

James Baldwin's *Another Country* as an Abstract Machine



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Abstract: This article on James Baldwin's third novel, *Another Country*, examines how abstract machines diagram an unfolding flow of desires in a bipolar process of becoming that produces two distinct genres in Baldwin's novel, a protest–literature narrative and an asubjective text. One abstract machine, described as a machinic assemblage by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, shapes the perceptions (cognition), significations (meaning), and language (representation) of a protest–literature narrative that takes place in Greenwich Village during the late 1950s. Embedded within this text is an abstract machine described by Deleuze and Guattari as a collective assemblage of enunciation. Its bipolar movement interrupts Baldwin's novel by rupturing the stable surface with neurologically based emotions expressed by a chain of significations that enable it to become a new text, and in doing so, unbecome what it was. Consequently, this article examines how these abstract machines shape a novel that generates new meanings for the reader as a result of this encounter of discourses.

Keywords: segregation, integration, James Baldwin, Gilles Deleuze, abstract machines, narrative genres

In this article on James Baldwin's third novel, *Another Country* (1962), I look at how a story set in Greenwich Village during the late 1950s affectively composes as well as discomposes in what Brian Massumi refers to as “an abstract machine which, as always, is immediately bipolar: on one side it

organizes a form-substance of content, and on the other a form-substance of expression” (27). I examine how an abstract machine—or diagram that changes, maps, and gives meaning to a flow of desires—assembles statements and signs in a bipolar process of becoming that produces two different genres in Baldwin’s novel: an objective protest-literature narrative and an asubjective text “in which a distinction between the subject and objects does not exist” (Vadén 199). “Book 1: Easy Rider” is focalized through Rufus Scott, an African-American jazz drummer who is in a relationship with Leona, a white southern woman. They meet one night after Rufus finishes performing with his band at a club, and their subsequent relationship implodes in a destructive spiral that leaves Leona in a mental asylum and culminates in Rufus’s suicide. After his death, the novel shifts its focus to an interracial love affair that develops between Ida Scott, his sister, and Vivaldo Moore, his Italian-American best friend. This love story between an aspiring songstress and a frustrated writer focuses on their struggle to overcome barriers caused by their racial differences. Much like Rufus and Leona, the couple grapples with surfaces composed of feelings, a force field identifiable in a protest-literature narrative steeped in conventional meanings associated with a history of segregation, and they negotiate depths diagramed by a destabilizing asubjective text comprised of expressions of emotion or arbitrary combinations of words.

This interplay between surface and depth in Baldwin’s novel highlights what Henry Louis Gates refers to as a critical parody that exposes how an objective literary text in the naturalist tradition, or what Baldwin refers to as protest literature, contributes to “‘the Negro problem’ and [is] perhaps part of the problem itself” (187). It is my contention that this double-voiced narrative in *Another Country* is alluded to by Baldwin in his essay “Notes of a Native Son,” where he critiques Richard Wright’s novel *Native Son* for being overly sentimental in its essentialist representation of reality. Baldwin points out that Wright’s attempt to give a true account of human cruelty leaves out an important inquiry into what makes people with power over other human beings behave with such senseless brutality. Therefore, my essay argues that *Another Country* signifies his departure from a protest-literature narrative by placing it alongside an asubjective text to draw attention to an instability that subverts Wright’s absolutist paradigm.

In Baldwin’s novel, these distinct genres function on one side as an abstract machine, described as a machinic assemblage by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. This text shapes denotations (propositions of truth and falsity), manifestations (the speaking subject), and significations (linguistic assumptions about ultimate truths) into a protest-literature narrative. This genre is

dominated by feelings mediated by a past that aligns with assemblages (self-organizing systems) stabilized by binaries. Consequently, Rufus, Leona, Vivaldo, and Ida perceive one another through a frame of racial diversity that reinforces a structure of cognitions, representations, and transcendental meanings rooted in a history of segregation. For instance, Rufus is forceful and rough during his first sexual encounter with Leona, and when she tries to pull away from him he says to her, “Go ahead, fight. I like it. Is this the way they do down home?” (*Another Country* 23). This moment is rife with feelings filtered through a lens that affirms racist stereotypes about black men as sexual predators of white women, and this scene shows how a protest-literature text, drawing from essentialist representations that rationalized lynching, leads Rufus and Leona to misrecognize one another. These types of feelings continue to surface in a relationship where the couple is unable to communicate using propositions that reify segregated territories, a dynamic that impedes their attempts to transgress boundaries of race, gender, and class.

Embedded within this protest-literature narrative on another side of the abstract machine is what Deleuze and Guattari describe as a collective assemblage of enunciation. Its bipolar movement interrupts Baldwin’s novel by rupturing the stable surface with neurologically based emotions expressed by a chain of significations that enable it to become a new genre, and in doing so, unbecome what it was. This text can be found in the redemptive love story between Vivaldo and Ida, and it is evident in a critical moment for the couple when he finally learns that she has been having an affair. The third-person narrator comments that “his heart began to beat with a newer, stonier anguish, which destroyed the distance called pity and placed him, very nearly, in her body, beside the table on the dirty floor” (*Another Country* 358). The feeling, pity, is displaced by the emotion, anguish, and the result is that dominant segregationist perspectives are dislodged by an experience of the present that intensifies a paradoxical merging of their bodies. This moment disrupts alienating boundaries and a distinct way of being emerges. In effect, a comparative parody of an old text with a new one takes place in a process Linda Hutcheon describes as a “repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity” (6).

Thereby, this new way of perceiving reality also functions as a background narrative discourse that is superimposed onto or placed beside the dominant protest-literature text. The result is a space for the reader to discover new meanings generated by the emerging discourse. This process restructures the protest-literature narrative in ways that signal the potentiality and possibility of change, and also draws attention to how this metamorphosis is actualized and realized for Ida and Vivaldo. Consequently, *Another Country*, published

in 1962, embodies a new text that anticipates the sweeping social changes brought about by the Civil Rights Act in 1964. Baldwin's novel gives voice to a reality that has yet to be achieved with its parody of two different genres, a protest narrative that draws from the objectivity of naturalism or protest literature, and an asubjective text. This double-voiced work is glimpsed in Rufus and Leona's story, but it is achieved in Vivaldo and Ida's journey into another country, an ambiguous and paradoxical space mediated by a desire that collapses binaries. What remains is an asubjective experience that presents bodies that Deleuze describes as lacking a surface: "the inside and the outside, the container and the contained, no longer have a precise limit; they plunge into a universal depth" (*Logic of Sense* 86).

In 1938, Wright says of his own novel *Uncle Tom's Children*, "I realized that I made an awfully naive mistake. I found that I had written a book which even bankers' daughters could read and weep over and feel good about. I swore to myself that if I ever wrote another book, no one would weep over it" (qtd. in Elmer 132). *Native Son*, published in 1940, is the unsentimental book he writes in response. The novel tells the story of Bigger Thomas, a twenty-year-old African-American man living in Chicago's South Side during the 1930s. It explores ways in which the black body is a site of both ontological and systemic violence, and it ends tragically with Bigger sentenced to death for the murder of Mary Dalton, the Marxist daughter of an affluent white American family. Wright's work examines harsh conditions in the inner cities increasingly populated by African Americans in the years leading up to World War II, and it attempts to realistically portray the effects of racial oppression on their embattled communities. It's a protest-literature novel that functions rhetorically as an objective witness to the black body on the run from capture by Jim Crow's discriminatory practices.

In 1949, Baldwin published "Everybody's Protest Novel," a review that examines Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 anti-slave narrative *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, calling it "the cornerstone of American social protest fiction" (13). His article critiques the novel for its shortcomings by arguing that Miss Ophelia's self-righteous outrage at the benevolent St Clare's rationalization for slavery is the author's point of view. This moral center of the text is clarified by the Northerner's horrified response to her Kentucky cousin's explanation of slavery as caused by Black folk being turned over to the devil for the benefit of white people. Baldwin describes Miss Ophelia's virtuous response as cringe-worthy, glib and "terribly in earnest" (13). Moreover, he argues that the author displays an unquestioned "medieval morality" comprised of binaries between forces of light and darkness, black and white, this world and the next one (13). In addition, he castigates Beecher Stowe for drawing on melodrama and overt sentimentality to evoke empathy in the reader. Baldwin writes,

“Sentimentality, the ostentatious parading of excessive and spurious emotion, is the mark of dishonesty, the inability to feel; the wet eyes of the sentimentalist betray his aversion to experience, his fear of life, his arid heart; and it is always, therefore, the signal of secret and violent inhumanity, the mask of cruelty” (14). In his view, self-righteousness inadvertently subverts the subgenre’s nobler intent to produce freedom for the oppressed and greater social responsibility in the culture. In the end, Baldwin invokes the specter of the missionary going to Africa in describing Stowe as a pamphleteer who has written a “lie more palpable than the truth” (16).

Baldwin spends the remainder of the review critiquing Wright’s *Native Son*. He points out, “All of Bigger’s life is controlled by his hatred and his fear. And later his fear drives him to murder, and his hatred to rape” (22). It is an endless pit of violence that invokes a vision of being cast eternally into destruction rather than toward redemption. Therefore, he objects to Bigger’s rejection of life, and he uses it to illustrate why protest literature falls prey to the inauthenticity at the center of this subgenre with its propensity to reject the fullness of life in favor of categorization (23). Baldwin points to limits that make Wright’s novel didactic and lacking in psychological complexity, a rhetorical trope that utilizes sentimentality to maximize its effects. The appalling social conditions provoke the reader to feel deeply about the plight of the aggrieved, but this noble sentiment does not necessarily translate into social action.

This review causes a rift in Baldwin’s personal relationship with his mentor Wright, and in 1961 he writes about the falling out in “Alas, Poor Richard.” According to Baldwin, Wright felt “Everybody’s Protest Novel” was a betrayal of him and of all African Americans because of its attack on protest literature. His response to Baldwin about the unflattering essay was to say, “All literature is protest. You can’t name a single novel that isn’t protest” (qtd. in “Alas, Poor Richard” 278). This prompts Baldwin to reply that “all literature might be protest but not all protest was literature” (“Alas, Poor Richard” 278). Wright deftly pinpoints a difficulty in defining protest literature; however, Baldwin’s point of view is one that dovetails with what Ralph Ellison describes as the “limitations of [Wright’s] vision” (qtd. in Gates 186). Gates argues that Ellison’s use of modernism in *Invisible Man* is a critical parody of Wright’s realism that “exposes naturalism to be merely a hardened convention of representation” (187). This critique is influenced by Mikhail Bakhtin’s examination of the novel’s history in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, a work that identifies examples of paradigmatic shifts that occur whenever one genre is contrasted, or parodied, by another within the same text. Bakhtin coins the term “heteroglossia” to describe this contested ground where these different literary systems collide (263).

This point of contact is characterized by dialogism, an encounter where pre-existing authoritative texts are supplanted by other marginal texts that function to simultaneously open up readings to new meanings. Thereby, Ellison and Gates underscore the limits of Wright's work by tackling its problems as a genre, whether one calls it naturalism or protest literature. For Ellison, the response was to parody "Wright's literary structures through repetition and difference" (Gates 186). An example of this is the interplay between the book titles, *Native Son* and *Invisible Man*. Bigger Thomas is voiceless while the book title denotes a presence, and the unnamed protagonist in Ellison's novel is nothing but a voice while the title, *Invisible Man*, implies an absence. This similarity with a difference is one that draws from African-American culture's use of signifying as a trope to indirectly make an argument through repetition that reveals "an implicit parody of a subject's own complicity in illusion" (181).

For Baldwin, the emphasis of his signification was not to push in the direction of modernism, but to work toward a technique that spoke to the ambiguous nature of human existence. At the heart of this literary approach was a critique of the violence in *Native Son* as "gratuitous and compulsive because the root of the violence is never examined" ("Alas, Poor Richard" 273). Its inability to examine this rage makes the work more reductive and less able to speak to the complexity of the human condition. It accentuates how different the circumstances of the character are from those of the conventional reader. Bigger is poor, black, and beset by the perils of inner-city violence. His representation rewards the reader with a satisfying sentimental journey, one that doesn't transcend its own solipsism. Therefore, Baldwin's approach would be to create work that was not reductive, nor would it seek to play to a reader's feelings. Instead, he sought to tap into pure emotions in a new type of realistic novel that achieved its rhetorical aims through a representation of the human condition that substantively transforms the reader. He vaguely describes the paradoxical power of love as a vehicle for achieving this goal, and he writes, "only within this web of ambiguity [and] paradox... can we find at once ourselves and the power that will free us from ourselves" ("Everybody's Protest Novel" 15). *Another Country* is the book where this vision is realized.

In *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, Deleuze clarifies the distinction between *affectio*, as affection, and *affectus*, as affect. Affection refers to the feeling affects on the body, or emotions, while the *affectus* refers to image affections of the mind, or feelings. It is a process that Baruch Spinoza uses to describe "desire as the conatus having become conscious, the cause of this consciousness being the affection" (*Spinoza* 60). Within this context, desire is an innate inclination to persevere in beings that is expressed through a body's capacity for being affected in two ways, by actions of the body undertaken

by the affected agent, and by passions or feelings appearing to the mind as phenomena.

This dynamic is evident in the exposition of *Another Country* that begins with an extension into the intradiegetic level of a Byronic figure. Rufus Scott, the moody, tormented jazz drummer, stumbles from a movie theater into the street at Times Square. It is the late fifties, and in the northern states Jim Crow still persists in education, housing, employment, and public facilities. It is also a little past midnight, symbolically a critical turning point, and the third-person narration draws attention to the effects of this inequity on Rufus's body and mind. He is exhausted, hungry, and broke. With nowhere to go, he walks as "one of the fallen" among "boys and girls drinking coffee at the drugstore counters who were held back from his condition by barriers as perishable as their dwindling cigarettes" (10). He doesn't yet know this is the final night of his life in a city that swirls with objects; white chattering people, taxicabs, and policemen among billboards, neon lights, and tall buildings. It is a whirl of nouns without propositions, their privileged status already assumed in their placement at the center of the narrator's point of view. Discomposed by sad passions evoked by a territory that diminishes his ability to act, Rufus resembles Bigger Thomas whose feelings of bitterness destroyed his life and the lives of those around him. He needs to urinate, but he will not go into a club he once headlined in with his band. Instead, he stands outside listening to jazz musicians play music "hurled at the crowd like a malediction" that "reassured everyone that nothing terrible was happening" (10). As Rufus urinates in the street, he is paralyzed by a culture built on segregationist ideas that emphasize distinctions in identity, and his mind is compromised by the ways he has internalized as well as tried to make sense of this social condition.

This moment is organized by what Deleuze and Guattari theorize is a body without organs, composed of abstract machines that differentiate as singularities and emerge as material forms. In this incorporeal field of forces, Rufus has added dimensions and differentiated to become a multiplicity with emergent properties. Possibilities have been realized and potentials are actualized. His body is no longer singular, but inextricably connected to differentiations within diversity that bind social communities, shape human culture, and determine allegiances to families, clans, tribes, and nations. Consequently, binary thinking has actualized virtual potentials in him, and the process has been simultaneously diagrammed as well as realized in this experience he inhabits. He is a being in the world for whom the deleterious impact of separatist ideas, fueled by racism, have left him unable to muster up the will to pursue his affective attachments to an attainment of the good life. As an African-American jazz musician, he has failed to become one of the handfuls

that have achieved commercial success. Therefore, his will to aim for a better future has deserted him and overcome by the impossibility of his desire, he is a symbol of those in his community whose affections, actualized as passions, leave them without the will to live.

Deleuze and Guattari refer to lines of flight as moments of change or deterritorializations that take place in a multiplicity when moving to a different threshold. For instance, they describe how an orchid forms in the image of a female wasp and thereby attracts the male to reproduce with it. During this encounter the male wasp deterritorializes in ways that are “not imitation at all but a capture of code . . . a veritable becoming, a becoming-wasp of the orchid and a becoming-orchid of the wasp” (10). Pollen is transferred to the wasp that inadvertently pollinates other orchids it mistakes for females that it is attracted to. Processes of this kind are referred to as “lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification” (3). Similarly, while Rufus walks the late-night streets of Greenwich Village, he metamorphoses as “a sudden, cold, familiar sickness filled him” (*Another Country* 11), and a memory of his former lover, Leona, triggers a stream of consciousness that complicates the plot. This rupture in the frame narrative speeds up the pace of the telling in a line of flight that collapses distinctions between mind, body, space, and time to form a new multiplicity. This shift is one that signals a departure from objective realism, pollinates the narrative with a trope that disrupts the linear momentum of the story, and introduces a dynamic that will be utilized in the novel that establishes what Hutcheon describes as “difference at the heart of similarity” (6).

Rufus is a site of becoming as years pass in snippets of memory from his childhood in Harlem. The voice of his father appears in italics followed by a list of images that summarize Rufus’s experience in New York after the Second World War. He remembers “the beat: hands, feet, tambourines, drums, pianos, laughter, curses, razor blades; the man stiffening with a laugh and a growl and a purr and the woman moistening and softening with a whisper and a sigh and a cry” (*Another Country* 12). First a denotation—the beat—and this name diversifies in a galaxy of associated expressions of desire. This heightened tumble of words gives way to the image of an Indian shawl that triggers the memory of his younger sister, Ida. This genealogical marker signifies a shift to an emphasis on debt. Rufus owes both his family and the arborescently linked racial community to prevail in attaining the good life. He must achieve the great public success they see in his potential, and only after he realizes this promise can he take his place as the preserver of the family name. He is ashamed of his failure, and through this line of flight, a delirium of intensities takes him outside of himself. He finally recognizes how in attempting to mimic conventional expectations, he embodies the alienating knowledge that

“he had hit bottom. . . . Yet there knocked in his heart the suspicion that the bottom did not really exist” (50).

A short while later in a flashback to seven months before, the narrative goes back to when Rufus meets Leona for the first time in the afterglow of a successful gig. He takes her to a house party of an African-American man “who had fought his way to the top in show business via several of the rougher professions, including boxing and pimping” (19). Charlie Parker plays on the hi-fi in his apartment while the two men talk briefly about success and respectability, a conversation that touches on the ways white people for years have “been stealing the colored folks blind” (19). This scene illustrates how a machinic assemblage organizes territory that gains its coherence through what Baldwin described in his critique of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as unquestioned “medieval morality” comprised of binaries between forces of light and darkness (“Everybody’s Protest Novel” 13). However, this binary thinking is deterritorialized by Leona’s presence and contributes to Baldwin’s departure from Beecher Stowe’s protest-fiction model. Put differently, the banter between the two men is witnessed by a poor, divorced, southern woman, and so Leona’s incongruous presence complicates the men’s generalized description of white people. Class binds them as allies in their respective uphill struggles for survival in a system that excludes all of them from privileged social circles, and her diversification within this homogeneity signifies the limits of protest-literature narratives that depend on binaries for their meaning.

At this point of dissonance, desire propels the narrative on a line of flight, or escape, toward a sexual event as Rufus flirts with Leona on a balcony that overlooks the George Washington Bridge. He uses words he’s said “before, years ago, to someone else” (*Another Country* 22). His seduction is a copy of a copy of his previous attempts to endear himself to former lovers. He wants to kiss her, but instead walks to the balcony’s edge. He is uncertain of himself at a critical point of intensity where his fate has yet to be determined; however, the subsequent expression of his desire will further project him along a trajectory that leads him on a flight of death fueled by the hatred of white oppression he brings to this encounter between their bodies.

The pace of the narrative slows to mimetically evoke an amplified intensity and lingers over details that unfold unpredictably. Rufus moves to the darkest part of the balcony, and Leona follows after asking him in baffled rage what he’s trying to do to her. He knocks the glass out of her hand, fantasizing about watching her fly over the balcony. He’s rough and tells her to fight because he enjoys it. At first, she cries before she stops struggling. Then, “Her hands came up and touched his face as though she were blind” (23). The narration is focalized through Rufus’s perspective, and this line of flight is brutal in its

exploding violence. He wants her to remember him, and “under his breath he cursed the milk-white bitch and groaned and rode his weapon riding between her thighs” (24). She cries a second time again, and he reminds her that he said he would give her something to cry about as “he beat her with all his strength” (24).

Afterward, they hold each other, and she tells him how wonderful an experience it was.

It is a confusing end to a rape, and the contemporary reader struggles to understand how Leona can feel close to Rufus after they witness an act of sexual violence. The racial oppression he has suffered does not excuse his unjustifiable behavior, and the narrative appears glib in its handling of a sexual assault. This disjunction lends this moment a sense of gratuitousness, similar to that Baldwin used to critique the unexamined violence and hatred in *Native Son*. Moreover, this scene draws from the naturalist tradition that foregrounds a political analysis of interracial relationships, and it can be read with an emphasis on what happens to both Rufus and Bigger as a result of their respective experiences in a segregated society. Thereby, this moment reveals how their line of escape is aligned with desires in an assemblage dominated by tribal alliances, each of the characters inhabiting what Deleuze describes in *The Fold* as bodies with minds that have a “favored—clear and distinct—zone of expression” (85). However, in *Another Country* this enunciation is double-voiced. Rufus is disconnected from what is taking place. He “watched himself” and is baffled by a contradictory “tenderness for Leona which he had not expected to feel” (23). She is both resistant and acquiescent. Consequently, both characters move between feelings shaped by a historical past and an undercurrent of baffling emotions expressed by their bodies.

The balcony scene accentuates how feeling affects and image-based affections result in a manifestation of the vile Southern fantasy and fear of black men as rapists. The narrator describes this experience as a “violence of the deep” (24). It is a moment that on its own would be definitive in its objective claims and essentialist thinking evident in Wright’s naturalism; however, it also serves as a comparative text that recollects the clandestine kiss between Bigger Thomas and a drunk Mary Dalton. This repetition with a difference (deterritorialization) adds a layer of critique to this brutal scene akin to what Homi K. Bhabha describes as signifying the present where “something comes to be repeated, relocated, and translated in the name of tradition, in the guise of a pastness that is not necessarily a faithful sign of historical memory but a strategy of representing authority in terms of the artifice of the archaic” (207). Therefore, this moment of heightened intensity in *Another Country* is strategic in how it reveals the illusory nature of conventional ideas about

interracial sexuality when presented as a definitive text (a mode that is a staple function of representation in the naturalist text). Since the predictable nature of Rufus's violation of Leona is rendered in terms that are bipolar in their movement between emotions and feelings, the scene is also a critical parody that highlights the inauthenticity at the heart of interracial stereotypes. In addition, it points out a difference that will gain clarity once subsequent incarnations of this thematic material reappear in the relationship between Ida and Vivaldo.

In the rising action of *Another Country*, Rufus, Leona, and Vivaldo walk through Greenwich Village. Rufus is concerned about the price to be paid for their interracial relationship. There will be "trouble with the landlord, with the neighbors, with all the adolescents in the Village and all those who descended on weekends" (29). In addition, he cannot tell his family. His race-conscious parents will accuse him of being ashamed of his black skin. There is nowhere to go with Leona where they will not be judged, and Rufus is uncertain about whether he is willing to deal with the grief.

After the friends enter a park, the omniscient narrator describes Villagers who sit on benches reading Søren Kierkegaard paperbacks, or talking "distractedly of abstract matters" (30). These people are weighed down "with a limpness which indicated they would never move again" (30). It is a minor detail on the intradiegetic level of the text that has no plot function. Instead, it is one of the many versions of a free leitmotif in the novel, the bourgeois intellectual luxuriating in contemplation and given over to what Jean-Paul Sartre calls "a kind of desperate quietism" (*Existentialism and Human Emotions* 9). On the extradiegetic level, this fleeting appearance of the Villagers is part of the affective detail in a territory marked by the failure of Kierkegaard's existentialist rhetoric on faith, responsibility, and free choice. This humanist project, transformed in the New World by capitalism and the American Dream, has ossified into solipsistic beings that are unable to enter intersubjective encounters with others. These flat types momentarily foregrounded in the text mirror the inability of the trio of characters to communicate with one another. They see each other through objectifying racial categories, and this shapes how they perceive and behave.

Rufus makes eye contact with an Italian-American adolescent. "The boy looked at him with hatred; his glance flicked over Leona as though she were a whore; he dropped his eyes slowly and swaggered on—having registered his protest, his backside seemed to snarl, having made his point" (31). Much like the ashamed keyhole peeper in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, the Other's look makes Rufus aware that he is the object of the Other's idea of who he is. He begins to see himself as both an enactment of the Other's gaze and as a subject he now encounters in himself. Sartre writes that "the Other decenters

my own relation to the world. My world 'flees' toward the Other, precisely because the Other sees and appropriates it; its immediacy to myself is replaced by an immediacy to the Other" (*Being and Nothingness* 312). The teenager's look destabilizes Rufus, and similar to the Self-as-object peeping through the keyhole, he loses his sense of autonomy. He sees himself as an extension of the Other's project, and he feels ashamed that he is with a white woman. He is decentered, and much like Sartre's destabilized Self, ashamed of being viewed as an object by Others. When Leona tries to explain to Rufus that the adolescent is "just bored, and lonely," Rufus gets angry because Leona innocently refers to him as a "boy" (31). The moment quickly passes, but it reveals how isolated he is from both hostile as well as sympathetic white people. This inability to communicate is a painful absence he feels, one already built into a social formation he inhabits where human beings do not see each other beyond their tribal affinities.

This sequence highlights one of Baldwin's themes in the novel concerning how the matrix for understanding between people of different races fails when ideas about Others are accompanied by a certainty about what it means to know them. Therefore, as Rufus and Leona continue their walk through the park, anxiety bubbles beneath their light banter, and a machinic assemblage diagrams a territory where racial diversity is marked by generalized attitudes that make communication between them impossible. Thus, they are manifestations of Sartre's assertion about the Self's perplexing inability to know Others. The existential philosopher writes, "The Other's look makes me be beyond my being in this world and puts me in the midst of the world which is at once this world and beyond this world" (*Being and Nothingness* 320). Consequently, the couple is both immersed in and displaced by binary thinking that dominates the racial categories they have internalized. Their erroneous way of seeing sabotages any possibility of communication that can occur between them, and Rufus oscillates between feelings of resentment and emotions such as rage. This bipolarity reproduces the behavior of the abstract machine and draws attention to Baldwin's critical parody of the limits of protest literature.

In "Line of Escape: Gilles Deleuze's Encounter with George Jackson," Michelle Koerner writes that thought can be an expression "on the run, a way of mapping escape routes and counterattacks that cannot be adequately understood in terms of structure or an understanding of language as an invariable system" (166). This mind-in-flight can also be described as the affection of the conatus, an innate desire to persevere to exist. In the frame narrative of Baldwin's novel, the effects of Jim Crow's racial segregation instinctively propel Rufus through the night on a flight from psychic and physical capture. His relationship with Leona is over, but it has been a violent one. They fought "each other with their hands and their voices and then with their bodies" (50).

Defined by binary structures in a segregated society, they discomposed in a destructive spiral. Rufus hit and humiliated her. She stayed with him because she believed he was a good person in pain. Her compassion enraged him. He repeatedly beat and raped her before eventually driving her into an insane asylum.

At this tipping point in the narrative, Rufus bears an uncanny resemblance to Bigger Thomas. Both figures epitomize the violent return of the black male as an irredeemable brute. This trope exists in both novels to draw attention to the inequitable social conditions that produced them and illustrates how both figures are on a trajectory toward death, Bigger by a state-sanctioned execution in the electric chair and Rufus by suicide. Each of them has been on the run from tragically accepting “the possibility of his being sub-human . . . according to those brutal criteria bequeathed him at birth” (“Everybody’s Protest Novel” 23). However, neither character is able to prevent his body from being captured by the ideology of segregation. Slavery is in the past, but the reach of Jim Crow’s legacy in the northern states keeps Bigger and Rufus in a condition of bondage. In the years between their creations as fictional characters, African Americans fought in World War II. However, despite a greater range of choices, Rufus is not a beneficiary of social change. He is a bebopper who embraces the urgency of the music’s assertion of independence. With this choice, he exemplifies a line of flight away from the popular commercial music of white swing band musicians. However, this decision has left him no freer than Bigger Thomas, whose limited options lead him to work as a chauffeur for wealthy white people. For Wright, this social condition is due to racism, but for Baldwin it also doubles as an example of the failure of a system of reality embodied by the protest-literature trope.

Rufus has “fallen so low, nothing belongs to him anymore,” so he visits Vivaldo for consolation (9). During their conversation, Rufus asks whether Vivaldo wished he “were queer” (48). It is a question neither one explores, but it is one that later haunts Vivaldo. Could he have stopped Rufus’s pain that night if they had become lovers? It also is a moment that is a departure from the representation of Bigger as a straight black male and Rufus as one who follows a line of flight that deviates from the norm. The latter exposes the former for its ineffectiveness in responding to the complexities of the human heart and shows how embracing the parameters of straightness “means that we not only have to turn toward the objects that are given to us by heterosexual culture, but also that we must ‘turn away’ from objects that take us off this line” (Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* 21). Eventually, Rufus cries while his friend holds him, and in that moment, fragile surface feelings have collapsed to reveal emotional depths. “He was flesh: flesh, bone, muscle, fluid, orifices, hair and skin. . . . Nor did he understand what force within this body

had driven him into such a desolate place” (50). He is angst ridden, the world is absurd, and his attachment to the idea of a good life appears to be willful ignorance. Undone, he enters a gap where he no longer perceives death—this cancellation of possibilities—as an event that happens in the lives of others. At this penultimate moment, Vivaldo offers Rufus a handkerchief and to go out for drinks. From this point onward, the friends drift apart and the embattled musician’s flight of escape has taken a significant turn toward a flight of death.

In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze writes, “Singularities are turning points and points of inflection; bottlenecks, knots, foyers, and centers; points of fusion, condensation, and boiling; points of tears and joy, sickness and health, hope and anxiety, ‘sensitive’ points” (52). In his final hour, Rufus has reached this tipping point where a substantive change is about to occur. At this critical junction, he is going to either succumb to sad passions or begin a process that will lead him to reverse the fateful trajectory he has been oriented toward. However, in this crucial moment he is not able to find stability in external reality; therefore, he ends up standing alone on the George Washington Bridge at the limits of language. He is aware, for the last time, of lights that lit highways and the shore. He boils over into tears and notices the water is black like him. In anguish, he thinks of Ida, his sister and whispers to her: “I’m sorry Leona, and then the wind took him, he felt himself going over, head down, the wind, the stars, the lights, the water, all rolled together” (78). Thus, he tragically succumbs to the internalized essentialist discourses that have defined him, and he is like Charlie Parker, the martyred black saxophonist whose music played on the hi-fi while he first stood on a balcony with Leona. As Rufus falls, the reader enters an echo chamber of final impressions that rapidly erases the possibility of redemption. The narrative fragments. Rufus is unable to find a deictic center in biographical time. He abruptly exits the narrative, his future possibilities canceled.

The social conditions that push Rufus and Bigger to early deaths have a didactic function, to challenge overcoding segregationist practices. Hence, Rufus and Bigger are emblematic of the cost of an ideological bias, evident in its *affectio* as affection and *affectus* as affect, which discomposes in the black body. In addition, this critical point of intensity in Rufus’s narrative is disrupted by a text that organizes in a collective assemblage of enunciation that deterritorializes the dominant narrative in lines of flight or rupture. This unstable text forces the reader into a synchronic encounter that derives its meaning from connotations, metonymic substitutions, and simultaneous happenings. In one moment, the black water and his black body merge in their significance to his mind. Rufus asks rhetorical questions. “Why? Why?” (78). He thinks of three people—Eric, Ida, and Leona—whose contributions to

this final moment are not clear. Italics are used to convey a random internal collection of thoughts. A dialogical encounter between the narrator (encoder) and the reader (decoder) simultaneously pulls in two directions. These differentiations that subvert linear prejudice are both the “becoming of life [and] the unbecoming of matter, which is not its transformation into (inert) being, but its placement in a different trajectory of becoming” (Grosz 11). Consequently, in his final moments, Rufus is a site where an abstract machine deterritorializes the dominant protest-literature narrative and reterritorializes it with a different form of expression, one that allows for the possibility of the redemptive power of love.

Rufus’s death is a moment that contains within it the potential to either transcend or reproduce his self-destructive spiral in an interracial love affair that develops between Ida, his sister, and Vivaldo. Sarah Ahmed writes in *Willful Subjects*, “If a shape is acquired through the repetition of an encounter, then repetition becomes direction” (70). Ida is an aspiring jazz singer, and Vivaldo is a young novelist suffering from writer’s block. She is African American; he is Italian American. Each of them is ambitious; she struggles with whether to become lovers with Steve Ellis, a celebrated music producer, and Vivaldo is troubled by conflicts over whether to become a successful formulaic writer like his mentor, Richard Silenski, or to write a Dostoyevsky-like novel. However, this repetition of the interracial relationship paradigm is also an opportunity for the emergence of a different outcome. The couple will need to find a way to communicate with words that adequately convey their complex differences in a segregated reality.

At first, Vivaldo and Ida repeat a predictable destructive cycle. They quarrel over the similar issues about racial dynamics that plagued Rufus and Leona. Ida says to Vivaldo, “Because I’m black. . . . I know more about my brother than you can ever know” (349). Vivaldo cannot accept this version of reality and replies, “Sweetheart, suffering doesn’t *have* a color” (351). Territories are demarcated, and neither one is able to talk their way clear. There is a failure of denotation as propositions of truth and falsity, manifestations of the speaking subject, and significations laced with assumptions about ultimate truths. Ida blames Vivaldo for not being aware of her brother’s condition, one where white people forget about, in Ta-Nehisi Coates’s words, “the scale of theft that enriched them in slavery; the terror that allowed them, for a century, to pilfer the vote; the segregationist policy that gave them their suburbs” (143). She believes his lack of racial awareness led to her brother’s death. In addition, she sees Vivaldo’s inability to witness Rufus’s suffering as a sign of his unwillingness to implicate himself as part of the segregationist system that killed her brother. Ida remarks, “Well, you know, Vivaldo was his best friend—and Rufus was *dying*, but Vivaldo didn’t know it. And I was miles away, and I *did*” (292).

At the limit of discourse, they cannot make sense of themselves to each other using privileged points of view, and they enter the absurdity of trying to engage one another while fixated on their own essentialist ideas about identity. She is black, he is white, and neither one of them can move beyond these clear zones of expression.

Ultimately, Vivaldo and Ida need to desire in a new way and imagine a different set of possibilities to actualize. They have reached a point of departure and arrival, one where they are at the cusp of passing from a threshold comprised of two singular entities to become a new multiplicity. Their voices have functioned like competing essentialist monologues unable to communicate on the question of Vivaldo's culpability for Rufus's death. His guilt, or *Schuld*, and debt, or *Schulden*, have increased the dissonance between them, and they are alienated from each other in an incorporeal field of forces without a form in which to express themselves. What is necessary is what Bhabha refers to as a "Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity" (208). A crudescence of binaries has perpetuated the illusion that a rational way of proceeding with language will lead them to objective statements that communicate a singular truth. However, they need to move into a mode of cultural difference where their speech changes meanings. In this third space, stasis will transform in ways that are unprecedented. Thus to become redemptive symbols, Vivaldo and Ida must transcend the conventional protest-literature narrative that Baldwin believed limited Wright's *Native Son*. His new text must be more than protest, and instead become protest as literature, an aesthetic that reveals the paradoxical power of love or desire as an agent of change.

In the short third section of *Another Country*, "Toward Bethlehem," a transformation occurs that creates the text Baldwin envisioned in "Notes of a Native Son." Deleuze describes this type of shift in *The Logic of Sense* as a paradox of "pure becoming, with its capacity to elude the present" (2). There is no separation between the past and the future. Instead, movement pulls in two directions simultaneously. Up to this point in the narrative, Ida and Vivaldo have been on a trajectory of movement toward a critical point that will determine whether they enter another country, a paradoxical space where characters are no longer tethered to dictates around postulations on race. Therefore, in a moment of candor during a heated argument between them, Ida confesses that she has had an extramarital affair with the music producer, Steve Ellis, because he was good to her and helped her music career.

This crucial juncture in the story is focalized through Vivaldo's third-person limited point of view, and this allows the reader to see his voice orient around

his will to become a person who can transcend solipsism to be able to love another human being. The affect of Ida's admission is destabilizing for Vivaldo, and he is suddenly aware of the realness of objects: a coffee pot, pork chops in a pan, water, sugar, milk, and cigarettes. This heightened experience coincides with an instability of language. He "stared into his cup, noting that bad coffee was not black . . . not even the night, not even the mines. And the light was not white, either, even the palest light held within itself some origins, in fire. He thought to himself that he had at last got what he wanted, the truth out of Ida, or the true Ida: and he did not know how he was going to live with it" (361). A machinic assemblage simultaneously interacts with a collective assemblage. The signifiers *black* and *white* lose their denotative value and become connotative. The previous emphasis on matter has shifted to an immaterial interplay of meanings as Vivaldo makes distinctions between the noun *truth* and the adjective *true*. *Truth* is the object whose qualities are *true*, and he perceives them simultaneously enfold into each other. Signs slide unpredictably over signifiers and bad coffee unbecomes to become fire. In this moment of heightened asubjective awareness, Vivaldo is finally a witness to Ida's emotional reality, and he condemns himself to freedom by embracing an unknowable world of paradoxes. While the 1960s move toward the enactment of civil rights legislation to counter segregationist policies, Vivaldo "began, slowly, with a horrible, strangling sound, to weep, for she was stroking his innocence out of him" (362).

Gates points out that another kind of "formal parody is to suggest a given structure precisely by failing to coincide with it—that is, to suggest it by dissemblance" (184). He goes on to describe how this process takes place in jazz, and he cites John Coltrane's versions of "My Favorite Things" as an example. Thus, there is a parallel that can be made to Charlie Parker whose music plays at the party the night Rufus and Leona meet. His bebop with its emphasis on improvising with chords helped revise the traditional sound of Louis Armstrong, a connection to Baldwin's own departure from Wright's iconic protest-literature narrative. This link to jazz as a trope that creates through chiasmus or repetition is also evident that night. At a gig earlier in the evening, a young saxophone player screams through his horn, "*Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?* And, again, *Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me?*" (13). This insistent question is italicized, and this moment illustrates metaphorically how this combination of chiasmus, parody, and irony fuse together in Baldwin's novel around his central concern about the power of love as a vehicle for authentic self-expression. The saxophonist departs from a sentiment-based mode of feeling to arrive at an emotional expression that emanates directly from a body described as "humping the air" (13).

The music affects other bodies in the audience, and the result is a dissemblance that is also part of Baldwin's project to respond to and revise Wright's protest-narrative text. Like the jazz musician, his novel moves between what Bakhtin describes as a discourse that privileges both language and speech as *duvogolosnost*, or double-voiced modes. This doubleness affects utterances in two distinct ways; firstly, it identifies how discourse is *svoj*, or an expression of a point of view one has made their own, and secondly it shows how it is also *cuzoj*, or a manifestation of "that which someone has made his own, seen (or heard) from the point of view of an outsider" (423). Therefore, Baldwin's text becomes heteroglot in the way it produces meaning. An interaction between *cuzoj* and *svoj* occurs where a multi-layered interaction takes place—sometimes as parodied genres—that Bakhtin refers to as a novelistic hybrid that is "*an artistically organized system for bringing different languages in contact with one another, a system having as its goal the illumination of one language by means of another, the carving-out of a living image of another language*" (361, original emphasis). As a result, *Another Country* undermines the static nature of the authoritative protest-literature discourse from the past. Baldwin's text functions like an impressive run of chords that create new phrases, and through parody it analyzes what is at core "speaking persons and their ideological worlds" (Bakhtin 365). Therefore, as Ida and Vivaldo's relationship hangs precariously in the balance, a new form of discourse emerges in a new genre that is different from that of Rufus and Bigger Thomas.

Read within this framework, *Another Country* is a site where the use of abstract machines, embodied in virtual and actual bodies, helps to transform a protest-literature paradigm into an asubjective-realist text. In the process, it disassembles to signify in ways that align with Gates' theory of interpretation "arrived at from within the black cultural matrix" that "turns on repetition of formal structures and their differences" (177). Thereby, Baldwin's novel was prophetic in its articulation of a voice that could speak to a transition from segregation to the possibilities inherent "in a region where there were no definitions of any kind, neither of color, nor of male and female. . . . And the terror: which all seemed to begin and end and begin again—forever in a cavern behind the eye" (255).

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