far removed now from Cass, in her terrible hour, as he was physically removed from Yves. (AC 340)

The threat of losing one's power or masculinity appears to be the deciding factor in motivations of the male characters. Baldwin interjects some reality into his idealised notion of a homosocial society. Homosexuality still remains a threat, even to Eric.

Though Eric has accepted his homosexuality, he still harbours some resentment about this aspect of his life since he envies Vivaldo's "normalcy." Eric does consider himself outside the realm of "conventional morality" and has stopped judging himself by these terms.⁷³ Cass comments upon the change that Eric has undergone when he openly talks about his sexuality. During his affair with Cass, Eric still contends that a woman can give a man something that he cannot find in other men. Eric never elucidates exactly what this something could be, but he apparently seems

⁷³Eric's new-found liberation is thought by some critics to bring salvation to those around him: "Eric is meant to symbolize a source of pure love for both sexes. The novel ends with Yves arriving in America at the New York airport, greeted by Eric, supposedly bringing with him a sense of sexual liberation which will herald personal and racial freedom for everyone involved" (Rosenblatt 91). But since the novel ends with such uncertainty, even about Eric and Yves's relationship, the achievement of this salvation is doubtful.

willing to forgo this aspect of male-female alliances in his relationship with Yves. Baldwin creates a sexually unfocused Eric to serve as a reminder that love has no boundaries and understanding can be achieved between any two people.

The male characters all exhibit bisexual behaviour, some more overtly than others. Rufus, Eric and Vivaldo all have had sexual liaisons with members of both sexes. Adolescent encounters aside, Eric and Rufus are the "repeat offenders," though it is only Eric who is identified as being sexually different from the others. Rufus is assumed to be heterosexual and Vivaldo, despite his father's opinion of him, reaffirms his heterosexuality after his affair with Eric. He seems to have enjoyed sex with Eric--both the giving and the receiving--but feels that this sexual encounter will remain a once-in-a-life-time experience, and he assures himself and Eric that he wants only women.⁷⁴ Despite the continued threat of homosexuality to masculinity, Vivaldo envies Eric since Eric can "make it with men and women" (AC 282). Eric, however, has made up

⁷⁴Some critics again attempt to impose their own assumptions upon the text. They favour heterosexual relationships and express doubt at the success of gay relationships. "Vivaldo elects to remain with Ida, and Eric, apparently, has decided to continue his relationship with Yves" (Pratt, 66). Nothing is definitively stated in the novel with regard to the permanence of their respective relationships. On the contrary, the novel concentrates on the difficulties of these relationships. Pratt implies that Vivaldo's and Ida's relationship will endure, while Eric's and Yves's remains only apparent.

his mind in favour of Yves after his affair with Cass and devotes himself to coming to terms with this decision. Nevertheless, he reveals his fears about becoming old as a gay man; that he too will chase after young men and may again engage in promiscuous, anonymous sex. The defence of sexual identity by the heterosexual male characters is coupled with an envy of homosexuality. Baldwin demonstrates that bisexuality still remains elusive for heterosexual men.

Rufus does, nonetheless, profess his love for Vivaldo, and Vivaldo takes Rufus's side when Jane instigates the fight in the racist milieu of the bar. It is Rufus who washes the blood off Vivaldo after the bar room brawl. Despite the physical closeness of the two men, their relationship is mediated through women. They even have sex with the same women, indicating that they can share an intimate act without the danger of physical contact with each other. Homosexual anxiety⁷⁵ prevents them from

⁷⁵"Vivaldo's recognition that his fear of embracing Rufus in affection, 'only love,' was based on his own insecurity about his sexual identity serves two functions: first, it helps clarify his own sense of himself, which will in turn facilitate development of self-trust; and, second, it prepares for his acceptance of just such an embrace from Eric as Vivaldo had feared to give Rufus" (Powers, 663). The importance of this event is reiterated by Scott: "Significantly, it is Eric with whom the homosexual encounter occurs, and Eric has been a lover of Rufus'. Further, it is the female role that Vivaldo takes. It is after this encounter, after Vivaldo has lost much of his white, male pride, for the pride has been there..." (32). The so-called female role described during the sex act constitutes a distinct enigma when describing sex between two men; Scott's active/passive dichotomy reveals his heterosexual preconceptions of sex.

achieving any real closeness. Rufus only wants to be loved, but he can never accept love from anyone, and perhaps least of all from a woman. Vivaldo admits that he could not hold Rufus in his arms when he felt vulnerable because he too was afraid. Rufus asks, "Have you ever wished you were queer?" (AC 48). After Vivaldo responds that he had thought about it, but decided that he was not, Vivaldo then replies: "...we've been taught to lie so much about so many things, that we hardly ever know where we are" (AC 49). This crisis of identity strikes at the essence of the characters' search for identity. For Baldwin, the truth is found in love, not in words.

Ellis and Richard, who remain on the periphery of bisexuality, enter into a metaphorical sexual relationship.

Richard has given up his masculinity by succumbing to the temptations of Ellis. The business contract negotiated between the two men operates symbolically as a sexual exchange, just as the liaison between Ida and Ellis constitutes the literal sexual exchange. Richard has relinquished his idealism and his masculinity when he forfeits his Bohemian lifestyle by writing a bestseller. Ellis participates in the hegemonic practice of soliciting male and female talent, like Richard, which he can exploit.

Ellis's figurative bisexuality is situated in greed, not love, and Richard prostitutes his literary integrity for success. This desire draws him closer to Ellis and further

from his wife, who disapproves of his success. Through the use of this metaphor, Baldwin illustrates that being unfaithful to the reality of a bisexual nature can only cause harm.

The sexual ambiguity present in Another Country--Baldwin never uses the term bisexual in the novel--challenges the notion of labelling, but sexuality cannot escape from identification. Baldwin's idealistic attempts to escape from the necessity of labelling are not communicated in the novel since all of Baldwin's characters tacitly decide upon their sexuality as either homosexual or heterosexual. The only individual whose sexuality is not quite explicitly stated, and whose sexual orientation remains ambiguous--as are most of the details surrounding his character--is Rufus.

Baldwin upholds the ideal of the male bisexual in portraying Eric as the most content and well adjusted character of the novel.⁷⁶

⁷⁶"In that the attitudes Baldwin expresses about homosexuality (or more accurately bisexuality) in this novel are completely positive attitudes, the novel is in regard to that subject radical, radical because Baldwin's judgments stand in total opposition to accepted norms of behaviour. There is some suggestion that the bisexual male is for Baldwin the apogee of human development" (Gibson 12). Although Gibson considers a positive attitude toward bisexuality, he primarily acknowledges only homosexually identified characters as bisexual. The predominantly heterosexuals who have had sex with--in all cases--other men, are still considered heterosexuals. He later asserts that it is not necessary for Eric to be bisexual when he writes: "On the other hand, if Baldwin meant to suggest by his bisexual male characters an attitude less rigidly bound by standard categories of social differentiation, then he would have done well to show us a male who might possess the good

Baldwin incorporates the problematic relationship between the oppressions of ethnicity, gender and sexuality in Another Country through his condemnation of the macho American cowboy myth. It is his demonstration of the destructiveness of the masculine myth which prevents love and understanding and promotes the domination of man over man. Nevertheless, Baldwin lends neither credibility nor voice to femininity through his male characters, or at least does not acknowledge it as such. Men, in their relationships with other men, continue to draw battle lines even among gay lovers. The ability to forsake the lure of masculinity evades the male characters. The portrayal of women and their sexuality perpetuates the view of the feminine as cunning and deceitful, whereas masculine sexuality, though sometimes brutal, is idealised as a sacred act. Once the primacy of masculinity has been ensconced, it can be wielded as a weapon against any enemy at any time, for masculinity maintains as tenuous a position in men as phallic turgidity.⁷⁷ Baldwin, though making great strides in

qualities of an Eric without imposing the necessity of his being in fact bisexual" (130).

⁷⁷Baldwin's "...books finally state that unless the mythology of fantasized masculinity is reexamined, unless the affirmation of white male supremacy is abandoned, all systems of oppression will continue to work, making male and female identity impossible to define and limiting relations between men and men, but also men and women, to simple exercise in violence and power." (Christol 86)

exposing the dangers in the privilege of any category of ethnicity, gender and sexuality over any other, cannot escape from socially defined labels. He limits himself by selecting socially constructed stereotypes to describe identity and is especially restricted by such artificially value-laden labels as masculinity and femininity, under which his characters suffer greatly.

IV. SEXUAL LIBERATION IN FICHTE'S VERSUCH ÜBER DIE PUBERTÄT

Hubert Fichte's Versuch über die Pubertät examines the question of identity and the relationship of the individual to society in a less straightforward manner than Baldwin's Another Country. The characters of the novel remain undeveloped, and there is a general absence of extensive descriptions of emotion or motives. Instead of a subjective narration, the text is composed of short and often abrupt "factual" statements. The narrative is often convoluted, with the placement of seemingly unrelated statements one after the other; hence the novel lacks the moralistic tone of Another Country.

Fichte, like Baldwin, believed in the healing nature of spiritual power or love, and despite their differing conceptualisations of spirituality, they present several of the same themes in their works. Through the exploration of identity in his novel, Fichte also demonstrates the importance of such issues as sexual orientation, gendered behaviour and ethnicity. The concept of difference constitutes an important theme in Fichte's novel in terms of individual and societal relations. As in Baldwin's Another Country, sexuality functions as a means to construct identity and accept difference, thus eliminating oppression. Fichte furthers this solution to oppression by politicising

the issue of sexual difference on the cultural level. He presents alternative expressions of sexuality which challenge prevailing mores and norms.

Conventional notions of sexuality do not constrain Fichte from exploring in detail such topics as sado-masochistic behaviour, paederasty and bisexuality. This chapter reviews the critical literature on the novel, provides a brief outline of the structure of Versuch über die Pubertät and, as in the previous chapter, discusses the effects of the closet, stereotypes and affirmations of identity under the categories of ethnicity, gender and sexuality. Versuch über die Pubertät affords the necessary material for an examination of the categories of ethnicity, gender and sexuality and their relationship to oppression in both the individual characters and the cultural representations in the novel.

Chronologically Fichte's sixth published work, Versuch über die Pubertät is the last of a tetralogy which includes Das Waisenhaus (1965), Die Palette (1968), and Detlevs Imitationen "Grünspan" (1971). As the culmination of the tetralogy which contains elements of the "Bildungsroman," Versuch über die Pubertät deals with sexual discovery and, as the title suggests, the transition towards adulthood. The critical literature reviewed reflects the important roles that homosexuality and identity assume in this process.

Wolfgang von Wangenheim's Hubert Fichte (1980) points to the importance of Fichte's work as "die erste offene und eingehende Behandlung des Themas Homosexualität in der deutschen Literatur" (119). Wangenheim discusses Fichte's portrayal of the oppression of gay identity, stating that Fichte's works demonstrate "die Genese der Beschädigung eines schwulen Bewußtseins, als Er-Geschichte oder Ich-Geschichte angelegte 'Chiffrierungen' für 'Entschlüsselner'" (119). These cultural codes further contribute to oppression during the self-identification process since they create an atmosphere of secrecy and wrongfulness. Vollhaber agrees with the importance of the novel in dealing with gay self-identification and development. He asserts that "[wie] kein anderer Autor hat Fichte das Thema der schwulen Initiation dargestellt" (143). Though this is debatable, certainly for its time the novel contains one of the most unique representations of gay diversity.

In his essay "Was will Fichte?", Hartmut Engelhardt claims that Fichte does not attempt to normalise homosexuality, but to conflate it in its most perfect form with art. Similarly Dominique Fernandez comments on the role of homosexuality in society. She notes that "[l]'homosexualité n'a un rôle à jouer dans l'histoire générale de la culture que pour la fonction symbolique qu'elle exerce: comme refus de la normalité (mais pas seulement de la normalité sexuelle), comme choix de la marginalité (mais pas

seulement de la marginalité sexuelle)" (233).

Homosexuality becomes more important for what it represents culturally, rather than what it means to the individual. Nicole Casanova furthers the notion of homosexuality as a liberating force in society. She maintains that the erotic scenes in the novel contain such beauty as to generate an aura of chastity. The eroticism, "délivré de sa magie noire, pourrait n'être plus que tendresse, un communisme de l'amour également réparti entre tous" (154). This idealisation of the presence of homosexuality in society as a liberating force negates the personal reality of the effects of cultural oppression of homosexuality.

Apart from the liberating powers of homosexuality alluded to in the novel, Fichte also demonstrates his pessimism about cultural oppression of homosexuality. Sabina Röhr attributes this sensitivity to discrimination to Fichte's own homosexuality. She supports this claim by referring to Fichte's other works which "werfen ein Licht auf die haßerfüllte, weil scheinheilige Verfolgung der Schwulen, das eigene versteckte Schwulsein der Verfolger, die Angst der Verfolgten vor der Entdeckung, vor Gewalt und Ächtung" (37).

Manfred Weinberg, however, cautions against viewing the novel as predominantly about homosexuality. He professes that

der "Versuch" [sich] dabei als ein Roman erweist,

der sich keinesfalls in der Darstellung der Homosexualität und homosexueller Verhaltensweisen erschöpft, welche sich vielmehr ihrerseits auf dessen Grundfrage nach der Einheitlichkeit des Ich zurückbiegen läßt (211).

Fichte continually returns to the "I" which depends on sexuality to achieve a sense of self. W. Roth sees that identity development and sexuality in the novel are even more closely intertwined. He maintains that "[S]elbsterkenntnis und Erkenntnis der Anderen rücken als Bewußtseinsprozesse eng zusammen mit der Sexualität, die physische Berührung schafft" (199). Adorno comments on Fichte's themes of identification and imitation. He describes this as a process "die Welt zu übernehmen" (65) and observes that this process is instituted "in einer als fremd erlebten, feindlichen Gesellschaft" (65).

The notion of struggle and oppression are represented in the novel through the interjection of factual episodes of personal abuse. Peter Bekes remarks that the struggle for identity is not "[eine auf] ein bestimmtes Lebensalter bezogene Entwicklungs- und Prägungsphase," but "ein lebenslanger Prozeß der Reifung" (7). This process is not a predicable or linear one. Torsten Teichert sees Fichte's conception of the process of identity development as a random process. He states that "[n]ichts lage Fichte ferner, als ein exakt kalkuliertes System zwingender Regeln, gleich einer 'ars poetica,' das der Welt ein kaum harmloseres Zaumzeug anlegen möchte, als es die ähnlich machenden

Wissenschaften tun" (29). Teichert examines Fichte's struggle with identity and authenticity. He believes that Fichte can only achieve a sense of consciousness in his characters through a continuous concern "mit den eigenen Wünschen, Bedürfnissen und Scheiterungen, und mit der eigenen Geschlechtsidentität als Homosexueller" (131).

Heinrichs views Fichte as a crusader against homosexual oppression. Fichte "schrieb mit einer polemischen Kraft, als hätte sich in ihm die Enttäuschung und die Wut der Homosexuellen personifiziert, als sei er dazu bestimmt gewesen, die Brutalität und Gewalt der Heterosexuellen in einem poetischen und analytischen Akt zurückzuschleudern" (8). Though the novel lacks direct analysis, Fichte initiates the material for political debate on certain issues without necessarily interjecting his own opinions. For all the cross-cultural content in the novel, it offers little insight into the experience of ethnic or racial oppression of individual characters. With respect to gender, Versuch über die Pubertät contains no explicit reference to gender oppression. B.M. Kane notes the lack of political analysis in the novel. He attributes the lack to Fichte's intent to move "away from the mainstream of the German novel of recent years--with its strong political commitment--and to have more affinity with the American Beat movement than with his German contemporaries" (108). Though Fichte's critics have considered the themes of

homosexuality and identity within his works, none have considered the similarities between ethnic and gender oppression as they relate to gay identity formation. This comparison--a technique also utilized in the novel-- contributes to a greater understanding of Fichte's celebration of difference.

The influences of Afro-American culture on Versuch über die Pubertät (1974) are apparent as the narrative drifts through disparate time intervals which transport the reader between locations without warning or explanation.⁷⁸ The narratives progress in parallel directions, and two sections of the novel comprise separate narratives unto themselves. These sections, the second and the fourth of the five chapters, contain partial autobiographies of two "gay" men, Rolf Schwab and Hans Eppendorfer. These texts actually have been taken from interviews Fichte conducted with these men, which he then inserted between the passages of his own "autobiographical" recollections of adolescence.⁷⁹

⁷⁸The anthropologist Klaus Neumann offers an explanation of this temporal stratification montage when he states: "Fichte dissolves narrativity by juxtaposing passages resembling short strips of film. The temporal relation of these strips seems to be of less importance than their ability to talk to each other, and to represent the multi-layered reality he experienced" (267).

⁷⁹Fichte comments on the autobiographical nature of the novel as reported by Neumann: "`Sensing the Self beyond one's body, 'heartbeat on the outside,' means permitting a double bid to watch and describe the interplay of Self and Other on one and the same level. Where is the ethnographic

The narrator, we subsequently learn, is named, not surprisingly, Hubert. He also identifies himself with other characters previously introduced in the tetralogy called Detlev and Jäcki.⁸⁰ He begins his narrative with a primal sound followed by a description of the coroner's institute *Nina Rodrigues*.⁸¹ Hubert concludes the narration with the same recollection of the institute during an autopsy. It would be virtually impossible to offer a detailed recapitulation of the story, since the novel was intentionally formulated to exhibit a disjointed picture and to articulate thoughts in an experiential manner instead of a linear, rational one. It can, nevertheless, be stated that the

'I'? Where is the ethnographer's eye? 'I am the experimental subject best known to me,' Fichte says, observing and recording his cracks" (266). What Fichte articulates about his ethnographic writings pertains equally to the tetralogy. The novels contain the attributes of a *Schlüsselroman*, although Fichte denied it.

⁸⁰Teichert provides an explanation for the fusion of personalities: "Nachdem er [Fichte] sich mit Axel, Detlev und Jäcki drei poetische Imitationen zugelegt hat, führt er im Versuch über die Pubertät eine vierte ein: sein zweites 'Ich'. Das problematische Pronomen erfährt eine zusätzliche Aufspaltung, die dem Erzählmodus aus dem dritten Roman verwandt bleibt. Waren es dort Jäcki, der Detlev kommentierte, und der Autor, der Detlev und Jäcki kommentierte, so sind es im Versuch über die Pubertät drei 'Ichs', mit denen wir es zu tun bekommen. Das eine 'Ich' reist durch Bahia und Haiti, das zweite erlebt seine Pubertät in Lokstedt; zwischen beiden aber vermittelt das dritte 'Ich', das als Autor-Ich in den zwei vorangegangenen Romanen seine poetische Funktion bereits festgeschrieben hatte: Monteur, Gestalter, Kommentator" (Teichert 137).

⁸¹Raimundo Nina Rodrigues (1862-1906) was a doctor of legal medicine in Brazil. His writings contained elitist theories of genetics and ethnology (Levine 150).

narrative does alternate between a coroner's institute in presumably Brazil⁸² and the city of Hamburg where the narrator discovers his homosexuality and experiences the difficulties linked to this discovery.

The two remaining sections, which contain the interview material commence with the phrase "Eine andere Pubertät." The first of the two sections follows the life of a sixty-year-old man, who recounts some of the incidents of discrimination that he has experienced and divulges some of his sexual exploits. The second of the two sections contains the recollections of a murderer, who, upon his liberation from prison, realises his bisexuality and his predilection for sado-masochistic sexuality.

In providing these varying impressions of puberty-- which, he implies, is a continuous process--Fichte examines the quest for identity. The novel explores the quest of a maturing adolescent in a self-consciously ambiguous manner.

The search for an affirmative identity will become more intelligible in examining the representation of difference.

In the novel, that translates into identifying the affinities present in the relationship between black or Jew and white, male roles and female roles, masculinity and

⁸²The references to Lamarca, a Brazilian urban guerilla allied with the Popular Revolutionary Vanguard and to the Institute *Nina Rodrigues* may lead the reader to this conclusion (Rossi 91).

femininity, homosexuality and heterosexuality. The exploration and affirmation of difference under the constraints of the closet will establish the affinity of these struggles. This analysis will also include an investigation of the confluent identities and the internalised strategies for the endurance and advancement of identity formation under the influence of the closet, stereotype, and affirmative images.

A. ETHNICITY IN VERSUCH ÜBER DIE PUBERTÄT

As a racial minority, Blacks have routinely been disregarded in German literature, especially in the literary canon. Writers and literary critics have largely ignored the role of Blacks in German colonial history, and the repercussions of blackness in a relatively homogeneous culture.⁸³ The engagement and exploration of Afro-American culture and religious rituals contribute to the appeal of the novel and raise many important social issues. Fichte had himself observed and participated in various rites which he perceived as a considerable accomplishment since it was often an honour to be allowed to scrutinize these sacred acts (Wischenbart, 81-83).

In writing about Blacks, Fichte appears conscious of the cultural effects of ethnic difference since he was half Jewish and had undoubtedly experienced anti-Semitic hatred.⁸⁴ As in the previous chapter, I will discuss the representation of the closet, stereotype and affirmative

⁸³From Wolfram von Eschenbach's portrayal of the black and white Moor, *Fierifiz in Parzifal* to more recent images of Klaus Mann's Princess Tebab, to Anna Segher's depiction of Haitian mulattoes, German literature has not included many characterisations of Blacks. Germany took mainly an economic interest in Africa rather than a cultural one. It engaged in trade with many African colonies and possessed four colonies of its own during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (For a more in-depth study of German involvement in Africa, see Stoecker.)

⁸⁴His Jewish father was apparently killed by the Nazis during an escape to Sweden.

images of ethnic identity with attention to representations of ethnic oppression. Versuch über die Pubertät portrays the effects of culturally inscribed prejudice through the behaviour of the individual characters. Some of the characters attempt to closet themselves from the effects of oppression and deny their ethnic identity. This attempt to conceal identity usually draws attention to the difference the character is trying to hide. The novel demonstrates the futility of the closet as a means of self-preservation.

Versuch über die Pubertät exposes stereotypes through glimpses of the treatment of Blacks in society. It does, however, exoticise and fetishise the black body. In order to affirm ethnic identity, the novel provides cultural comparisons of ethnic rituals which serve to unite the obvious differences between Whites and Blacks. In examining the text, the paradox of the celebration of identity through the depiction of difference and the fixation on erotic ethnic distinctions reveal a unique relationship between the notions of oppression and affirmation.

The Ethnic Closet

Fichte's characters consciously use the closet to escape from the effects of ethnic oppression. This section investigates the effectiveness of the closet for the individual as a means of avoiding oppression and then

surveys the cultural causes of that oppression. The narrator often points to the similarities between oppressions and their effects on the characters' behaviour. In Versuch über die Pubertät, retreat into the closet appears to be a self-defeating act which denies individual identity and exposes culturally imposed stereotypes.

The implicit denial of ethnic ancestry, also referred to in the vernacular as "passing," that is passing for white, forms the ethnic closet. This establishes the threat of being 'outed.'⁸⁵ The novel illustrates the ridiculous seriousness of the correlation of stereotyping and the masking of identity which was essential for survival by Jews during the Third Reich and which remains a strategy for many homosexuals.

Albert, Albertine in dem Zimmer von Prousts Eltern.

Ich werde unerbittlich zu Handbewegungen verführt.
 – Die Fußspitzen nach innen. / Was ich während des Tausendjährigen Reiches vermeiden mußte, weil es jüdisch wirkte. / Die Fußspitzen nach innen richten, weil ich dadurch auf der Bühne weniger lang erscheine. (Pubertät 195)

Survival depends upon a self-imposed imperative to conceal the stereotyped traits of a pigeon-toed walk for Jews and expressiveness for homosexuals in order to avoid the grave consequences of suspicion. These mannerisms can, of course,

⁸⁵Being 'outed' means that someone publicly makes known another's homosexuality without prior consent.

randomly manifest themselves in various proportions in any given population. However, for the suspect, such attributes become imagined or magnified and an overly conscious effort to hide these traits results. This paranoid defence reaction constitutes an obviously discernable anxiety which, paradoxically, substitutes as a detection mechanism for the ostensibly distinguishable characteristic.

The narrator in the novel comments on the contrast between accepting and tolerating difference. The sixty-year-old Alex Kraetschmar, with whom Hubert had an affair, was "geschmacklos", though:

Geschmacklos sein heißt, sich dem bürgerlich gewordenen oder antibürgerlich gewordenen magischen Kodex nicht unterwerfen. / Geschmacklosigkeit ist eine Gegensprache wie Krankheit oder Kriminalität. / Der Geschmacklose hat seine Lektionen nicht gelernt, wie der Homosexuelle, wie der Jude, wie der Neger. (Pubertät 154-5)

The narrator seems to advocate against adapting to the appropriate model of adherence to societal regulation. Fichte reduces difference to a deficiency of propriety, which diminishes the threat of difference and merely results in disapproval. Alex's gaucherie does not imply a legal transgression, only a cultural one.

The narrator, Hubert, associates his ethnicity--he is half-Jewish--with homosexuality and further explores the limitations of ethnic tolerance with regard to other oppressions on a more immediate level. Like the narrator,

Fichte also was born of a Jewish father and claims to be bisexual, though unlike Fichte, Hubert expresses no heterosexual desire. According to the narrator, people of mixed race attract an abundance of suspicion. When racial boundaries are transgressed, the discernment of racial allegiances often results in confusion and remains suspect.

Wie Tausend Jahre lang Volljuden zwar vergast,
 aber weniger verachtet wurden als Mischlinge und
 Rassenschänderinnen. / Der Neger sei primitiv,
 aber der Mulatte verachtenswert. (Pubertät 51)

People of mixed race present a greater threat since they have violated the sacrosanct law of homogeneity; they are no longer other, but lie somewhere in between two races.

It becomes more difficult to oppress the sameness that they manifest.

Hubert seems to have overcome his internalised hatred for his ethnic origin when he experiences the apprehension of reprisal in the classroom. He promptly dismisses the threat through his Jewish personae:

Und dann habe ich die Halbjudenidee: / – [Der
 Lehrer] darf dich nicht mit dem Rohrstock hauen!
 die noch nicht durch die Schwulenidee: / – Er
 könnte dir ins Gesicht schlagen! / aufgerippelt
 worden ist. (Pubertät 207)

Hubert's Jewish self remains convinced of his rights, that is the right not to be struck for stating his opinion, while

his gay self still fears reprisal. This, however, does not mean that Hubert is now free from ethnic discrimination,⁸⁶ since he discovers that the Nazi legacy has not abandoned him when seeking employment:

Die Idee des Arbeitsamts ist für mich immer noch verbunden mit Rasierklingen und Parteiabzeichen, Hungersuppe und Einweisungsbefehlen für Halbjuden, und der Stempel, mit dem Herr Kaufmann zögert, ist nicht weit von meiner Haut entfernt. (Pubertät 236)

The novel demonstrates the effects of oppression on the individual characters and the futility of their attempts to escape from it. The narrator does illustrate the tolerance of some ethnic minorities, but not the acceptance of them. The novel depicts the social intolerance of difference through a presentation of the treatment of Blacks.

Fichte's work discloses his fascination with Afro-American culture as he attempts to bring this culture out of the closet. Versuch über die Pubertät imparts much about the societal oppression of Blacks⁸⁷ in the Third World in

⁸⁶Fichte continually attacks Christianity since the Bible provides justification for discrimination through its doctrines of monotheism and an ambiguous text. "Es stimmt aber alles mit dem Urteil Christi, daß sie (die Juden) giftige, bittere, rachgirige, hemische Schlangen, meuchel mörder und Teufels Kinder sind, die heimlich stechen und schaden thun, weil sie es öffentlich nicht vermögen..Ein Christ (hat) nächst dem Teufel keinen giftigen, bitteren feind..den einen Juden" (H und L 2 52).

⁸⁷Racial barriers are not always clear in Central and South American countries due to racial intermixing. Race is determined more by economic circumstances and physical features rather than skin colour. See The Brazilian Puzzle:

short passages throughout the novel. The struggle for survival is a daily preoccupation:

Ein arbeitsloser Landarbeiter auf Hispaniola schläft im vom Altöl schwarzen Schlamm. \ Ein arbeitsloser Landarbeiter in Pernambuco läßt seine verhungerten Kinder am Wegrand liegen und wandert weiter nach São Paulo. (Pubertät 273)

This passage contemplates only the economic conditions to which the "Landarbeiter" has been subjected and not the other indignities which he may have previously suffered. Fichte then alludes to the slave ships, which demonstrate the horrendous exploitation by the European colonialists. With an ironic and straightforward tone, he concisely describes the disregard for the cultural contributions of the exploited:

Montaignan bemerkt beim Cognac dringlich, daß Deniker und Delay in Paris begonnen haben, die Erkrankungen der Psyche mit Reserpin zu kurieren, einem Gift aus Rauwolfia serpentina, die schon den Indern, den Arabern, den Afrikanern bekannt war und mit den Sklavenschiffen in die Neue Welt gelangt sein soll. (Pubertät 213)

Fichte, conscious of the oppression of Blacks at the hands of the Western patriarchal tradition, castigates Christianity for its subjection of Blacks in his Homo-

Culture on the Borderlands of the Western World edited by David J. Hess and Roberto A. DaMatta.

sexualität und Literatur 2.⁸⁸ Fichte's inclusion of the exploitation of slaves by European colonialists demonstrates his sensitivity towards the impact of this historical event on society.

Later in the Versuch über die Pubertät, Fichte returns to the theme of slavery, explicitly referring to the use of slaves as factors of production. While the narrator observes a group of young actors in search of work in the vineyards of France, he comments upon the nature of their suffering and then adds:

Das Abschätzen der Schulterbreite, der Muskeln,
der Fingerstärke – in Zeiten, wo Sklaven durch
Fruchtbarkeit den Besitz des sklavenhaltenden
Rechtsanwaltes, Artes, Gouverneurs mehrten, der
Blick auf die Milchdrüsen, die Hoden und die Aus-
geprägtheit des Harnleiters. / Kräftige Hoden usw.
sind dem Weinbauern nicht wichtig. (Pubertät 274)

⁸⁸In Homosexualität und Literatur 2, Fichte sarcastically discusses the biblical justification for slavery. "Wie rechtfertigt man die Versklavung der schwarzen Söhne des schwarzen Ham?... / Luther hatte barmherziger geschrieben:

-ALS nu Noah erwacht von seinem Wein / vnd
erfur / was jm sein kleiner Son gethan hatte /
sprach er / Verflucht sey Canaan / vnd sey ein
Knecht aller knecht vunter seinen Brüdern. Vnd
sprach witer / Gelobet sey Gott der HERR des
Sems / Vnd Canaan sey sein Knecht. Gott breite
Japheth aus/vnd las jn wonen in den Hütten des
Sems / Vnd Canaan sey sein Knecht. (1. Mose 9, 24-27)

Wenigstens zwölf Millionen verschleppte und ermordete Afrikaner waren die Folge dieser Bibelstelle und ihrer Übersetzung" (41-42). Fichte attributes all the atrocities of slavery to Luther's translation, though he fails to consider other historical or socio-economic causes.

Again Fichte's ironic comment demonstrates the privileged positions of the young actors who do not have to confront such appalling treatment. The slaves are stripped of their personal identities and diminished to a mere compilation of physical attributes. The depictions of slavery emphasise the tenuousness of identity and demonstrate that power can reduce subject to object.

Fichte remains conspicuously non-committal throughout the narrative and relies upon the intuition of the reader to discern many of the narrators' judgements or opinions.⁸⁹ The closet remains a futile strategy in combatting the effects of prejudice. In providing tableaux of situational oppression, Fichte represents the grim past and no prospect for a better future. Ethnicity becomes closeted within individuals even though the exposition of ethnic differences in the novel endures as a positive force.

Ethnic Stereotypes

Fichte, like Baldwin, uses sexuality to illustrate the stereotype of ethnically different men as sexual objects. The narrator, who appears to be condemning such exploi-

⁸⁹Fichte's language has been described as "mehrdeutig... [sie] läßt einen Bruch zwischen Gesagtem und Gemeintem vermuten. Anpassung und Tarnung: Imitation der Erwachsenen, ihrer Meinungen und ihrer Sprache ist für das Kind der beste Weg, um ihre Gunst zu finden" (Ullrich 103).

Fichte often places statements of no causality one after the other to create an ironic commentary.

tation, in turn exploits Blacks, or more accurately black men through sexual objectification and fetishisation of cultural rituals.⁹⁰ Fichte's presentation of black ethnicity rests precariously between personal preference and addressing issues of social injustice. The condemnation of stereotypes becomes more obscure since sexual desire remains a positive force in identity formation. In examining this representation of stereotype, it becomes clear that Fichte borders on exposing stereotypes and reinforcing them as components of identity.

The black man becomes a mere physical attribute in the narrator's fantasy: "Ich habe im Halbwachen davon geträumt, die vom Träumen leicht bewegten Wimpern eines Afrikaners neben mir zu beobachten" (Pubertät 14). The narrator consumes the black men in his dreams with his eyes, representing them as "fast nackte schwarze Athleten" (Pubertät 164). In his "Litaneien der Pubertät" (Pubertät 242) the "[s]ehnige und schnelle Hände von Negern" and the "unverän-

⁹⁰Fichte employs various subject matter to obtain this exoticism. "Der Exotismus zeigt sich im Vorstellungsrepertoire aus Sexualität, Tod, sozialer Lebenswelt und Religionen – vermittelt über Wort – und Satzreihung, Metapher und Metonymie, Zitation, Namen-Fetischisierung, szenischem Arrangement und Aussonderung einzelner Sprachteile" (Heinrichs 55). Meyer rightly points to the motivation behind this interest: "Die meisten Freunde und Interpreten hielten die Faszination der afro-amerikanischen Kulturformen bei ihm für einen Endzweck. Vielleicht sogar bloß für eine sexuelle Obsession. Es war viel mehr, und es war vor allem wohl nur ein Durchgangsstadium auf dem Wege zu den Griechen" (Meyer, "Auf der Suche..." 98). Meyer, though, oversteps his bounds in stating that this was an attempt at usurping ancient Greek culture as well.

derbare Tierruch" materialise and incorporate blackness as sexual provocation and equate Blacks to wild animals. The feral atmosphere created by Fichte intensifies the stereotypical illustration of Blacks as instinctively sexual. The caged primitive life-forms in the aquarium and the reference to the Stone Age reinforce this notion:

Im Aquarium von Monaco begegne ich einem amerikanischen Neger in weißer Marineuniform und auf die Zeremonien der kleinbürgerlichen Pubertät, auf die Verwandlungen meiner Begierden in die steinzeitlichen, zeitsteinlichen Betätigungen des Knechts preßt sich nun die Gegenwart des vollkommenen schwarzen Körpers. (Pubertät 295)

This fetishisation is detectable in Fichte's other writings, some of which indicate that this may have been his own preference.⁹¹

Rolf Schwab's biographical account describes his predilection for foreign men. He exploits ethnic

⁹¹Röhr notes the influence that Blacks and black culture had on Fichte: "Der Neger, das Afrikanische und Afroamerikanische spielen eine große Rolle in seinem [Fichte's] Leben. Schwarz ist schön für Fichte. Sowohl die erotische Faszination der Schwarzen für ihn, das Element des Homo- und Bixesuellen im afroamerikanischen Synkretismus als auch sein Interesse an Magie (in einem erweiterten Sinne), Trance, Ritualisierung, von denen er behauptet, daß sie--in unterschiedlicher Ausformung--jedes menschliche Zusammenleben bestimmen, führen ihn auf die Reise. Die Ethnographie ist Teil seines Ichs und dessen Geschichte. Und kein von ihm selbst getrenntes wissenschaftliches Forschungsinteresse" (102). Although the professional devotion can be lauded, Fichte's objectification of Blacks further enhances the already damaging stereotype of Blacks as sexual animals.

differences through his sexual relationships:

Der Libanese war also brutal. / Der hat mich ganz mörderisch gefickt, mit aus und spritzen und allem und er hat auch geküßt. (Pubertät 136)

Ostensibly the submissive partner, Schwab integrates his prejudices in the description of the Lebanese man as a sexual animal. The scene further enhances the image of the sexual stereotype of the hot-blooded Mediterranean, subjugating the significance of ethnic difference to sexual gratification. He continues:

Bei dem Türken war ich noch nicht. Das Wochenende hat mich so 150 Mark gekostet. Es wird ja alles teurer. Aber ich will Freitag nächster Woche hin, wenn es Gehalt gegeben hat, in das Wohnheim fahren. (Pubertät 137)

Schwab's life emerges as a conglomeration of international sexual experiences, and in an equally voyeuristic manner he also retells several reports he has heard about the escapades of others in foreign lands.⁹²

Dieser Kaufmann aus Hannover, der plant eine Reise nach Martinique. Der sagt, das soll ganz sagenhaft dort sein, die Neger dort und die Einheim-

⁹²As Uwe Pörksen notes: "Dem Leser wird die Rolle des Voyeurs zugemutet" (38). The reader is not only a voyeuristic witness to these sexual spectacles, but also to other cultural anomalies that Fichte presents through his depiction of black rituals.

ischen.

Emil fliegt wieder nach Bangkok. Das sind alles solche Siamkatzen. In Bangkok gibt es ja auch einen Jungenpuff mit Intimmassage.

Die Jungen streichen dem alten Mann unablässig über den Bauch und sind ganz begeistert über die Speckfalten. Ob die wohl an Buddha dabei denken?
(Pubertät 137)

In search of the definitive sexual experience or merely a diversion from his closeted existence, Rolf persists by acquiring sexual partners with more and more unconventional characteristics. In the last encounter he describes, he has had a sexual liaison with a murderer. Fichte, only nominally the author of this section, has, however, decided to include this passage which compels the correlation between ethnicity and criminality. The behaviour of this free, white male typifies the exploitation of difference or "other" in the pursuit of pleasure.

Versuch über die Pubertät reflects the pervasiveness of racial discrimination through colour symbolism conflating blackness and death to fetish. The novel alludes to this fetish focusing now on objectifying the dead, instead of Blacks. The coroner questions Hubert: "Warum interessieren Sie sich für die Toten?" He replies, "Das ist die Antwort auf seine Frage. Denn ich interessiere mich nicht touristisch für die Toten, sondern für das Auseinanderfallen des Bildes, das mich ausmacht. / Warum malte Rembrandt?"

(Pubertät 19). Hubert's response seems contradictory since

he dissects the body to find the locus of himself. This self-revelation is tantamount to Fichte's message throughout the novel.⁹³ Towards the end of the novel the same passage is reiterated. Hubert encounters the black Testanière, a further object of Hubert's desire and curiously desire becomes inextricably united with the categories of race and death.

Since the narrator never refutes the notion that black men are not sexual animals, the stereotypes appear to be presented as truth. The black characters do not speak in the novel so that the effect of this stereotype on the individual character is not elucidated. The constant emphasis on sexual desire as an attempt towards personal growth further reinforces the stereotype.

Cultural Affirmation

⁹³Böhme explains the significance of the creative process with reference to Rembrandt's "Anatomische Vorlesung des Dr. Joan Deyman" (1656): "Der Maler, selbst unsichtbar, macht den Anatomen und die Leiche so sorgsam sichtbar wie sein Gegenüber, der Arzt, sorgsam das Innere des Körpers sichtbar macht -: Der Maler ist das unsichtbare Double des Anatomen, der noch niemals Geschautes in Augenschein nimmt.

Stumme Kommunikation zwischen Maler und Anatom, vermittelt durch die wie auf einem Opfertische ausgestreckte Leiche und ihr stummes, jetzt, genau jetzt ihr Geheimnis freigebendes Fleisch. Eine wissenschaftliche Operation - eine ästhetische Operation -: zusammentreffend an einer Leiche, die im schweigenden Sprechen ihrer ikonologischen Anordnung eine dritte Operationsform bedeutet: die Opferung. Eben diese verwandelt das Bild Rembrandts zum dramatischen Augenblick, zum Höhepunkt einer Kulthandlung, einer rituellen Zeremonie, wo die *ἄναστασις*- die *Wiedererkenntnis* (Pubertät, 19) einsetzt, säkularisiert gesprochen: die *Analysis* (ebd.)" (Böhme, Riten 200).

While the narrator does fetishise Blacks from a sexual and cultural perspective, there nevertheless still exists within the text images of Afro-American culture that enlighten the reader. These images posit a conceptualisation of Afro-American culture which diminishes difference and celebrates universal cultural homogeneity.⁹⁴ This section investigates the dissolution of cultural barriers in an attempt to unify differences. Curiously, the racial affirmation in the novel occurs on the cultural level since the black characters do not have their own voice. In providing examples of Afro-American rituals, Fichte validates the identity of black culture through the constant comparison of ritual acts to routine Western conduct. Ritualised acts become spiritual acts of healing in other cultures and are compared with more practical Western applications. Fichte imbues the "magic" of ritual with the power to heal the soul.

The comparison between cultures demonstrates that dissimilar acts possess a very similar societal function.

⁹⁴As mentioned, Fichte is not ignorant of the discrimination which takes place against Blacks and cites numerous examples in his Homosexualität und Literatur 2:

"- Rassismus hat es in Kuba nie gegeben. / - Hier in den kubanischen Restaurants von Miami kann man nur die amerikanischen Neger nicht ausstehen mit ihrem schlechten Benehmen und ihrem grässlichen neurotischen Gehabe. / - In Kuba hatte man nur etwas gegen Ehen zwischen Weissen und Negern. Mit solchen Leuten redete man nicht" (117). Again, Fichte uses irony to illustrate the existence of discrimination. He mockingly confirms that the prohibition of inter-racial marriage evades inclusion under the rubric of prejudice and remains a sensible practice.

Though such Western conduct may not have ordinarily been considered ritual by Occidental measure, once Fichte fashions the parallel it becomes obvious that behaviour that postures as Western propriety can be interpreted as ritual behaviour. In particular, Fichte focuses on the religious rituals that encompass death and sex, as he seeks to unite the significance of the two. Similarly, Western society as interpreted through Freudian psychology has also conjoined birth and death at the level of the subconscious. Fichte provides no explicit comparisons, of course, but provides the necessary "facts" pertaining to these rituals that are significantly similar to compel this comparison. The description of the Voodoo ritual appears strikingly reminiscent of the autopsy scene in the coroner's institute:

Der Gerichtsmediziner nimmt ein viel zu kleines Messer und schneidet vom "Salzfäßchen" zwischen den Schlüsselbeinen herunter, über die Brust, den Magen, bis in die Unterhose hinein. Sezierer und Sezierter sehn sich so ähnlich, daß es wirkt, als schneide ein bleiches Double des Toten sich selbst auf. (Pubertät 21)

Compare this passage with the following:

- Sie setzen jetzt an und schneiden das Bärenauge -- wie man es wohl auch nennt--bis zum Muttermund hin aus. / Dann binden Sie alles fest zusammen. Sie füllen Asche in die rechte Hand und führen damit vor dem Opferteil eines der heiligen Zeichen aus, schließlich mit Maismehl und Reismehl und als

letztes mit zermörserten Baumrinden.... \ Jeder
 habe einen solchen lebenden Leichnam gesehen.
 (Pubertät 170)

The association of the coroner's institute as a "nach nassem Mehl riechenden Palast" alludes to the function of flour in the Voodoo ritual. The analogous situations reveal the corresponding practices between the two cultures when dealing with death. The power of Voodoo, which purports to create the living dead, parallels the portrayal of the coroner and the corpse through which a new identity is constructed or at least metaphorically the two beings appear as one essence.

The connection between ritual and "scientific" experimentation further reinforces Fichte's criticism of cultural prejudice. He incorporates these concepts in his condemnation of ethnic elitism even though the ethnic significance of each process may be somewhat different.⁹⁵ The culturally appropriated medical procedure, trepanation, employed in the West to alleviate pressure from the brain by

⁹⁵Fichte is critical of the intelligentsia as well as modern science: "Beleidigt in seiner Rolle als Mann ist auch der heterosexuelle Literaturwissenschaftler von der die Freundinnen ansingenden Sappho, vor allem aber will der Dr. phil., der Herr Professor, der Dichterfürst keineswegs in der Peepshow angetroffen werden und überführt sein, daß er sich – wie Baudelaire – am Spiel der Freundinnen entzündet. Dies alles mag die skurrilen Reaktionen erklären helfen, welche Männer vor den Gesängen der lesbischen Dichterin zeigten" (H und L 2, 96). He points out not only the homophobic error, but also the necessity to sexually link Sappho with men since universal male self-esteem depends upon this condition.

boring a hole in the skull, appears in Afro-American culture as a sacrificial rite.

Nahe den Troglodyten liegt der Vierzehnjährige
aufgebahrt, mit kultischen Schnitten, rechts und
links am Brustkorb. Getötet durch Trepanieren des
Schädels, durch Abtrennen des eben reifen
Geschlechtsteils? Er wurde Ogum geopfert.
(Pubertät 23)

The narrator provides this ironic representation of trepanation--what in Western tradition would constitute a life-saving procedure--as the offering to the god, Ogum in order to elucidate the valuation of cultural conventions. The relationship of death to its specific cultural inscription is scrutinised under the cross-cultural microscope, which adeptly provides a varied, reverent perspective on the issue.

The truly positive attributes of ethnicity exist in the portrayal of difference. The allowance of dissimilarity creates what Fichte terms the magical qualities of culture.

The concept of magic assumes a significant role in the rituals of Afro-American culture. In examining the prologue, Fichte distinguishes between a conventional definition of magic and the manner in which the text consolidates the magical elements:⁹⁶

⁹⁶Casanova reiterates the danger inherent in exposing the "magic" or normalizing homosexuality and subjugating it to the censure of the conscience. "Cette Aufklärung entreprise aux origines mêmes de l'homosexualité et d'un certain nombre de perversions, veut avoir une portée morale. Hubert

Ich beschloß, von nun an die Handlungen einzuteilen in magische und vom Magischen abgelöste. / (Wobei ich den Begriff des Magischen für meinen Gebrauch etwas umwandelte.) (Pubertät 9)

The conceptualisation of magic as a moral guide has been mentioned in the reference to the "magischen Kodex" which could be considered a replacement for Christian morality. The magic in Afro-American culture represents an enigmatic, spiritual essence that creates diversity and reduces the stigmatisation of difference. The significance of magic to Afro-American spirituality is languishing as the novel summarises the pessimistic prospects for the narrator to attain this emancipating spirituality.

Ich habe das Getränk für den Gott Xango getrunken. Die Hände des schwarzen Matrosen verwandeln sich, wie meine Hände, in die Äste und Borken des Baumes Loko. / Magie ist die große Einbettung ins Instinktive. / Von dieser Einbettung ist nach für mich ein Betonbett mit Abfluß, auf dem Lamarcas Leiche liegt. / Der Mensch ist kein Baum. Der Zauber ist zerschnitten. / Jetzt beruhigen sich allmählich die erbrechenartigen Erinnerungen. Die Gerüche, die Töne, die Temperaturen, die Farben verlieren an Heftigkeit. / Ich lebe weiter in einer ganz säkularisierten Welt. (Pubertät 298)

Fichte reconnaît l'ambiguïté de son livre, le risque de se contaminer soi-même ou de propager la radio-activité qu'il manipule. L'enjeu du livre est quand même une purification, la fin du "magique", la "sécularisation" du monde, opérée par la connaissance" (Casanova, "Puberté", 140).

The magical forces embodied in Afro-American rituals as celebrated by Fichte have been annihilated as the novel concludes with an ominous pessimism.

Versuch über die Pubertät contrasts racial discrimination and abuse typified by colonialisation, stereotype and the holocaust with the fetishisation of difference. However, Fichte promotes the condemnation of racial intolerance and the exploration of cultural similarities. This presentation of cultural analogies exposes the myth of stereotype and the unmitigated anxiety of difference. The balance between racial affirmation and exploitation becomes less occluded in the novel, as Fichte's attempt at a political solution becomes evident through an understanding of the dictates of difference.

B. GENDER IN VERSUCH ÜBER DIE PUBERTÄT

Fichte presents a critique of traditional gender behaviour in Versuch über die Pubertät by obscuring the boundaries between masculinity and femininity. This section investigates the reduction of women's identity to social function, the female roles of seductress and passive victim and an affirmation of the single mother. The discussion continues with an examination of male roles and masculinity.

An investigation of the male roles reveals the femininity of the gay male characters, stereotypical male violence and the affirmation of masculinity through the narrative style of the novel. Throughout the novel, Fichte conflates gender transgression to sacred act, but does not dismiss the cultural proscription of this behaviour.

i) **Female Roles and Femininity**

The roles of women in Versuch über die Pubertät are minimised and Fichte provides no commentary on the position of women in society. The absence of women in Fichte's work is surprising since he appropriates the agendas of other oppressed groups. Though the reason for this omission remains elusive, Fichte may simply have rendered a realistic portrayal of women and reserved his own views on the

treatment of women by men. His opinion on the consequence of women's victimisation in society is more clearly elucidated in his Homosexualität und Literatur 2 which appeared in 1988.⁹⁷

As in Baldwin's Another Country, women function as wives and mothers and constitute status symbols in support of manhood. In Fichte's novel, the male characters also cannot fulfil the prerequisites of manhood until they have had sex with a woman. Versuch über die Pubertät, however, differs from Another Country in that the motivations and actions of the women characters are denied volition, though admittedly there is little introspection into the motivation of the male characters. This section investigates the lack of the female characters' individual identity, their stereotypical portrayal as seductrice and their affirmation in the role of single mother. Fichte provides a portrayal of the dismal and insignificant position of women in society and denies them any personal identity.

Women in the Closet

The narrator closets the female characters in the novel

⁹⁷Fichte later attacks Christianity by quoting the Bible in order to criticize the tenet of women's inferior social position: "– Und zum Weibe sprach er(Luther): Ich will dir viel Schmerzen schaffen, wenn du schwanger wirst; du sollst mit Schmerzen Kinder gebären; und dein Verlangen soll nach deinem Mann sein, und er soll dein Herr sein. (1. Mose 3, 16)" (H und L 2 54).

by denying them a voice. I will examine the emotionally defective relationships between women and men where women provide a social function and their individual identities remain closeted. This treatment of women might be expected from a novel dealing with a male homosexual theme, for women exist supposedly outside the homosexual framework. Women do not constitute objects of desire for men, their bodies are irrelevant.⁹⁸

Most of the women introduced in the novel are the wives of homosexuals or paedophiles, who marry the women to maintain their social acceptability. This enables these men to escape the violence and discrimination of society which their sexual behaviour provokes. Matrimony supports the bourgeois ideal of family, complies with the obligatory socio-economic contract of production and tacitly oppresses lesbians and gays. For gay men, marriage ironically remains the perfect sanctuary since they can conceal their sexuality in the closet and maintain their privilege.

Pozzi, Alex, Testanière, and Hans Eppendorfer all marry to assure their male role within society will not be scrutinised. Furthermore, these men procure the advantages of marriage in addition to preserving a separate sex life with other men outside the conjugal relationship. The women

⁹⁸This opinion has altered in recent years especially with regard to North American gay fiction, where the supportive friendships between women, lesbians and gay men and the commonality of their struggles has become a popular topic.

these men marry presumably are cognizant of this sexual behaviour and resign themselves to a non-monogamous relationship.

Women constitute the supportive element in these relationships, attending to their husbands' emotional requirements, or providing a mechanism for societal acceptance, though their husbands rarely acknowledge this kindness.

Hubert looks to a woman, Irma, in order to attain assuagement of his emotional distress:

Ich erzählte Irma davon[the autopsy]. / Um es loszuwerden, wie man sich angewöhnt hat zu sagen. / Ich okuliere durch meine Erzählung Realität; durch Mitteilung entsteht keine Verminderung der Bilder, sondern eine Verdoppelung. Was geschieht mit ihr, der ich erzähle? (Pubertät 16-7)

Hubert exploits Irma, alleviating his anxiety through recounting the details of his experience at the coroner's institute. She becomes merely an instrument for his purposes, although he does demonstrate some concern for her. This seemingly parasitic relationship contains an emotionally reciprocal dimension and comprises one of the more constructive, yet scarcely referred to, relationships.

The reader cannot discern the nature of their relationship, Irma's name simply surfaces. This character does, however,

appear in subsequent novels such as Hotel Garni.⁹⁹

Pozzi's relationship with his wife, consistent with the aforementioned marriage paradigm, exists apparently only as an acceptable method of procuring a family and societal validation. Liana, Pozzi's wife, appears infrequently and the couple seems to conduct their lives separately. The information obtained about Pozzi serves to indicate his disdain for his wife since he appears more preoccupied with young boys and play-writing than with a family life.

Pozzi liebte Friedhelm Hinrichs, der ihn schlägt. Pozzi heiratete als junger Expressionist Liana, die einen anderen Bewerber hatte abblitzen lassen, weil er sich ihr in Papschen genaht. / Werner Maria unterhielt eine von Liana für schädlich erachtete Liaison mit einer Russin. / Pozzi zeugte Anna. (Pubertät 46)

In order to placate his wife, he provides her with a child and maintains complete command over her and his daughter. No evidence exists that the liaison with the Russian woman has concluded, nor that he has any regard for his wife's discomfort.

Pozzi continues his affairs with other women or boys.

Liana hat sich daran gewöhnt, daß Pozzi sich nicht

⁹⁹Hotel Garni belongs to Fichte's 19-volume magnum opus Die Geschichte der Empfindsamkeit that is in the process of being posthumously published. The character of Irma closely resembles Fichte's wife, Leonore Mau.

um sie kümmert und Pozzi sie nicht gehen läßt. Sie hat sich an ihre Abhängigkeit gewöhnt und Pozzi hat sich daran gewöhnt, daß sie als siebzigjährige wie ein zwölfjähriges Mädchen aussieht. Und Pozzi hat sich an sein überjähriges Leid um Trygve gewöhnt... (Pubertät 147)

The couple is resigned to an arrangement in which Liana performs her function as a dutiful housewife even though Pozzi no longer desires her. Pozzi is allowed to pursue his own love interest for Trygve or any other boy. Likewise, Alex and Testanière, Hubert's lover in France, treat their wives with utter disregard as the narrator flippantly notes: "...veilleicht hat Alex sie nur aus semantischen Gründen geheiratet?" (Pubertät 186).

More revealing than the fictive marriages that emerge in the novel is the description of Hans Eppendorfer's marriage. He seems quite satisfied with being married, though he too engages in extramarital infidelities with other men. For him, the idea of being needed comprises male fulfilment and he seems indifferent to his wife's emotional requirements.

Ich habe einige wenige Freunde und ich habe meine Frau. Ich liebe meine Frau. Sie braucht mich und gibt mir das Gefühl, gebraucht zu werden und das finde ich fantastisch. Ich habe nicht die Absicht, sie jemals zu verlassen... (Pubertät 268)

His position indicates the impertinence of a man who has

previously brutally murdered a woman, yet continues to dominate his wife and attributes no autonomous volition to her. He does not articulate the intentions of his wife or concede that she could credibly have an intention. She relies upon her husband to fulfil her needs which supports his view on the necessity of male authority in male-female relationships.

Fichte portrays marriage as a superfluous institution, as a method of establishing a family and a means of social sanctioning. He never comments directly upon marriage, but his glimpses demonstrate resolutely the oppression and disregard for women's identity by these men in their marital and other relationships. The women in the novel do not struggle to attain an identity; their gender has predetermined their fate.

Stereotypes of Women

The female characters conform to their function in accordance with the patriarchal model--they are submissive and supportive of their husbands; they are temptresses; they are objectified and they are violated. This section explores these conceptualisations of women and reveals the effects these stereotypes have on women's oppression. Once again, women's power is limited to their mythological sexual identity.

Within the first three pages of the novel, the concept-

ualisations of women introduced by Fichte constitute some of the traditional categories of literary representation of women such as virgin goddess, and dutiful care-giver or mother. The first image of women that Fichte offers is the Virgin Mary in the "nach nassem Mehl riechenden Palast" (Pubertät 11) superseded by a glimpse of young women who cleanse the corpses and then a depiction of "eine Frau im blutigen Kleid" (Pubertät 13) with "ein[em] Kopfver- letzte[n], and "ein[em] sandige[n] Junge[n]" (Pubertät 13). Fichte later tarnishes the image of the young, diligent caretakers and presents a negative depiction of women when the narrator states "[m]anche Leichenwäscherinnen entjungfern die toten Mädchen" (Pubertät 20). This "heinous" portrayal of the young women sexually defiling the corpses that they are commissioned to clean vividly exemplifies an antithesis to the care-giving role ascribed to women. The reversal of expected behaviour encroaches on male territory, since if women are to be deflowered either dead or alive, the feat must necessarily be accomplished by a man. This representation of women certainly avoids flattery, but it does nonetheless grant a powerfully sexual dimension to women.

In addition to depicting this carnal disposition, this portrayal of women reveals their capacity for violence. Other disparaging typecasts of women occur in the novel, such as the female paederast and the temptress, which are

equally uncomplimentary. The actions of these women interestingly enough are directed against homosexuals. A nun sexually "abuses" Hubert in a dream that depicts a series of sexual initiation experiences.

Ich träume, ich sitze auf dem gußeisernen Trittbrett der Nähmaschine im Herrenzimmer, und Schwester Appia schwebt herein. Sie beugt sich zu mir herunter und drückt mir mit ausgestrecktem Finger unter das Unkeusche und fliegt mit flatternden Schleiern durch das Herrenzimmer, an der Zimmerpalme vorbei, wieder weg. (Pubertät 38-9)¹⁰⁰

A considerable portion of the dream imagery concerning women contains references to Kleist's work.¹⁰¹

The contrast between the virgin-like piety of Kleist's Cäcilie conflicts with the presentation of this seductress's attempted corruption of a youth. This conceptualisation of woman nevertheless proposes that women are evil enchantresses and possess supernatural powers over men. The mystical components of the dream episode are evident and

¹⁰⁰In Fichte's Das Waisenhaus, Schwester Appia also materialises at the orphanage where Hubert was placed as a child.

¹⁰¹This particular illustration alludes to Kleist's Die heilige Cäcilie and compels a direct comparison. The conversion of the young iconoclasts to Catholicism through a fantastic experience depicted in Kleist's Cäcilie parallels Hubert's own desire for conversion from his previous homosexual behaviour to a heterosexual orientation. The transformation remains, however, incomplete throughout the novel--the preference of heterosexuality will be discussed in detail in the section devoted to the topic of sexuality.

ascribe a sexual aggressiveness to Kleist's innocent woman, and also attributes authority to her comportment.

After the dream episode, the narrator refers to the "erste Erektion...auf der Mutterbrust" (Pubertät 38), which in conjunction with the previous imagery alludes to the Freudian Oedipal myth that permeates the novel. Fichte transforms these culturally sanctioned symbols "ins Magische", but since the absence of a father figure does not allow for the obligatory castration to ensue, conversion to heterosexuality has not taken place. Hubert's wish is "vom Magischen abgelöst." His mother, like Yves's, has failed to provide Hubert with the necessary means to become a man. Women appear to be responsible for male sexuality though they do not seem to be aware of this facility.

Anna, Pozzi's daughter, also appears as a seductress. She "corrupts" Trygve/Mozart, with whom Hubert was having an affair¹⁰² and she smugly acknowledges her sexual triumph. When Hubert finds the two in bed together, a scene which apparently he recalls in his consciousness, the "reality" of the situation appears confused:

Liegt Anna dort im zerknüllten Bettzeug und
lächelt mir zu mit dem Lächeln der Nachbesitzerin?
/ Oder liegt Trygve dort sichtbar? / Für den
romanesken Effekt wäre Trygve besser. Er hat das
weiße Federbett bis zu seinem Hals hochgezogen und
von seiner Brust abwärts wölbt sich die Bettdecke

¹⁰²In the first book of the tetralogy, a woman, Detlev's mother, betrays Detlev/Hubert.

wie über einem Geschwür. / Anna, verborgen unter dem Zubett, weil ich zu früh kam, wie ein Embryo. Aber das Umgekehrte ist wahrscheinlicher.
 (Pubertät 117-118)

Hubert's resentment and pain enhance the condemnatory portrayal of Anna, since she has pirated away Hubert's lover. Trygve seems exonerated from his culpability and responsibility. He relinquishes his homosexual allegiance and assumes the traditional role of male, expressing no consideration for the previously desired object, Hubert. "Mozart hat seine Schwule abgelegt wie eine Badehose und die Tochter hat dem Vater vergeben, daß der dem Schäker vergeben hat, daß er die Tochter vergewaltigte" (Pubertät 120).

This statement summarises the relationship and misunderstanding of the sexual views of men and women by affirming that men maintain a sense of inconsequentiality about sex. Women appear as interchangeable and frequently involuntary sex objects and must overlook the male attitude towards sex.

The desire for women by some of the men in the novel is precarious as they vacillate between women and male adolescents with a propensity toward the latter. Women exist as a function of their reproductive capacity and Fichte contributes a cultural comparison of this postulate: "Der Blutpakt der Dahome. / - Tausende werden wegen Unfruchtbarkeit erschossen werden!" (Pubertät 63). Women are reduced to reproductive commodities, worthless if they cannot produce

offspring. This diminished function solely as child-bearer reflects the ease of viewing women as objects both of production and of desire.

Aside from the psychological violence women endure, they are also subjected to physical abuse. There is mention that Pozzi's daughter Anna was raped, Eppendorfer brutally murdered a woman¹⁰³, and Hubert "vergewaltig[t] die Marquise von O" (Pubertät 39). Women become the targets of male violence securing the notion of the culturally inscribed hatred of women.

An examination of the negative stereotypes of women perpetrated by Fichte, illustrates the connection between the oppression of the homosexual and women.¹⁰⁴ In limiting women's power to a mythic representation of their sexuality, Fichte demonstrates that sexual mythology becomes a powerful weapon in the oppression of women and gay men. Like gay

¹⁰³This event was a factual occurrence for which Eppendorfer was sentenced to prison. A detailed account of this experience is documented in Hubert Fichte spricht mit dem Ledermann.

¹⁰⁴Fichte acknowledges the relatedness of these oppressions. "Das Recht der Frauen auf sich selbst, die Liebesmöglichkeit der Homosexuellen, die Achtung vor Negern, die Emanzipation der Arbeiterklasse, eine vernünftige Schonung der Umwelt – nicht nur in der Ersten Welt, nein, vor allem in der sogenannten Dritten Welt -- werden unter Berufung auf die Bibel täglich verhindert. Sie können durch Gottes Wort, übersetztes Wort Gottes verhindert werden. Die Luther-Bibel wird täglich in Schulen und Kirchen unter Jugendlichen mehr als jedes andre Buch verbreitet" (H u L 2 60). Suzanne Pfarr also investigates the connection between homophobia and sexism in her Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism.

men, women are vilified so that the violence directed against them appears justified.

Affirmations of Women

Hubert's mother, who embodies a combination of roles, exemplifies the most affirmative portrait of women in the novel.¹⁰⁵ Though the affirmative images of women in the novel are few, I will consider the role of Hubert's mother and her attempts at rearing a son without the aid of her husband. This brief although affirmative image of women indicates the oppression that women endure since their only positive representation in the novel is reduced to archetype.

The only information about Hubert's mother, however, is presented through Hubert's perspective and she has no voice of her own. Fichte excludes substantial detail regarding her life. The narrator communicates that she survives by working to support Hubert and herself despite being burdened with the responsibility of raising her child as a single, unwed mother. As a prompter in the Hamburg theatres, she manages to secure enough money for both of them, though what she does earn is reflected through her son's concerns.

¹⁰⁵Hans Meyer comments upon Fichte's relationship with his mother and his search for a father figure. "Auch diese Suche nach einer möglichen Freundschaft mit Herodotos war also nach wie vor als Suche nach dem Vater zu verstehen. War abermals Absage an die Mutter" (Meyer, "Auf der Suche", 98).

Hubert worries about consuming too much of the family's staples, indicating their poor financial condition. It could, however, be contended that she is an incompetent mother since she has allowed Pozzi to adopt the adolescent,¹⁰⁶ though no evidence suggests that she had any previous knowledge of Pozzi's "paedophilia."

Fichte demonstrates the oppression of women through the lack of positive imagery. The novel privileges the male aesthetic and reduces women's value even as objects of desire. Women sacrifice their personal identities and apparently remain necessary for men as previously demonstrated by their function as mothers, whores and social sanctioners. The sexual mythology imposed upon women serves to limit women's expression and provides an excuse for male domination.

ii) Male Roles and Masculinity

In Another Country, Baldwin offers the masculine archetype of the American cowboy, which he continually criticises. He persistently maintains a preference for masculine behaviour in all the male characters and a disdain for men who exhibit any evidence of femininity. Fichte also interjects themes of masculine domination and phallic

¹⁰⁶In Das Waisenhaus, the mother also sends Detlev/Hubert away to the convent during the war to protect him from the Nazis.

omnipotence into his novel. Fichte, however, explores more fully the integration of masculine and feminine qualities in the individual male characters, which Baldwin only insinuates. The novel still delineates a dominant masculine perspective and a relatively inconsequential feminine viewpoint.

As in Baldwin's work, the obsession with masculinity converges on the phallus, but the phallus here signifies a more sexually and linguistically focused force than Baldwin's concept of the phallus represented by hatred and greed. In Versuch über die Pubertät the masculine manifests itself in the male characters as men continuously compete amongst themselves for identification with the phallic signifier, power. The characters who do not vie for this privilege are either women or identified as gay. The portrayal of women or gay men who appropriate masculine power occurs infrequently. Fichte, in striving to expose the complexities of the masculine and feminine dichotomy, concentrates on masculine obsession and does not provide a resolution which reflects an equitable power division.

The concept of masculine domination and power exercised through societal complicity reflects the subjugation of both feminine and concomitantly gay. This section examines the betrayal of male femininity and its role as ritual. The "imposition" of femininity on gays betrays the cult of masculinity presented in the novel and, as discussed in the

theoretical survey, has played a large role in the historical formation of a gay identity. As a result, the masculine stereotype of violence figures greatly into the portrayal of male identity in the novel. In order to further affirm the notion of masculinity, Fichte imbues the novel with a factual, objective tone. Since masculinity figures greatly in the representation of sexuality, Fichte appears to favour these personal expressions of masculine violence. Nonetheless, the novel does condemn public displays of violence.

Closeted Male Femininity

Femininity in the male characters has two functions; it fulfils a spiritual need through the creation of a religious ideal--a bi-gendered nature--and it stigmatises the individual as aberrant from the norms dictated by society. The feminine characteristics of males are always attributed to men who engage in same-sex activity which serves to reinforce the stereotype of the gay male as psychically feminine. I will demonstrate that the attribution of feminine characteristics to gay men further closets them and that men who display feminine behaviour do so within restricted confines. Nonetheless, the effeminate male characters express their individual identities and their effeminacy contains a sacred dimension.

The unclarity and confusion of gender identity expands

more conspicuously when an analysis of the counterpart to the masculine male, the effeminate male, is addressed. Unlike Another Country, Versuch über die Pubertät does not present such a contemptible view of male femininity, yet he still challenges the origins of male femininity and cross-dressing, depicting femininity as "unnatural" and as an incomprehensible attribute for a man. Hubert remains confused over the issue, and though he can conceive of his sexuality as being "fifty-fifty", he finds it difficult to appreciate the feminine disposition of his peers. "- Ich bin weiblich, sagt Bernd, und [Hubert] weiß nicht, was er damit meint" (Pubertät 79). This statement coincides with the perception that identity constantly fluctuates and avoids definition. Hubert never decides unequivocally upon a fixed identity for himself and cannot attribute any meaning to Bernd's identification with or imitation of the feminine.

The subtlety of communication and the use of ambiguous meanings aids in determining the sexual preferences of the desired. This circumlocution is mirrored as Hubert plays the coquette during an outing with Onkel Willi:

Lispeln. Flüstern. Schäkern, Andeuten. / Onkel Willi, der Dralle, hält mich hin, will mich nur halb verstehen, ich wahre mir Sicherheit, gebe mich nur halb preis und eine Verachtung isoliert sich in ihm und ich giere weiter nach Wegwurf und entwickle die Gegenwehr des Homosexuellen zwischen allen Torten und Tanten der Welt. Wie ich ihn beinahe verachte, den blonden Hausmeister mit seinen Landserwitzen. Aber unsere gegenseitige Gier und Verachtung werden nicht virulent, denn

ich bin der Enkel meiner Großmutter und er ist Onkel Willi von Tante Hannah. (Pubertät 87-8)

Hubert acts out the feminine role of seductress, while attempting to determine if Onkel Willi will participate. Fichte attempts to explore the stereotypical lisping and coquettish homosexual character, which Baldwin also produces in his loud and garish portrayal of effeminate gays.

Fichte indicates some of the more elusive aspects of gay identities and their subsequent oppression.¹⁰⁷ Aside from indicating feminine behaviour, cross-dressing conveys the identification of homosexuals as "women" and the imitative process of identity goes beyond the elusive masquerade. This exaggeration of the feminine becomes evident when Fichte describes Erwin:

Es ist Rosenmontag und neben Dante im Regen
verwandeln sich die Fassaden der wilhelminischen
Mietshäuser in muffige Palazzi Pitti...
Die Tochter der Geliebten des Schlagerkomponisten
macht auf und am Ende des langen dunklen
Arbeiterflurs thront eine dicke, alte Frau mit
gefärbten, gelackten schwarzen Haaren, Boa und
Kunstseidestrümpfen und Blumen aus den dreißiger
Jahren: Erwin. (Pubertät 145)

Fichte notes that normality does not accommodate Erwin and

¹⁰⁷Wearing woman's attire is a stereotyped behaviour for gays and, however inaccurate the stereotype may be for the majority of homosexuals, cross-dressing has nonetheless maintained a prominent role in gay history, gay culture and gay oppression. See Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past edited by Martin Duberman et al.

would pervert this "geschminkte Rosenmontagsgottheit." The declaration appears to affirm cross-dressing. The narrator alludes to the analogous practice of cross-dressing during religious rituals.¹⁰⁸ The application of cosmetics is usually ascribed to the feminine in Western society except perhaps in the theatre, where a speculation of a homosexual presence is assumed. The odours of cosmetics associated with ritual, either during embalming or in the theatre convey the sanctity of the experience. At the theatre Hubert declares, "Gerüche, Gerüche von Schminken, Schminken bedeuten mir, so lange ich empfinden kann, nichts Lächerliches, sondern etwas Religiöses" (Pubertät 187). This assignation of a traditionally feminine act to ritual reflects the role of woman as caretaker of spirituality. Femininity appears to govern religious ritual through an external and internal beautification process in which men and women participate.

In addition to the secretive world of Erwin's cross-dressing, another image of a cross-dresser is presented in the relatively public domain of a transvestite bar. Rudi,

¹⁰⁸Heinrichs alludes to Fichte's curiosity about gender confusion with respect to religious ritual: "Das Verhältnis von Ritual und Sexualität wird von Fichte narrativ, aphoristisch und essayistisch abgehandelt. Er beobachtet und beschreibt homosexuelle und transvestitische, bisexuelle und hermaphroditische Wünsche, Manifestationen (im entsprechenden Götterglauben) und Abwehrreaktionen. Die Geschlechtlichkeit der Gläubigen der afroamerikanischen Religionen ist unbestimmt, fast alle haben 'androgynen Züge'" (Heinrichs 54).

the owner of the bar, is socially and financially successful. The ageless Rudi remains an anomaly defying both gender and age categorisation. Hubert explicitly questions the origins of transvestitism:

Ja, Rudi aus den Drei Weisheiten. Der jetzt nicht mehr ganz junge, das heißt, zeitlos alte, der jenseits der Geschlechter unbewegliche Besitzer des Transvestitenlokals, von dem man fragt: /
- Wie wird einer so? (Pubertät 203)

The indeterminable question remains unanswered and indicates the exaggerated fascination of this "aberration" from normality which continues to pose a threat to society. The novel offers no hypotheses as to the origins of transvestitism, and this inability to provide a rational explanation substantiates the notion of a duality of gendered behaviour in men. The homosexual god Xango, who is presented as embodying both the masculine and feminine, remains idealised and incorporates a religious mysteriousness that makes homosexuality inaccessible to mortals. This differs from the Oedipal myth which proposes that homosexual behaviour is an incomplete stage of human sexual development rather than a divine attribute.

Fichte's treatment of effeminacy in males remains cautious. Though he celebrates the effeminate male as liberated and sacred, the social stigma still exists. Effeminacy in males is still confined to gay men and these

gay men still remain closeted or limited to sympathetic surroundings.

Masculine Stereotypes

One of the narrative levels in the novel concentrates on Hubert's sexual and/or love relationships with other men.

Hubert has few female friends, which may indicate some insecurity about his masculinity. He adheres to a masculine cult¹⁰⁹ to maintain his masculine identity since women exist outside of this male arena. I will investigate the concepts of masculinity in Versuch über die Pubertät where male love is again conflated with violent sexuality. Fichte imbues exhibitions of masculinity with sexual violence which results in an epiphany of individual emotions for those involved.

The need for the expression of feeling or at least ambiguity of emotion especially with regard to sex and love, both confounds and typifies the aura of masculinity. Hubert observes that "Man küßt nur, wenn man liebt" (Pubertät 92).

¹⁰⁹Popp examines the role of the male cult which he attributes solely to the aesthetics and physical attraction. "In der Regel aber werden homosexuelle Männer in ihren ästhetischen Anpassungs- oder Emanzipations-Leistungen allein aufgrund ihres biologischen Geschlechts der Männerkultur zugerechnet" (Popp 10). He, however, does not discuss the attraction to the male cult as a result of the power and position of males in society.

Thus, sex is reduced to genital contact which reinforces the concept of objectification of the desired body and diminishes the capacity for a more intimate and emotional experience. Masculine sexuality is represented as alienated from a sexuality that emphasises emotional communion. Rolf recognises this conceptualisation of sexuality in himself and that it perhaps constitutes a liability in his life:

Und das ist eben leider Gottes gerade bei mir das Handicap, die Unmöglichkeit, sich an eine bestimmte Person zu binden, zu fixieren, und das hat mich auch mein ganzes Leben verfolgt.
(Pubertät 123)

His bond with other men seems detached, focusing primarily upon sexual affinity and not emotional attachment.

The violence directed toward women by men advances the previously noted claim by Luce Irigaray that all societal relationships operate according to a covert precept of homosexual desire where women are engaged as the medium of exchange. Women exist to promote and certify the manhood of men. Hubert's own reflections when drifting towards homosexuality demand re-enforcement through some violent masculine feat, rape in this instance. Fichte illustrates this principle when he states "Homer und Homosexuell;...Ich vergewaltige die Marquise von O." (Pubertät 39).¹¹⁰ Again

¹¹⁰Kleist's victim the Marquise von O., raped while in a faint and as a result impregnated, represents the total acquiescence of woman. This rape occurs without any sign of

this imagery of violence appears as he masturbates, formulating the connection of the power relationship between victim and victimiser.

Ich brauchte nur die Hand auszustrecken und könnte [his penis] berühren und vielleicht gelänge es mir, ihn durch die Faszination, die das Opfer auf den Mörder ausübt, zum Stillhalten zu zwingen, und Orest würde Orest zur Marquise von O. machen.
(Pubertät 84)

The violence directed against the victim becomes a fascination, wherein the victim is reduced to an object.

This association of masculinity and violence echoes the sentiments expressed by Genet¹¹¹ in his Querelle de Brest, in which a homosexual sailor murders his sexual partner.

Fichte generates a specific reference to Genet's work firstly at the beginning of the novel and again towards the end:

Der Satz: / – L'idée de meurtre évoque souvent l'idée de mer, de marins. / ist richtig. Ich

physical violence and the perpetrator eventually marries the Marquise, ironically to save her from disgrace, exemplifying masculine control.

¹¹¹Fichte comments on Genet as a prognosticator in the development of gay identity: "Genet hat, wie kaum ein anderer écrivain engagé, eine soziale und damit eine politische Dimension, sein Werk vermittelte den Homosexuellen in den literarischen Metropolen ein Selbstbewußtsein, einen Sittenkodex - es bereitete das Coming Out vor."
(Homosexualität und Literatur 2 19)

hatte ihn schöner, falscher in Erinnerung: /
 - L'idée de mer évoque souvent l'idée de meurtre.
 / Die Leichen riechen nach Meer. (Pubertät 13)

Masculinity, violence and sex are inextricably intertwined through the vehicle of the sea, symbolising freedom. The sea endures as the home for the sailors and provides the isolated male atmosphere conducive to homosexuality. The incorrect quotation in which the idea of murder conjures up the vision of the sea, hence the masculine environment, has been reversed so that the sea invokes the idea of murder, thus the masculine atmosphere compels murder. This quotation appears again in a different context.

Die Strichjungen auf dem Terreiro de Jesus
 entreißen dem Kunden die Bücher und Zeitungen und
 buchstabieren hastig das Gedruckte. / L'idée de
 meurtre évoque souvent l'idée de mer, de marins.
 Ausgesprochen. / Die Verherrlichung der KZs.
 (Pubertät 217)

The Genet quotation now appears as a threat or warning especially in conjunction with the glorification of the death camps. The male prostitutes harass the bookshop customers, since limited opportunities for economic advancement are available to them in a capitalistic society. The prostitutes are consequently tacitly victimised by the shoppers, when their bodies become commodities. The need to possess power in order to maintain the masculine stereotype appears to preoccupy the male characters in the novel.

The fascination with sexual violence as a means of demonstrating masculinity supports the notion that Fichte tacitly approves of this behaviour. Though ostensibly condemned on a cultural level, Fichte ritualises violent sexuality as the rite of passage into manhood.

Affirmations of Masculinity

The importance and predominance of male characters in the novel affirms the masculine aspect of the novel. Though some men are effeminate, masculinity clearly remains the preferred behaviour for men. In selecting to write in an unemotional, factual and detached style, Fichte indicates his perceptions of the dominance of masculinity in society.

The male characters also choose to behave in a violent, masculine manner.

Versuch über die Pubertät, through its concentration upon male characters, male sexuality and male ritual, institutes a masculine domination in the thematic and stylistic aspects of the novel. The absence of emotion in the novel and the rational and factual portrayal of events reflect a stereotypically masculine style. Hubert also reiterates the inadequacy of sentiment and feeling as he gazes upon the corpse in the first chapter:

Die Leiche hat keine Empfindungen. Mit ihrem
Nicht-Leid kann ich nicht mitleiden.
Ich kann mir nicht vorstellen, nichts zu
empfinden. Nicht: Warum empfinde ich nichts?

Sondern: Ich empfinde nichts mehr. (Pubertät 15)

Femininity and masculinity in the male characters of the novel present a paradoxical schism between the struggle to uphold a seemingly unstable masculinity and an over-compensatory hyper-masculinity. Fichte never discusses the dynamics of this instability and considerable doubt lingers as to the origins of this insecurity. The hyper-masculine demeanour with its concomitant violence reflects an escape of the male characters from an uncertainty about their masculinity and forms an ironic counterbalance to the conformity to societal norms.

Through Fichte's ambiguity in his presentation of male femininity and his tacit acceptance of masculine violence, an understanding of the religious and social significance of gender categories becomes even more occluded. However, in exploring and questioning the gender categories, he has perhaps provided comment enough upon their validity and rigidity.

C. SEXUALITY IN VERSUCH ÜBER DIE PUBERTÄT

Compared with Baldwin's rigid conceptualisation of gender behaviour, Fichte presents a more compassionate view of gender transgression. Versuch über die Pubertät also establishes a more enlightened perspective on sexual acts and behaviour. The novel does not condemn some sexual acts as immoral, but contrarily depicts these acts as sacred and liberating. In conjunction with Another Country's theme of achieving love and understanding through sexual experience, Versuch über die Pubertät extends the scope of the significance of the sexual act from individual fulfilment to the cultural realm. The novel presents sexuality as an idealised solution to end prejudice, but the narrator remains conscious of the pessimistic reality.

Sexuality represents a means of attaining personal maturation and liberation from social constraint. I will explore the effects of the closet in the development of the characters sexuality, survey the various gay stereotypes represented in the novel and provide a portrait of an "affirmative" gay identity. Throughout the discussion, I will illustrate the difference between individual sexual experience and culturally imposed restrictions on sexual behaviour. Although the novel is critical of social violence, sexual violence is ritualised as a sacred act. Fichte presents a unique and enlightened representation of

sexuality, but this sexuality is exclusively male and supports masculine domination. Male femininity in the novel, though not given the prominence of sado-masochistic sexuality, also obtains sacred status. Fichte celebrates difference in spite of cultural sanctions that prohibit the emancipation of the individual. He provides an alternative to the oppression of personal identity, but is less optimistic of liberation occurring on a cultural level.

The Closet

Fichte describes the identity development of his main characters, or they describe it for themselves--as in the case of Rolf Schwab and Hans Eppendorfer. This section investigates the portrayal of the coming out process in conjunction with effects of the social prohibitions against homosexuality. The sexual and emotional maturation of the characters contains features of the Oedipal myth and emphasises the role of socially constructed rituals. Legal prohibitions and scientific cures promote and condone the violence and hatred directed towards gay men through the advocacy of their mythologies as truth. The self-discovery and awareness of sexuality leads firstly to a rejection of societally proscribed notions of sexuality though often the gay characters resort to self-defeating and sometimes self-destructive behaviour. Fichte pessimistically demonstrates the destructive impact of the

closet and homophobia on his gay characters.

The Oedipal myth is introduced in the novel with a reference to Sophocles's play. After a declaration of love for a married actor named Gerd, Hubert envisions his mother, the prompter, Jocasta, the mother of Oedipus, who upon detecting the homosexuality of her son appears to take revenge:

Die Flüsterin wird zur Verschlingerin. / Mutter als Jokaste, Klytämnestra, Medea zugleich. / Vielleicht hat sie Grund, sich an Homosexuellen zu rächen, und sie vergißt für einen Akt lang, daß der zusammengesackte sechzehnjährige Schwule ihr Sohn ist, und stößt mich, sie, die mich nie ohrfeigte, ohrfeigend von sich und zieht mich mit sich fort. (Pubertät 119)

In this scene in which theatrical presentation melds into reality, Hubert perceives his mother's violent behaviour as a reaction to his homosexuality not out of maternal jealousy, but out of maternal protection for her son.

The enduring myth of the absent father as a cause of homosexuality, in conjunction with the instruction offered by Hubert's mentor Pozzi, his substitute father figure, serve to solidify this depiction of the Oedipal myth.¹¹²

¹¹²Fichte comments on the domination of the father and the sadistic nature of this relationship as represented through Christian myth. "Allerdings ist ja auch die Kreuzigung Christi eine Folterung gewesen, eine Folterung, die ein Vater an seinem Sohn, in Gegenwart der Mutter-Gemahlin, vollziehen läßt, in Gegenwart auch des Mehr-als-Freundes Johannes – es gibt keine sado'schere Konstellation; derselbe Gottvater dieses Agnus Dei, der von einem anderen

This omission of some of the conditions of the Oedipal myth might be explained by Hubert's supposed bisexuality, described by himself as fifty-fifty.¹¹³

The lack of social conformity of gay men coming out, as illustrated by Hubert and the other gay men, also indicates the level of societal intolerance and self-censorship of

Vater, Abraham, die Opferung seines Sohnes, Isaak, verlangte und erst im letzten Moment, als der Sohn schon den Tod durch den Vater erfüllt hatte und der Vater sich schon als Sohnesmörder vorkam, einen Widder unterschob" (Wangenheim 1010). The Oedipal myth and its perpetuation through Christianity, which has dominated the occident is sharply criticized as Gisela Dischner notes: "Die Freud-Kritik macht sich, wie im 'Anti-Ödipus' von Deleuze-Guattari, an der westlich geprägten Borniertheit (den eigenen Stand der Dinge zu universalisieren für alle Räume und Zeiten) fest, erkennt in der kolonialisierten 'Dritten Welt' anti-ödipale Strukturen, erkennt sie gleichzeitig in der subversiven Kraft moderner Literatur – so im Werk Kafkas oder Becketts: Man muß ein Fremder in seiner eigenen Sprache werden, in der eigenen wie in einer ausländischen Sprache reden" (46).

¹¹³Fichte's fifty-fifty conceptualisation of bisexuality does not manifest itself for Hubert, who has sex only with other males. Röhr illuminates Fichte's views on bisexuality and hermaphroditism as related to form and content: "In dem Aufsatz 'Die Rasierklinge und der Hermaphrodit' verdeutlicht Fichte, was er unter Concetto versteht: Als 'Gillette' - nach beiden Seiten schneidend-werden in Bahia de Todo os Santos Homosexuelle und Bisexuelle bezeichnet. Aktives und passives homosexuelles Verhalten und bisexuelles verschwimmen ineinander durch die Doppeldeutigkeit von 'schneiden'; 'die Gegensätze 'Mann' und 'Frau', 'Klinge' und 'Scheide', 'vorne' und 'hinten', 'aktiv' und 'passiv' (fallen) durcheinander und zusammen. Hier wird die formale Information des Ausspruchs deutlich. Die doppelte Fehlerhaftigkeit des logischen Gehalts drückt einmal mehr aus: Hier geht aber auch alles jetzt durcheinander. Was es nicht gibt, gibt es doch' (Die Rasierklinge und der Hermaphrodit: 13)" (Röhr 58-9). The hermaphrodite, likened to the homosexual or bisexual, maintains a dual status due to its biological predisposition.

expression and desire:

Ein Homosexueller lernt gewisse Lektionen der normalen Gesellschaft nicht, dafür lernt er die Lektionen der Homosexuellen. / Ich beobachtete den Jungen von gegenüber nicht. / Ich beobachte ihn doch, aber nicht, um mich ihm zu nähern, sondern um ihn wegzudrängen... / Die Angst des Homosexuellen, sich am Arbeitsplatz, in der Stammkneipe, in seinem Wohnblock auszusetzen. / Das heißt: Ich sublimiere und werde von den Normalen als wertvoll erachtet. (Pubertät 237)

Identity and self appear devalued and the social valuation of the individual implies the acceptance of heterosexual societal standards. Hubert permits his own sublimation of desire in his relationship with Bruno, one of his school mates, since he fears that he may "corrupt" or "convert" Bruno.

- Nimm mich mit! / Ich habe sublimiert.
Ich fürchte, Bruno zu verderben? / Oder fürchte ich, daß Bruno sich nicht verderben läßt? / Vielleicht gibt es Homosexualität gar nicht.
(Pubertät 244)

The narrator describes the many attempts of Hubert at gaining self-awareness during his adolescence. Hubert's coming out process, though similar to Eric's in Another Country, seems less repressive due to the presence of "supportive" father figures. Hubert, who was reared only by his mother and to whom she seems rather indifferent, is identified by Pozzi as androgynous. Once Pozzi proclaims

this fact, Hubert adopts this designation as his own.

Hubert initiates the following diatribe:

Bumms! Bi! Tüten! Fünfte Symphonie! / Fiftyfifty
 – das heißt homosexuell. Fiftyfifty. Fünfe
 gerade sein lassen. Wenn schon fünfzig, dann auch
 das ganze Hundert. / Bumms! Schwul! Gong!
 Posaunen von Jericho! Die Mäuse scheißen in die
 Orgel – der Schwule orgelt in die Scheiße! Tabu!
 Terrorangriff! Atombombe! Fiftyfifty! Eine
 Tunte! Eine Tunte! Eine Tunte! Ein Warmer! Ein
 Lauwarmer! Ein Warmer Bruder! Ein Huch – Nein!
 Eine Töhle!...Eine Triene! Eine Schwuchtel! Ein
 Arschficker! (Pubertät 35-6)

Though obviously not satisfied with Pozzi's condemnation, Hubert soon initiates his sexual experimentation and realises that his own body is a source of libidinous pleasure. He becomes preoccupied with masturbation and then shares this experience with amenable male classmates. In order to augment his sexual education, Hubert continues to observe and engage in a few brief affairs, the most notable being his affairs with Trygve and with Alex. Hubert's puberty appears to be a reasonably plausible progression of normal events except that his sexual experience occurs exclusively with other boys and men, instead of girls or women.

Furthermore, even though Pozzi continuously validates Hubert's homosexuality, Hubert still sceptically speculates upon his own sexual identity. A colleague does not acknowledge Hubert after the screening of a film. The

motivation for this colleague's failure to recognise Hubert is not divulged--though perhaps the colleague acted out of fear of revealing his own homosexuality through his association with Hubert. This rejection causes Hubert to renounce his own desire. He repeats: "Vielleicht gibt es die Homosexualität gar nicht" (Pubertät 243). This denial also illustrates his self-loathing, which causes him to ruminate:

Ich werde keine Kinder haben. Wenn sie wüßten, wer ich bin, würden sie mich mit einem etwas überlangen Schweigen aus ihren Gesprächen aussparen. Sie würden mich ins Moor werfen und kurze Stöcke über mich breiten. (Pubertät 86)

Hubert even suspects that his own children would renounce him, a projection upon which he grounds his decision not to have children. Thus, his oppression does not allow him to fulfil his potential ambitions and his homosexuality becomes an impediment to the realisation of opportunities.

The traditional response in gay novels to these onerous constraints of the closet is to flee from them--most often through suicide. Hubert escapes from the familiar milieu of Hamburg, and not unlike Baldwin's Eric, proceeds to Provence in France.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴The idyllic motif of the countryside as an Arcadian deliverance from the familial and societal constraints of bourgeois life appears repeatedly in gay literature. Usually the retreat is to a country that is

Another cause of Hubert's escape is the degeneration of his relationship with Alex Kraetschmar. As previously indicated, Alex is portrayed as an alcoholic. Hubert describes the extent of Alex's drinking with the following comparison, "Pozzi versoff nicht wie Alex Kraetschmar 80 D-Mark in der Bar Celona" (Pubertät 47). Alex's alcoholism flourishes as he adopts Hubert as his young lover, and commences imbibing in secret. Alex develops an obsession with the notion of suicide and Hubert grimly notes:

Alex liebt alles, was ich schreibe, und also auch meine Novelle "Der Selbstmord". / Und diese Novelle des achtzehnjährigen vom sechzehnjährigen Selbstmörder stellt [Alex] die Frage: / - Warum habe ich es nicht früher getan? (Pubertät 188)¹¹⁵

Hubert feels very contrite about Alex's suicide since he later rejected Alex. Alex's death is announced in a

perceived as more tolerant towards homosexuality. This escape motif can be seen in Waugh's Brideshead Revisited, and James's Turn of the Screw, and E.M. Forster's Maurice.

¹¹⁵Fichte creates both an epiphany and an eradication of the self in their work through necromantic mannerism. A detailed analysis of Fichte's position on the creative process is presented by Böhme. In connecting the concepts of creation and death the text becomes a metaphor for the transubstantiation: "Gewiß ist das Schreiben in einem seiner Impulse auch ein säkularisierter Versuch zur Mumifizierung: Umschrift des kontingenten, verletzlichen Fleisches in ein unsterbliches Double, das Double der Wörter. Pozzi: der in Wörtern mumifizierte Jahnn. Detlev, Jäcki, Hubert -: der mumifizierte Hubert Fichte. Das Double in der Schrift ist eine quasireligöse, rituelle Transskription, Transsubstantion von zeichenloser Materie in sprechende Schrift" (Böhme 191).

sarcastic and ironic manner: "– Schönen Gruß von Alex W. Kraetschmar. Er liegt im Eppendorfer Krankenhaus. Er hat sich umgebracht" (Pubertät 183). The reasons for the suicide are not explained and the cause of his alcoholism is not delineated. During Alex's career as an actor, it is suggested that he has been victimised by a homophobic director. Fichte does not elucidate the calibre of Alex's talents, only that Alex encounters obstacles when obtaining acting positions since he is perceived as a homosexual.

Aside from the effects of the closet on the individual, society has established several mechanisms in order to institutionalise this discrimination. The legal and psycho-medical professions have, as represented by Fichte, had an enormous impact on the development of a gay identity, through the promotion and perpetuation of their conceptions of homosexuality as disease and a detriment to society.

The German legislation prohibiting homosexual acts, Paragraph 175a of the German penal code--repealed only in 1969 and under which many men and women were convicted--is cited in the novel as the threat of punishment against homosexual behaviour.¹¹⁶ Hubert recognises that a sexual

¹¹⁶In his polemics, Fichte comments on the injustices suffered under the legal and medical establishment: "Den Homosexuellen ist solche Gerechtigkeit bisher verweigert worden; weder sind sie durch die Reste des Paragraphen 175 den Heterosexuellen gleichgestellt, und von allen Bundesparteien verfechten allein die Grünen eine solche Gleichstellung, noch haben homosexuelle KZ-Häftlinge eine Entschädigung für ihre Haft erhalten, sie werden also den Gewaltverbrechern in den Kzs gleichgesetzt und nicht den

expression of his love for Gerd is prohibited by law--though Hubert could not be prosecuted, whether or not he is the initiator of the sexual act since he is under the age of consent:

Ein dreiundzwanzigjähriger frischverheirateter Nachwuchsschauspieler mit zweijährigem Sohn kann 1950 bei herrschenden Paragraphen, die ihn, wenn er Pech hat, zwischen lebenslänglicher Sicherheitsverwahrung und Kastration zu wählen zwingen, keine minderjährigen Kollegen lieben. (Pubertät 77)

The young Hubert also realises the necessity to confine his sexual play to the cellar of the house, where he and Klaus act out their sexual longings, making sure not to demonstrate too much affection through kissing.

Denn wo gibt es in einem besseren Eppendorfer Etagenhaus 1950 einen sicheren Winkel für den widernatürlichen Geschlechtsverkehr. Aber über den Dächern von Hamburg hängen die Mütter die Laken auf. / Klaus klaut den / Kellerschlüssel.... / Küssen nicht. / Man küßt nur, wenn man liebt. (Pubertät 92)

The guilt and self-chastisement that Hubert experiences

politischen Häftlingen; der Gesetzgeber wird sich auf die Bibel berufen können, auf die Luther-Bibel und auf die neue Sexualdogmatik der Katholischen Kirche – aber auch die Psychoanalyse gab erst vor einigen Jahren die altväterliche Doktrin auf: Homosexualität ist eine Geisteskrankheit - die Internationale hat eine solche Auffassung offen verkündet und niemals grundlegend revidiert" (Homosexualität und Literatur 2 54-5).

after having sex with Klaus arises as he states:

Bevor es soweit ist, werden die Empfindungen abgobogen und es kommen ein paar Tropfen und dann ist es schon zuende und es riecht nach Brikett und die Sehnsucht nach Aufgabe bleibt jetzt als Strafe, als Todesurteil, das ich voll Entsetzen an mir selbst vollstrecken will. (Pubertät 94)

Aside from the fear of legal retribution for homosexual expression, the type of research into the causes of homosexuality that the narrator describes contributes to the oppression of gay men, since these experiments constitute the initiation of a preventative resolution to the homosexual "problem."

Pozzi, a writer who experiments with his hormonal theories, discovers the musical genius of Mozart, incarnated in Trygve whose hormones seem to vacillate between the androgen and the oestrogen.¹¹⁷ This research proceeds even further as Pozzi attempts to discover the sexual orientation

¹¹⁷Pozzi's research into hormonal levels in young boys is not surprisingly similar to the interests of Hans Henny Jahnn. Thomas Freeman notes: "Fichte spricht in dem Interview, ebenso wie im Roman, von Jahnn's erstem Besuch in Fichtes Schule, wo er Hormonspender suchte, die für ihn in Bierflaschen urinieren sollten. Dieser Besuch wurde auch in meinem Interview mit dem ehemaligen Schuldirektor Rudolf Maack bestätigt. Fichte spricht auch von Jahnn's zweiter Begegnung mit ihm und seiner Mutter.... Bei dieser Gelegenheit hat Jahnn seine Überzeugung zur Ausdruck gebracht, daß Fichte in seinem Urin den Hormonspiegel eines bisexuellen Menschen aufwies, d.h., aus Jahnn's Sicht, eines künstlerischen Genies. Wie aus Fichtes Roman hervorgeht, hat Jahnn's Behauptung, Fichte sei sozusagen halbe/halbe gewesen, auf den Jungen einen außerordentlichen, ja erschreckenden Eindruck gemacht" (Freeman 219-20).

of Hubert through the weekly analysis of the hormonal levels in his urine:

Ich darf jeden Sonntag kommen und möchte bitte in Glaszylinder urinieren für blinde oder kröpfige Frauen in der Schweiz. Und wenn das auch eigentlich nichts Verbotenes oder Beschämendes ist - etwas Widerwärtiges hat es doch, so, als verzehre man als einziger Mann in einer Transvestitenbar eine riesige Karbonade in Aspik.
 Pozzi erstattet mir das Fahrgeld und noch etwas Taschengeld dazu-im ganzen zehn Mark. (Pubertät 34)

Hubert reacts with revulsion to Pozzi's declaration of his fifty-fifty status and conjectures about the medical practices which will be performed upon him and about derision and harassment from his peers. At the same time he allies himself with famous men who were presumed to have some same-sex interest:

Mir schneiden sie notfalls die Klüten ab und brennen mir mit einer Stricknadel das Sexualzentrum aus dem Hirn! Niemand darf es wissen, sonst rennen die Kinder auf der Straße hinter mir her und schreiben es mit Kreide an die Hauswand.
 Ich bin Gründgens, Patroklos, Plato, Lionardo, Michelangelo, Buxtehude, Mozart, Friedrich der Große usw. - ein ganzes Stollwerckalbum.
 (Pubertät 36)

Hubert continues to deny Pozzi's scientific theories and speculates whether his own hormonal levels will vary over time. He alludes to the preconception that a homosexual

orientation is an adolescent phase of transition.

Ich meinte also - fälschlich - Pozzi hielte mich für schwul - homosexuell; der miese Euphemismus "homoeerotisch" kam erst ein paar Jahre später auf. Würde ich in sieben Jahren ganz andre Hormone haben? (Pubertät 51)

This experimentation mimics the preoccupation of many scientists to determine a biological explanation for homosexuality and consequently to eradicate it. Hubert cannot acquiesce that his sexuality is normal and anticipates that his orientation will alter to satisfy the heterosexual norm.

Versuch über die Pubertät does not advocate assimilation into the heterosexual norm as Baldwin's Another Country suggests. Fichte illustrates the negative effects of closetry and the systemic prejudice through example. He often provides archetypical patterns and real accounts of discrimination and the profound consequences this maltreatment has had on the identities and lives of his characters and real people represented.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸In his study of Afro-American rituals entitled Petersilie, Fichte comments on the discrimination experienced by gays. "1. April 1977. Ehemalige Kandidatin für Miss Amerika. / Die Stimme, die erfrischt. / Das Symbol von Florida Orange-Juice. / - Ehe ich diesem schlimmen Angriff auf Gott und sein Gesetz nachgebe, werde ich einen Kreuzzug dagegen führen, wie ihn das Land noch nicht gesehen hat. / Die 37 jährige Anita Bryant will eine Verordnung niederstimmen, die von der Dade County Commission [in Miami] erlassen wurde / und jede Diskriminierung auf Grund von gefühlsmässigen oder sexuellen Neigungen untersagt. / Bob

Gay Stereotypes

Gays have used many stereotypes of homosexual behaviour to represent themselves in literature such as the paedophile, the queen,¹¹⁹ the pervert and the hetero-imitative homosexual as well as the "liberated" bisexual. Twelve years after the publication of Baldwin's Another Country and five years after the birth of the gay liberation movement, Fichte utilises some of the same stereotypes. He ponders the formation of these identities as he reiterates the

Green, Anita Bryants Mann: / - Wir arbeiten hart, um zu gewinnen. / Wenn nicht, wird Dade County wie San Francisco werden, wo Schwule das tägliche Leben bestimmen. / Bob Kunst, schwuler Leader in Miami: / - Wir gehen von Tür zu Tür. / Wir werden die ganze Stadt abklappern. / 2. Mai. Anita Bryant verdiente im letzten Jahr 400 000 Dollar. / Durch ihre Kampagne verliert sie vielleicht Engagements. / 23. Mai. Der ultrarechte Aktivist Edwin Walker, Ex-Kommandant der US-Truppen in Deutschland und Kandidat für den Posten des Gouverneurs von Texas, wurde wegen unmoralischen Verhaltens verurteilt. / Er hatte einen Polizisten auf dem Abtritt eines öffentlichen Parks unehrenhafte Anerbieten gemacht.... / 20. Juni. Anita Bryant tanzte einen Jig, als sie von dem Resultat hörte. Wie Hitler bei der Niederlage Frankreichs" (Petersilie 155-6).

Sabine Röhr appropriately attributes this interest in discrimination against homosexuals to Fichte's own homosexuality. "Ein Beispiel: Fichtes eigene Homosexualität läßt ihn besonders aufmerksam auf die Diskriminierung von Homosexuellen reagieren. Seine Montage von eigenen Erlebnissen in diesem Zusammenhang, Gesprächen und Zeitungsartikeln, die besonders das ganze Miami-Kapital durchziehen, werfen ein Licht auf die haßerfüllte, weil scheinheilige Verfolgung der Schwulen, das eigene versteckte Schwulsein der Verfolger, die Angst der Verfolgten vor der Entdeckung, vor Gewalt und Ächtung" (37).

¹¹⁹An exaggeratedly effeminate homosexual.

question: "Wie wird einer so?" (Pubertät 203). In Versuch über die Pubertät, traditional conventions of gay representation appear, but in addition to Baldwin's depictions of stereotypes, Fichte also includes the leather man.

Stereotypical identities emerge quickly in the novel. I will examine the stereotypes of the aging "pervert" and the paedophile and later in the section devoted to affirmation, the development of leather subcultures. When describing stereotyped gay identity, the narrator does not usually comment on the behaviour. A distinction is made between paederasty and homosexuality which provides a more diverse portrayal of sexuality. The novel reenforces these stereotypes by representing a variety of stereotypical behaviours without any insight into the characters' motivations.

As in Baldwin's Another Country, age has endured as a great preoccupation for homosexuals, since a gay culture that often converges on desire, promotes the youthful male body as its ideal. Rolf Schwab feels that it is necessary to veil or disguise his age. After he has sex at a bathhouse, Rolf remarks to the older man, "Wenn du jetzt deine Pelzmütze aufhast, dann siehst du doch nicht aus wie ein alter Mann. Hab doch keine Komplexe! - Und hat mich noch mal richtig abgeküßt. Ich dachte, er macht einen Witz" (Pubertät 130). This observation is invalidated as the man

responds: "Das sind nur Einzelerscheinungen" (Pubertät 130), demonstrating his refusal to accept the inflated importance of youth. Pozzi is also concerned with his youth and drinks Hubert's urine in order to inhibit the aging process.

Pozzi, who directs his desire towards youth, epitomises the stereotype of the quintessential paedophile. He has no inhibitions about pursuing his desired object. He even proposes to adopt these boys.¹²⁰ Pozzi does not succeed in his endeavour to adopt Trygve, but instead adopts Hubert. Hubert guiltily confesses that his adoption would diminish his mother's household expenses and agrees to the arrangement. Pozzi, rejected by Trygve, confesses his love for Hubert, who also refuses his advances. Fichte's portrayal of Pozzi appears ambiguous, though seemingly praised for his artistic achievements, he condemns Pozzi for his sexual proclivities:

Werner Maria Pozzi!
 Der Name ist ein Gift, wie der Blick ein Pfeil.
 Werner Maria Pozzi wirkt wie die Pest, sagt Dr.
 Steiner, sagt meine Mutter....
 Der Name Werner Maria Pozzi brät Minderjährige.
 (Pubertät 25)

Fichte continues his investigation of paedophiliac behaviour through the character of Alex, who detects that "[m]it

¹²⁰Jahnn also adopted a young boy, whose name coincidentally was Yngve, a name strikingly similar to Trygve.

voranschreitender theatralischer Karriere vergrößert sich der Altersunterschied zwischen Begehrer und Begehrtem" (Pubertät 150). Alex formulates a connection between his sexuality and illness and compares his paedophiliac "affliction" to a homosexual malady:

Wenn Krankheit etwas ist, was beginnt und enden könnte, sind weder Homosexualität noch Päderastie Krankheiten. / Wenn Krankheit eine ungeduldete Sonderform des Verhaltens ist, durch das zahlenmäßig Durchgesetzte zur Zerrüttung gebracht – dann sind Homosexualität und Päderastie Krankheiten. (Pubertät 151)

Interestingly, Fichte creates a distinction between homosexuality and paederasty, since traditionally both manifestations of sexuality have been erroneously conflated. He also comments that "das Flucht ins Exotische" (Pubertät 152) is more important for homosexuals than paedophiles since paedophiles attain a greater level of exoticism through their proscribed behaviour--presumably heterosexuals would have an even greater requirement. The distinction between homosexuals and paederasts reiterates that the two sexualities comprise separate expressions of desire. The assumption that homosexuality precludes a disposition for the unusual seems to preoccupy Fichte since he does not represent a homosexual version of the bourgeois ideal as Baldwin does through Eric and Yves.

The stereotypes presented in the novel represent a

cross-section of gay identities. The narrator consciously disassociates paederasty from homosexuality in an attempt to dispel one myth, however, the narrator does not comment on the more traditional stereotypes. Ironically, the social factors involved in the development of these stereotypes do not surface. Other than the protagonist, Hubert, the other characters are cast into stereotypes, even the non-fictional characters. The novel reflects the oppression that stereotypes manufacture since the characters appear confined to uni-dimensional behaviour.

Affirmation through Ritualised Sexuality

Fichte uses more extreme sexual behaviours to affirm gay identity--primarily leather sexuality.¹²¹ The relatedness of ritualistic behaviour in the leather community to the rituals of Afro-American religious ceremonies becomes evident through a comparison of the two.

For Fichte, ritual means magic and spiritual discovery. The idealised male cult is transformed from its intellectual tradition which originated in ancient Greece into the hypermasculine world of leather and sado-masochistic sex. Leather men have developed a new code or mythology which

¹²¹The leather community, though largely homosexually identified, is not exclusive to the gay community. There are also leather dykes, who have recently emerged. Nonetheless the heterosexual leather community remains highly closeted since the level of tolerance in heterosexual society remains relatively low.

ostensibly contravenes the societally oppressive forces surrounding gay men. This section examines the attempt at representing an affirmative gay identity through the ritualised behaviour of the leather man. This appearance represents an important development in the portrayal of gay men. The novel also includes some of the liberationist thought of individual equality of the early seventies. The absence of the "hetero-imitative" gay character affirms uniqueness of gay identities, though it may be debated that the practices of the leather community merely exaggerate heterosexual power dynamics.

The appearance of pain and torture as part of sexual ritual is first apparent when Hubert and Pozzi strike each other with belts in the school yard during gym class. Hubert relates the story with enthusiasm: "Ich habe meine Gertlein in der Hand und zischzasch schlag ich ihm eins um die Beine und schon läuft er. / Was ist das für ein Spektakel" (Pubertät 55). It appears that Hubert derives substantial gratification from this experience and launches his initiation into other more fantastic sexual behaviours. Pozzi habitually drinks the urine which he collects for his experiments and this also inducts Trygve and Hubert into this practice:

- Wir pissen uns jetzt in den Mund!
 - Es schmeckt salzig.... / Mozart trinkt meine Pisse und wird riesengroß und reicht bis an die Wolken und ich trinke seine Pisse und werde ries-

engroß und reiche bis an die Wolken. (Pubertät
115)

The magical significance of this performance transforms the boys into giants and generates a mystical experience that unites the two in this shared ritual.

The exchange of urine progresses to the use of blood in these rituals. Hubert meets Gerd and describes the sudden phallic metamorphosis of his surroundings: "Die Straßen verwandeln sich in Adern. Die Bäume in Schamhaare. Das Alsterwasser in Blut" (Pubertät 75). He proclaims his love for Gerd, his murderer during the production of the play. The symbolic level of the combination of blood and sex through violence associated with spiritual metaphors demonstrates Fichte's validation of a sacred constituent in sexual ritual:

Die Häuser erhalten eine erotische Qualität, weil ich nicht wage, etwas zu tun, was meinem Mörder deutlich machte, deutlicher machte, daß ich ihn liebe. / Die Häuser darf ich anhimmeln. / Aber durch die Wiederholung wird die Situation banal und ich erkenne schon wieder genauer, wer da neben mir geht: 23, verheiratet, von der Mutter unterstützt, probt demnächst im "Theater im Zimmer" "Von Mäusen und Menschen", gehört einer Gralsrittervereinigung an. / Und so geht es auch auf diesem Gang rund mit Gott, Bewußtsein, Astralleib, Haferflocken, Tannhäuser. / ...den religiösen Hottentottenarsch.
Es genügt, daß ich die neugotische Kirche sehe, und mein Oymel wächst dem Turm entgegen. (Pubertät 76)

This constant interplay between sex, violence, death and religion illustrates Fichte's commitment to the amalgamation of these concepts. They are culturally intertwined in the struggle for survival and the power of all three exert themselves as mutually dependent as the self, body, and soul.

Hans Eppendorfer, the real leatherman, incorporates his sexually exotic behaviour into his narrative, and illustrates through his personal revelations, the codes and rituals of the leather community. His story provides a voyeuristic glimpse into another representation of sexuality. The metaphorical significance of leather functions "wie eine atmende Haut. Leder ist einerseits eine Art von Schutz und zweitens eine Art von Überhaut" (Pubertät 256). This constitutes an illusion of impermeability and immortality in the leather psyche. The hyper-masculine imagery that Eppendorfer conveys also serves to reinforce this notion of inaccessibility and strength. Leather also denotes a cohesive maxim, which supposedly induces a primeval physical and psychic response in these men. Eppendorfer states, "Es ist, glaube ich etwas Animalisches, was uns mit Leder verbindet....eine Art von Parfum. Das ist eine Art von Droge. Leder gibt auch einer Tunte die Chance, ein Mann zu sein" (Pubertät 257). Leather not only institutes solidarity among men--as though this were necessary in a misogynist, homosocial society--but

it also has been endowed with the mystical power of transforming a "queen" into a man. The investiture of power in leather seems to defy limitation. It is the "Kombination zwischen schweißigem Körper und Leder und Urin, das ist eine Mischung, die dem Geruch von Blut ähnlich kommt" (Pubertät 263). Leather now becomes a component of blood, the life giving force.

Leather sex comprises other elements besides utilising leather apparel during sex, it includes the infliction of pain to attain pleasure. The voluntary infliction of pain initiates a relationship of trust between the victimiser or master and the victim or slave. This relationship forces a tenuous intimacy between the two, since the master apparently recognises the pain threshold of the slave and the slave allows himself to endure the pain beyond his limitations in order to gratify the master. A certain amount of time is required to establish this trusting relationship as Hans notes:

Es ist ein Schwede dagewesen, der wurde nicht nur ausgepeitscht, nicht nur angepißt, der wurde mit der Faust gebumst, der wurde geschlagen, der wurde einfach nach allen Regeln der Kunst maltrahiert, dem wurden die Brustwarzen ebenfalls mit silbernen Stiften durchbohrt....Es ist eine Art von Vertrauen, wenn die Leute sich aus der Defensive, in der sich alle Lederleute praktisch befinden, heraus ans Licht wagt, seine Wünsche und seine Begierden plötzlich artikulieren soll. Vor quasi fremden Leuten, die aufeinanderprallen. Das ist eine Sache des Vertrauens und das braucht seine Zeit. (Pubertät 254-5)

Ritual body piercing also demonstrates the ability to endure pain, and piercing often constitutes a part of sexual play.

Eppendorfer explicitly describes his own initiation into sado-masochistic acts in one of the more sexually graphic and notable scenes of the novel:

Aber ich glaube, daß Urin die Vorstufe von Blut sein kann.

Ich habe in Paris das erste Mal jemanden mit einer Faust gefickt. Einen amerikanischen Tänzer aus den Folies Bergères und es war eine so große Faszination, dieser Augenblick, wir waren in seiner Wohnung auf einem riesigen Bett von Stierfell, umgeben von lauter Spiegeln, und ich behielt meine Jeans an und er zog sich splitternackt aus, ein sehr guter Körper, ein Tänzer, muskulös in der richtigen Proportion und sauber, einfach ein sauberer Körper, und er bat mich, meine Faust nach oben zu strecken, ich lag auf diesem Stierfell und harrete der Dinge, die da kommen sollten und er hatte meine Faust eingefettet und mir die Sache erklärt und ich hielt dann die Faust gestreckt nach oben und er ließ sich langsam auf meine Faust runterrutschen und meine Faust ging also in seinen After bis etwa zur Höhe des Handgelenks, ein Stückchen drüber heraus vielleicht, und dann drehte er sich über meiner Faust...es war eine ungeheuerere Faszination für mich. (Pubertät 258-9)

The fascination with blood surfaces again as a subsequent encounter develops into an even more intense intimacy:

Etwas andres ist noch passiert. Ich habe jemanden mit der Faust gefickt in Amsterdam und der hatte auch die vernarbten Hämorrhoidenknoten im Darm und durch diese Reibung fing das plötzlich an zu bluten und mir lief das Blut den Arm runter... tropfte es auch auf die Lippe und ich habe es abgeleckt und es war eine Art von unheimlicher

Faszination... (Pubertät 264)

His pleasure is augmented with every additional sexual venture that continues further towards the unification of sex and death symbolising the ultimate gratification of sacrifice. This unconventional desire for pain represents an important ritual of exploring the limitations of the body and can be observed in other socially acceptable forms of risk. Although most feats of daring are not elevated to the status of ritual, there nevertheless remains a desire to challenge the mind, body and spirit. By extending this practice into the domain of sexuality, which is already sacrosanct, human fulfilment may be expanded.

Aside from the sexuality of gay men, Versuch über die Pubertät also portrays gay relationships and "affirmative" images of gay culture. Relationships emerge in the novel as transitory since most concentrate on the satisfaction of sexual desire and not emotional compatibility. The novel rarely communicates any emotions at all, which may be an indictment on Fichte's behalf of gay culture or culture in general.

Hubert experiences a series of affairs, most notably with Trygve, Alex and Testanière, which in their beginnings appear as satisfying though in each case they do not last for various reasons--most notably the absence of intimacy manifested through alcohol or substance abuse or through

sexual preoccupation.

Fichte also attempts to create a justification of homosexuality through summoning historical figures in order to enlist them as examples of eminent and great "homosexuals":

- Goethe war homosexuell, sagt Anna triumphierend.
 - Auch Lionardo da Vinci und Plato und Friedrich der Große und Bach in seiner Jugend und Kleist und Michelangelo. / - Und Schiller? / - Schiller nicht! Aber das merkt man auch, sagt Pozzi verächtlich. (Pubertät 31)

Even though these figures are employed to promote Hubert's self image, Pozzi still maintains the notion that appearance, and perhaps in this case writing, divulge homosexual orientation. The following postulate claims that the only prospect for gay men arises through their ostensibly innate, intellectual talents. "Der Homosexuelle hat nur eine Chance - die Brillanz, und er wird wegen ihrer gehaßt; ist er nicht brillant, wird er verachtet" (Pubertät 225). Therefore, the homosexual is inveigled by this reputation of brilliance and then is reviled for that ascribed gift, just as he is hated for his homosexuality. Fichte demonstrates this by providing historical examples:

Wie witzig und konform sind des aufgeklärten Heine Bemerkungen dem lächerlichen Platen gegenüber, wie gekonnt die vernichtenden Kritiken über Tennessee Williams in "Time magazine", wie treffend die Bonmots über Cocteau, der unmöglich genug war, den Säbel der Académie Française in das Gesicht seines

Freundes Jean Marais umzuformen. (Pubertät 214)

Despite these social pressures to conform to stereotype, Hubert does, however, tentatively accept his sexuality since he appears committed to pursuing relationships with men.

The narrator introduces other affirming images of sexuality, including gay liberationist politics through Alex, who condemns this conviction:

Alex' politische Einstellung ist die des Homosexuellen, der dadurch eine gesellschaftliche Stellung zu halten versucht, daß er nicht auffällt. Er findet es im Rahmen der Hamburger Lokalpolitik unpassend, daß Wolf Leander, als Vorläufer der Gay Liberation, 1951 seine Veranlagung auf literarischen Lesungen affiziert. Hamburg hat Homosexuelle immer geduldet, wenn sie sich geduldeten. (Pubertät 153)

The liberationist conception, however, does penetrate Fichte's polemics in which he condemns discrimination and hatred and ascribes the Bible as the foundation of this prejudice, as has previously been noted. Fichte's narrator avoids delving more thoroughly into the political sphere. The narrator appears to reject conformity and societal proscription, and demonstrates similarities among oppressed social groups. The novel does not, however, explore the power imbalances that form the basis of discrimination and that demonstrate the complexity of the struggle for justice.

In idealising one presentation of gay identity, the novel

suggests that the sado-masochistic ritualisation of sexuality expands experience and fosters a process for the liberation of identity.

Though Fichte attempts to criticise Western culture and to parody its traditions, he cannot escape from its influence as he unwittingly furthers its cause. His use of stereotypes and his presentation of behavioural "extremes" are absent of political explanation, though they do provide material for introspection. The portrayal of these images facilitates alienation and misunderstanding since such images betray patriarchal law.

The use of black culture and Afro-American ritual as a comparison, though effective, capitalises on Fichte's white privilege and demonstrates the radical differences between ethnic groups, exoticising blackness as intellectual exercise and for sexual stimulation. Admittedly, the novel does parody the parallel between these rituals and rituals--though normally not considered as such--of the West.

Fichte's portrayal of women is disparaging since women function as a prerequisite for the acceptance of men in society. Women are practically relegated outside of any sexual context--the only context in which they hold any power. Fichte's position on women in the novel does not seem to be as clearly developed as in his Polemiken.

Fichte's greatest contribution in this novel remains his exposition of the fluidity of identity through

Hubert/Detlev/Jäcki and the synthesis of the masculine and the feminine, black and white. However, the fusion ceases with the biological demarcation of sex, since the novel lacks an analysis of the constructed differences between sex and gender. Fichte clearly privileges the masculine, yet he fails to recognize the inherent threat in this posturing. The power dynamics in relationships are criticised, but no consistent analysis of accountability is sanctioned. There is a constant shifting between levels of narration and meaning;¹²² from male to female, between masculine and feminine, black and white, homosexuality and heterosexuality. Fichte forgives the power dynamics in the presence of individual desire and continuously reinforces a seemingly inescapable binary system that appears to endorse masculinity as an inherently male trait and to support the appropriation of femininity by males. Cultural conceptions of sexuality, death and religion appear to fluctuate between myth and personal identity as these customs endure Fichte's ritual vivisection.

¹²²Hermann Schlösser relates this dynamism to the travelling motif in Fichte's works. "Hubert Fichte, der zweigeschlechtliche Forschungs-Reisende, verband Hinnehmen und Ablehnen zu einer immer neuen Allianz von Mythos und Logos, von Verstehen und Befremdet-Sein. Zu einer Weltformel läßt sich das nicht verbinden, in einer einzigen Gattung hat es auch recht Platz" (193).

V. CONCLUSION

In examining the two novels Another Country and Versuch über die Pubertät--though they are disparate in tone, technique and their approach to the subject of homosexuality--we can conclude that the correspondence in political perspective with respect to gay identity lies in the presentation of the dynamics of the categories of ethnicity, gender and sexuality. The investigation of these categories reveals an integral correlation between the effects of oppression in these categories and the formation of gay identity. The dynamics of gay identity including the configuration of the closet, stereotypical representation, the interpretation of patriarchal mythologies and the development of an affirmative identity are reproduced in the dynamics of these other non-privileged categories. They directly relate to a complex system of oppression established through a hierarchy, which stems from gender privilege.

Fichte and Baldwin reject the imposition of limitations on sexual identity and view this rejection as a solution to the problem of societal intolerance. However, they perpetuate the notion of an essential masculinity for men and hence an essential femininity for women. Both argue for an idealised bisexuality in which males emerge enjoying a sexuality liberated from the patriarchal restrictions of procreation, and in which women appear to be excluded from

the system unless they employ masculine tactics, i.e., sexual aggression. The persistent favouring of masculinity expressed by males prohibits the success of their proposed solution and further oppresses all categories since the patriarchal imposition of predetermined sex roles and behaviours has only partially been challenged.

Baldwin's conceptualisation of race, though both insightful from his perspective as a black man and as a homosexual, presents Blacks as still "under fire". Neither Blacks nor Whites have attained the love required to bridge their racial differences. Interestingly, the white male homosexual possesses the healing quality of love through his ability to "make it" with anyone through the expression of his masculine sexuality.

Baldwin disregards gay identity as part of the public domain since the therapeutic effects of homosexuality are realised in the private domain. Race remains a public problem that Baldwin attributes to the American mythic representation of men as quintessential cowboys. Black men continue to threaten the white man's domination through their ability to defile the archetypal virgin, the white woman.

Fichte's most significant statement on ethnic difference includes the demonstration that cross-cultural myths remain analogous in social significance. His exploitation of racial categories through reification and his exposition

of racial discrimination represent a curious paradox, since his sexual objectification of Blacks undermines his propitiously intentioned message of inter-racial commonalities.

Though Fichte does not include many female characters in his work, the portrayal of their human complexity is primarily restricted to stereotype. Women, though conforming to the stereotypical representations of preceding literature, do possess a sexuality that expresses potential violence--an image not often ascribed to women. Women exist only in their sexual dimension, either as sexual competition for homosexuals or as vehicles for social acceptance. Whenever women exhibit masculine behaviours, they do not commonly receive the rewards of that behaviour.

Sexual delineation centres on the use of power in woman's relationship to man according to Baldwin's presentation. Women use their sex as a weapon of revenge or to punish, as in the case of Ida and Cass. Most male violence is directed towards women or gay men, through the sex act that Baldwin represents as a violent struggle between individuals. However, his portrayal of women is more complete than Fichte's since he lends credibility to their actions through allowing them to elucidate their motivations. Baldwin, in focusing upon the employment of sex as a manipulatory device, demonstrates woman's struggle to attain power from her position of ostensible frailty and reinforces traditional gender stereotypes.

Masculine behaviour predominates in Another Country and Baldwin favours masculinity in males, tacitly condemning the usurpation of masculinity by women. Conversely, femininity or at least overt femininity in males is criticised, particularly with regard to gay men. Baldwin appears to reject the masculine cult of the cowboy as an institutionally oppressive force in America. In doing so, Baldwin provides male characters who covertly exhibit feminine characteristics while concurrently and incessantly extolling their maleness. This ambiguity towards the masculine and feminine dichotomy places Baldwin in a seemingly indifferent position with regard to gender, however, he asserts the primacy of his own conceptualisation of masculinity throughout the novel, resulting in universal sexual access for males.

Fichte, ostensibly attempting to diffuse gender categories, reinforces these stereotypes through his irresolute refusal to condemn them. While demonstrating the fragility of gender boundaries, especially through cross-cultural comparisons, he tacitly supports traditional gender configurations through constantly questioning the validity of gender transgression that is already in a tenuous position.

Baldwin and Fichte present masculinity as a dominant force in their novels and, though citing some of the inherent dangers of this position, nonetheless venerate masculine privilege. The ultimate challenge of masculinity is demonstrated in the sexual arena where a successful

sexual performance verifies manhood. Baldwin and Fichte conflate the notions of sex and love and create a world in which men enjoy universal access to all objects of love/desire. This allegedly provides a solution to the problems of oppression.

The inability of these authors to successfully integrate femininity or women into their universal solution of love demonstrates the limitations of the gay male experience of the sixties and seventies. Baldwin purposefully supports his masculine concept, which institutes the division of sex roles between men and women (though not between men). His attempt to bridge racial difference operates on less firmly-placed role divisions since he advocates the assimilation of both cultures. Fichte furthers Baldwin's tenets through supporting the claim of masculine primacy and through the promotion of male-centred bisexual love. However, Fichte elucidates more clearly the notions of difference and commonality.

This study demonstrates the similarities between identity formation within oppressed groups and the effects of oppression on identity formation. In the two novels, an examination of the power dynamics within the categories of ethnicity, gender and sexuality discloses the oppositional forces at work and illustrates the subjective perceptions of power. Baldwin and Fichte offer their solutions to deal with the inequity of power in society and, hopefully, this

study uncovers some of the weaknesses in their valiant attempts. In examining the two novels with respect to the development of an equitable power structure, I chose to focus on the categories of ethnicity, gender and sexuality, but an ample number of other arbitrary demarcations such as class, ability and intellect are also worthy of investigation. Further inquiry into the dynamics within these other categories would provide insight into the complexity of an arbitrarily assigned and value laden gender construct.

Due to the impact of AIDS on the gay community, it would also be valuable to study the change in gay identity formation and its effect on gender construction in AIDS literature.

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