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**JAMES BALDWIN'S
GIOVANNI'S ROOM:
GENDER AND SPACES.**

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ABSTRACT

Our society has made a great progress over the years, but nowadays there are still controversial cultural and gender issues that should be reassessed. Being literature the medium that facilitates the knowledge and understanding of the reality of people, it allows us to observe and analyse these conflicts. In this way, works such as James Baldwin's novel *Giovanni's Room* (1956) become the object of study and analysis of these themes. Taking a position from the perspective and epoch in which the work was written, in this dissertation I approach Baldwin's novel from a sociocultural perspective aimed at contributing to the development of gender studies. As part of this approach, I have considered it convenient to examine the function and meaning of spaces (referring to the physical space where the main actions occur and also to the geographical space) and how these influence on the development of the homosexual relationships of the novel.

KEY WORDS: James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, gender studies, places, homoeroticism.

RERSUMEN

Nuestra sociedad ha hecho un gran progreso a lo largo de los años, pero hoy en día todavía hay temas culturales y de género controvertidos que deben ser reevaluados. Siendo la literatura el medio que facilita el conocimiento y la comprensión de la realidad de las personas, esta nos permite observar y analizar estos conflictos. De esta manera, obras como la novela de James Baldwin *Giovanni's Room* (1956) se convierten en objeto de estudio y análisis de estos temas. Tomando una posición desde la perspectiva y época en la que se escribió la obra, en este trabajo abordo la novela de Baldwin desde una perspectiva sociocultural destinada a contribuir al desarrollo de los estudios de género. Como parte de este enfoque, he considerado conveniente examinar la función y el significado de los espacios (en referencia al espacio físico donde ocurren las acciones principales y también al espacio geográfico) y cómo estos influyen en el desarrollo de las relaciones homosexuales de la novela.

PALABRAS CLAVE: James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, estudios de género, espacios, homoerotismo.

1 INTRODUCTION.

This project deals with a gender analysis and an analysis of spaces and their influence on the homosexual, though not exclusively relationship between the main characters of the novel *Giovanni's Room* by the writer James Baldwin. The main reason why a gender perspective is applied to this 1956 novel is that the field of gender studies today is really important and necessary. Through this perspective, we can challenge the stereotypes with which we are educated. In addition, gender studies in literature manage to distort the cultural assumptions under which works are created. On the other hand, heteronormativity remains as what society expects from people. For this reason, it is essential to analyse literary works whose characters depart from conventions and expose other ways of love, as it occurs in the homosexual relationship between the characters in Baldwin's novel. Understanding that homophobic ideas are present in small aspects of our day to day helps to combat them, and thus, gradually this allows society to become more tolerant and open-minded. From my point of view, both themes require more attention from scholars as well as students and the younger generations that will be the future. Moreover, from a personal point of view, throughout the degree students do not have many opportunities to conduct a thorough analysis of the topics mentioned above. That is why I wanted to take this opportunity to investigate areas that are appealing to me. In addition, I also wanted to apply the critical knowledge acquired during these years.

The main objectives of this work are several. Firstly, to dispel gender stereotypes and, of course, to educate readers about the beliefs that still dominate our culture, which is still largely patriarchal. Secondly, to better comprehend problematic and confusing terminology related to historical fiction and gender concerns. Thirdly, to show society the importance of accepting oneself in order to live freely and fully independently of our sexual orientation, ethnicity, or way of thinking. And finally, to prove that literature is valuable and a powerful weapon by means of we can understand how the human mind works.

The methodology that has guided this work focuses, first, on an analysis of the existing bibliography on *Giovanni s Room*, as well as on the life and work of James Baldwin. Furthermore, numerous literature history manuals have been consulted, as well as theories about gender roles, gender studies, and other literary categories. Secondly, a thorough study of the novel has been carried out with a personal interpretation. For this, close reading has been made focusing on syntactic and morphological aspects, as well as on literary resources used by the author to create his work. The main contribution to the field of this research is to offer an

in-depth analysis of a novel, which has not been specially studied. Therefore, this research aims to reflect the importance of this novel by Baldwin within the theme of gender and queer studies.

This dissertation is divided into two main parts: a theoretical framework and the study of the novel. The first part consists of historical and social contextualization of the period in which the work was written. In addition, there is another section where the life of the author is discussed, the most essential events that marked his life and some of his most famous works. Moreover, the main characteristics of his literature are mentioned. In the next section, we begin to introduce some concepts on gender which are essential to understand the analysis of the work. Once explained, we proceed to explain how these ideas are relevant to the psychological development of the three main characters: David, Giovanni, and Hella. Finally, a study is made of the physical and temporal spaces that appear in the work and the connection between these and the love relationship of the two protagonists is analysed.

2 CONTEXTUALIZATION.

2.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT.

Before focusing on the development of the main themes of this dissertation, it would be crucial to discuss the backgrounds that directly impacted the figures involved in this analysis. The twentieth century is a period characterized by continuous social, political, and cultural changes in the United States, and in general, throughout the world. It witnessed numerous events that affected the way of thinking and way of life of people from that period. Despite being a time when many advances in the way of thinking were experienced, especially in the United States, Afro-Americans people and foreigners were constantly connected with germs and contagion, despite the huge changes in demographics, citizenship, and the ability to treat and cure acute and chronic illnesses (Howard and Stern, 757).

Also known as "The Age of Modernity", this period is characterized by its turbulent beginning with the First World War in 1914, because of the consequent disputes of economic order, politics between the different powers, and the distribution of the colonies among the world powers. After this, in 1916 one of the most hopeful events in the field of feminism took place in America. Jeannette Rankin becomes elected to the House of Representatives, becoming the first woman to hold a position of this rank. A few years later, the government ratified the Nineteenth Amendment. Women gained the right to vote in 1920. Achieving this

progress in the society of the moment was an arduous path in which they had to fight, manifest, write, and protest for a long time to have such a fundamental right. The period from 1920 to 1929 was marked by significant social and cultural changes, including the rise of jazz music and flapper culture. However, this was followed by a time of greater darkness. In addition, after the appointment of Calvin Coolidge as President of the United States, The Great Depression took place. It was originated because of Coolidge's economic policies that created an imbalance in the US economy, The Great Depression (1929-1939) was a devastating economic crisis which had a significant negative impact on the American country. The unstable economic situation caused the government to take numerous measures that resulted in an increment in the unemployment rate and the emergence of poverty among the inhabitants. All this created a feeling of unhappiness and misery that affected the lives of many people. Even in art and literature, authors like Fitzgerald began to write in a more profound way, analysing the psychology of the characters, and treating human suffering as they had never done before.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, The US entered World War II. This event was crucial for the United States because after its participation in the war, it became a strong and powerful nation worldwide. Another event to be highlighted is also The Civil Rights Movement which was initiated in 1954. This was an act of great importance that consisted of the struggle of society to achieve civil rights and equality by social groups that at that time were discriminated. The protagonists of this movement were African American citizens who had been excluded for years because of their origin. The impact of this not only had consequences for society but also for other areas such as literature. Many writers used their works to give a greater voice to those people and social groups that had not yet been able to express themselves. The consecutive years were marked by continuous wars in which the USA intervened. On the one hand, The Cold War (1947-1989) was a political and ideological conflict between the US and the Soviet Union that lasted many years. This conflict led to the development and advancement of the technological sphere, whose objective was to create weapons. Between this period, it also began the Vietnam War (1955-1975). The war was marked by protests and hostility from American residents; in the end, US soldiers were withdrawn, and North and South Vietnam were reunited.

In general, throughout this period, there were numerous social, economic, and political changes that had an immediate impact on all artistic ambits, including literature. In all epochs, art and literature serve as a mirror to properly understand what happens. The creations of the artists become a manual that helps to analyse and understand the mentality of their

predecessors. James Baldwin is one of many American authors who used his literary works to communicate his viewpoint on the world and the society of the time. Authors criticised the social inequalities encountered by more marginalised groups, such as black people and homosexuals, through their characters and narratives. On the other hand, literature served as a powerful tool for these authors to provide the world with other perspectives and they try to change people's perceptions.

2.2 JAMES BALDWIN.

Considered one of the most influential authors and thought-provoking cultural critics of the 20th century (Michele, 1), James Baldwin was a writer and civil rights activist who was born in Harlem, New York, on August 2, 1924. Born and raised in a poor and humble family in the neighbourhood of Harlem, the essayist, poet, and novelist grew up in a situation facing various difficulties due to the humility of his environment. He lived with his mother Emma Verdis Jones and his mother's husband, a Baptist minister, whom she married when Baldwin was three years old. He was also the elder brother of nine children. As some authors suggest, he used the mystery of his lineage and humble birth as the starting point for a lifelong testimony about the moral flaws of the American nation and the power of love that animates it (Leeming, 10). As the article in *The National Museum of African American History* dedicated to the author states, despite his father's continued efforts to overcome economic difficulties, there were many moments in his childhood when the essayist's family was unable to feed their children due to the Great Depression crisis. Harlem was multiracial when Baldwin grew up. Among many other aspects of life, what united the residents was that a shared sense of poverty created a community, rather than fostering the hopeless isolation that later became a suburban staple. However, as Baldwin grew and matured, he began to realize the social injustices and inequality present in his area, especially for black people and gay men who, due to their sexual condition, were subjected to double social judgment and harassment by the most privileged society.

From an early age, the author's teachers realized the great potential that Baldwin possessed and constantly encouraged him to improve his studies by learning the importance and power of literature. Nonetheless, James Baldwin was a prominent member of the global intellectual community during his adulthood as a writer and activist. He made friends, engaged with other artists and thinkers, and formed lifelong relationships with people in every foreign city and community he lived in ("Harlem—Born and Bred"). The social gospel movement and

evangelical Christianity played major roles in the religious lives of Harlemites during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. He joined the Mount Calvary Pentecostal Church in 1938 when he was fourteen years old, and he quickly rose to the position of preacher. Later in life, Baldwin mockingly described his participation in "the church racket" as a "gimmick" to help him escape the ghetto a similar experience to the "criminal vocations" that other black people used to overcome their surroundings (Van Leer, 1). After the death of his father in the late 1940s, Baldwin decided to move to Greenwich Village to work on a novel about his family's history. At the same time, he published several essays that helped him become better known.

Under the influence of migrations to France, he decided to move to Paris in 1948. Baldwin became friends with a number of American expats while living in Europe, including Saul Bellow, Truman Capote, Terry Southern, Herbert Gold, and of course Richard Wright. Moreover, he got acquainted with relevant French thinkers including authors such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Jean Genet. (Van Leer, 3).

The French era was highly enlightening for the author since he was affected by many different schools of thought, which aided him in his writing and allowed him concentrate on important topics for his career, such the pursuit of the individual liberty and the necessity of social reform to abolish racism. It should be emphasised that Baldwin has distinguished himself throughout his career for taking part in the fight for civil rights. This novelist is also recognised for his avant-garde and liberal perspective on sexuality at the time. This can be seen in several of his writings when the main characters engage in homosexual relationships. When asked about his sexual orientation and how he lived as a black man, Baldwin has provided his perspective in interviews that were published in newspapers such as *The Village Voice*. "There is nothing in me that is not in the rest of the world, and nothing in the rest of the world that is not in me. We are caught up in language, of course. But "homosexual" is not a noun" (Baldwin, 1984¹). He had lived in France most of his life, but he did not want to renounce his American citizenship. He finally relocated to Saint-Paul-de-Vence in the south of France, where he passed away in 1987.

¹ Quoted from an interview published in:
<https://revistaorigami.wpcomstaging.com/2022/04/13/sigue-el-correr-de-tu-sangre-entrevista-con-james-baldwin/>

3 THEORETHICAL BACKGROUND: BALDWIN'S LITERATURE.

About his literary style, James Baldwin is renowned for his writing style, which is distinguished by his use of colourful and strong language, candid and perceptive commentary on race, sexuality, and American society, and a mingling of personal experience with more general social and political concerns. His lucid writing was so strong that it rapidly joined the early intellectual ferment driving the Civil Rights Movement (Elam, 3). Baldwin, a celebrated author of more than twenty works of fiction and nonfiction, has by most accounts attained canonical status. He has received numerous honours and distinctions, including a Guggenheim Fellowship (Lee, 2015, qtd. in Elam, 3). He is noted for writing novels, essays, poetry and plays. Known for works such as *Notes from a Native Son* (1955), *Next Time Fire* (1963) and *Go Say It on the Mountain* (1953), he pioneered literature by addressing racial and social issues in his writings.

The Harlem Renaissance movement, which was active when he was an adolescence, also had an effect on him. African American writers developed a collection of work that praised black life and culture and challenged racist stereotypes and prejudices during this period of extraordinary artistic inventiveness, especially in literature. The Harlem Renaissance was defined by the rejection of Victorian literary conventions and the adoption of a fresh, modernist style. His literature is known for his emotional intensity and lyrical language, often using personal anecdotes and experiences to illustrate larger issues of discrimination and oppression. He also writes about the complexities of sexuality and love, and the difficulty of living as gay in the heterosexual world. To illustrate this, the author combines fiction with some aspects of autobiographical information such as those found in novel *Giovanni's Room* (1956). On the other hand, he also stands out because of the simplicity with which he addresses gender issues, which was highly unusual at the time. His writings discuss various sexual orientations, including homosexuality and bisexuality. Additionally, he highlights many conflicts and displays aspects of gender roles and the expectations society has of you based on your gender. Among his novels, the most outstanding are: *Another Country* (1962), *Going to Meet the Man* (1965), *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* (1968), *Beale Street Could Talk* (1974), *Nothing Personal* (1964), and *The Amen Corner* (1954), Nevertheless, critics largely agree that James Baldwin's collection of early novels and essays is his "best" and most relevant work (Lee, 25).

4 *GIOVANNI'S ROOM:*

Published in 1956, this novel by James Baldwin became at that time a controversial work because of the topics addressed. In addition, Baldwin's choices to employ white people and convey a story of this kind startled both readers and critics. As Weatherby points out, the end of *Giovanni's Room* was among Baldwin's most distressing events. Although he had been forced to soften the homosexual ending of the previous book, the idea of homosexuality could not be removed from this second book. For most people, including publishers, it would just be a homosexual fiction. The response to a homosexual novel in 1955, when the majority of American homosexuals believed it to be much safer to stay in the closet, was predictable (Weatherby, 117-118). In a society in which homosexuality and any other sexual orientation outside of heteropatriarchy was not well seen, *Giovanni's Room* caused a great impact on critics at the time. Topics like sexual orientation and denial, gender and cultural expectations, identity, emotional escapism, and immobility of the self are only a few of the topics that contributed to this novel's negative reception. Nonetheless, Baldwin was not the only writer to reflect on themes of this kind. In that same decade, novelists like the British Mary Renault published in 1956 *The last Wine*. In it, a romance between two men with a significant age gap arises. In addition, in 1953, Umberto Saba wrote *Ernesto*, the novel was written during the same time as *Giovanni's room*, despite the fact that it was released in 1970. His novel *Junkie* (1953) is also remarkable from his previous literary stages. It is an early novel by William S. Burroughs that is regarded as offensive due to its homosexual content.

The narrative of David, an American guy, who suppresses his desires after having one homosexual experience as a teenager, is told in *Giovanni's Room*. David made the decision to move to Paris in his adult life while trying to find himself and after making several attempts to avoid his conservative father. Making use of continuous temporal leaps, David starts telling his story at a rental home in the South of France. His ex-fiancé Hella, who is currently travelling back to the United States, has been living with him in the residence. Nevertheless, Giovanni, his ex-lover, is incarcerated and set to die by guillotine the next morning. David reflects on the circumstances that brought him to this point, including his boyhood in Brooklyn, his father, and the relationship they had, his first male relationship, and the night he met Giovanni. They live together in Giovanni's small maid's room. The room, located in a building on the outskirts of the city, is disorganised, filthy, and packed with mementos of Giovanni's former existence. David, who is very enamoured with Giovanni, waits a whole month before telling him about his girlfriend, Hella, who has been vacationing in Spain. Giovanni is not too worried at the

beginning about that because he does not see anything wrong with being involved in multiple romantic relationships, but Hella's arrival in Paris changes the situation drastically. Giovanni realizes that his love for David is impossible since he does not accept his sexual condition and also, on the other hand, Hella is a threat since they stop spending so much time together. The fact that David tells him they cannot be together leads the Italian to a situation of immense sadness that eventually leads him to delirium. Finally, after discovering the true nature of David's relationship, Hella decides to break up with him and go back to America.

5 DEFINING GENDER NOTIONS.

“Perhaps the androgynous mind is less apt to make these distinctions than the single-sexed mind” – Virginia Woolf.

In conducting a critical analysis of James Baldwin's novel *Giovanni's Room*, it is meaningful to clarify some gender concepts in order to provide the necessary tools for examining Baldwin's work. It is important to clarify that during the reading of this document it must be taken into account that despite dealing with definitions and concepts that are still in the process of study, this topic is analysed from the perspective and the epoch in which the work was written.

Defining gender is not an easy and simple task. As Hegarty (2001) suggests, quantitative researchers need to approach this definition from a performance perspective in order to reinterpret the concept of gender. As the World Health Organization (WHO) claims, gender refers to the socially and culturally constructed characteristics of women, men, girls, and boys. This includes the norms, behaviours, roles, and relationships associated with being a woman or a man. As a social construction, the notion of gender varies from culture to culture and can change over time. Female and male are the traditional dichotomous response alternatives for "sex," whereas feminine and masculine are the traditional dichotomous response alternatives for "gender" (Ansara & Hegarty, 2014; Westbrook & Saperstein, 2015). Thus, according to Suzanne E. Hatty, the term "sex" typically refers to the biological factors that determine a person's gender (Hatty, 111). However, although we distinguish between two concepts, both tend to be linked to each other. In addition, going back to gender, because of this concept derives from the human being and is merely an invention, its definition has

changed over time, and what has been considered masculine or feminine has evolved or been seen from a different perspective according to the historical moment in which it is lived. In the decade of the 1950s, gender was associated with sex, therefore there was a direct union between men and male, women and female. Likewise, some traits and behaviours are attributed to each genre. society creates around the genre preconceptions about how each person should act, think, attitudes that should have, their interests, emotions... This leads us to the concept of gender expectations and gender roles. According to Amy Blackstone, to establish environmental limitations and opportunities, gender is produced in individual, interpersonal, and structural ways (Blackstone, 335). The majority of the time, these restrictions only apply to women, although a substantial proportion of the population is also negatively impacted by these limitations because of their sexual orientation, race, or social class. For instance, in the 1950s, an adult white man was expected to work because, as a man, he was responsible for supporting the family's finances. He was also required to marry a woman who was also of his ethnicity and social class.

6 GENDER AND *GIOVANNI'S ROOM*.

Characters in *Giovanni's Room* struggle with gender roles and expectations. They are in some manner constrained by these norms. Social expectations have a direct impact on how they behave and communicate. For instance, James Baldwin notes that cultural gender conventions frequently interfere with a person's sense of identity. This occurs as a result of David internalising preconceived ideas created by the society of that period. The dilemma of what it means for him to be a man contrasted with his sexual orientation and tastes makes him find himself in a dichotomy and existential crisis after rejecting his own nature since it is "wrong" according to social stereotypes. To understand this point more deeply, two of the novel's primary characters—Hella, Giovanni and David—will be examined in detail, focusing on how these ideas impact people's personalities and shape their future.

The first character to be analysed will be Hella, the only female figure in the narrative. Although she is not one of the most relevant characters in the plot, the complexity of her character and her figure become a remarkable example of how gender roles influenced society at the time. Focusing on her physical appearance, she is already described moving away from the prototypical features of the femininity of the epoch. This is shown by the narrator at the beginning of chapter four, part 2:

“She was wearing green, her hair was a little shorter [...]. When she saw me she stood stock still on the platform, her hands clasped in front of her, with her wide-legged, boyish stance, smiling” (Baldwin, 106).

Already with this description arises a duality in terms of the gender present in the young girl. To see that the character lacks the femininity of the era, one only needs to glance at a few of the covers of the 1950 fashion magazine *Vogue* or a portrait of any woman. The narrator outstands this idea by using the adjective "boyish" to describe her stance. Here, gender roles are exposed by implying that specific responsibilities, appearances, or performances are based on sex. However, at this point, the narrator gives an ironic perspective of the character. Although Hella deviates from social norms in terms of her appearance, she adheres more to them when it comes to her attitude and David's interaction. “*She stood stock smiling*”, in this way she reflects her somewhat more passive attitude in the hope that it is David who has the initiative. It is evident that they are engaged in an ongoing internal conflict in both this character as well as the other characters of the work. Although their actions and what they seek are far from what the world expects of them, they generally endeavour to act in accordance with expectations. In contrast to what Judith Butler claims, gender is an identity established via the repeated repetition of acts rather than a stable identity or locus of agency from which many acts have sprung (Butler, 520). Butler further characterises that beyond major life decisions, everyday activities are the essence that reveal a person's gender identity. Butler maintains that gender is not an essence (Butler, 520). Hella rejects heteropatriarchal principles, but if we examine her acts, dialogue, and behaviours, we can observe that she has a passive attitude that tends to be normative. In other words, she is dedicated to traveling independently and without relying on any man. She supports herself and does not ask for opinions, despite dealing with this transgressive image of the epoch, she really seeks the conventional: “I am not really the emancipated girl I try to be at all. I just want a man to come home [...], I want to start having babies” (Baldwin, 109). Hella reveals in this passage that, although enjoying a life that differs from the norm and being conscious of the gender roles that society may impose, her main goal is to achieve what is established by heteropatriarchy.

Hella runs the risk of being invisible in her culture because she is a woman. To avoid this, she adopts a traditional femininity that is in line with social expectations. She marries David as a result since she does not see any other suitable options. She gives up looking into ways to be independent in order to allay her fear of being disposable and submits to the heteronormative system (He, 35).

One of the key moments that illustrate this idea is at the end of the book when David is sincere with Hella, and he shows Hella his true feelings towards Giovanni. Analysing Hella's behaviour reveals how methodical, prudent, and cautious she is in all of her movements, she endeavours to represent the prototypic feminine figure. Returning to gender roles, she behaves according to them: "she went to the closet and got her coat [...], looking into the tiny mirror she began to apply her lipstick" (Baldwin, 146). This quote is pertinent because of the behaviours she adopts and the manner in which she acts in accordance with gender expectations. She makes sure she looks good, applies lipstick, and does everything. "carefully" (Baldwin, 146).

Her speech, nonetheless, also reveals the internal conflict indicated in the preceding sentences. As has already been stated, the fact of living in a certain way against what is established and at the same time trying to be part of the normative, all of this creates in her a state that leads her to consider the concept of being a woman, so she declares: "I'll forget what it is like to be a woman" (Baldwin 144). The essential question of what it means to be a man or a woman is exposed by Baldwin in this passage. What is to be a man or woman? What determines one or the other? In this situation, sex is linked to a specific set of behaviours, and when a person deviates from those behaviours, it comes the doubt about what they are then.

It is in this part also where the author in a way does a kind of ironic reflection on his vision of women and marriage. When Hella begs David: "please let me be a woman" (Baldwin, 143), Baldwin parodies the stereotype that women should play a passive role in marriage. Yet, Hella uses a gender-binary argument to claim that David's adherence to the traditional definition of masculinity is necessary for her to be a woman (He, 38).

In addition, the next character analysed will be the main figure in the plot, David. From the very beginning, the reader learns something essential about the narrator. By narrating his first sexual relation with a man during his adolescence, he brings up a key factor here that will determine all the narration and the story. His bisexual or homosexual condition leads him to a state of confusion and at the same time this idea terrifies him. The problem is that the confusion about his sexual orientation is associated with their gender identity. As explained above, sex and gender are two different concepts but in many historical moments, both have been treated as one. In this case, David confuses being a man with being attracted to women only. As he feels attracted to men, this makes him unable to be a man according to the social construct of masculinity.

All this association causes the narrator to present himself indirectly as a fragmented character. When speaking of fragmentation, reference is made to the disunified or disorganized

personality of the character. Referring to the text: “a girl sitting opposite me who will wonder why I have not been flirting with her” (Baldwin, 3). Inside him, several versions coexist altogether, the traditional version linked to the canons of what being a man means, and on the other hand, his true essence that differs from all this. The relevance of the fragment above lies in the fact that it shows the reader from the first moment that the character presented depends on the roles imposed by society.

As it happened when analysing Hella’s character, this again raises the question of being a man and it appears repeatedly throughout the novel. Although David tries, by all means, to fit into the patterns of society, this is impossible for him, and even at the end of the work, the narrator fails to give a firm answer to this issue. “I looked at my sex, my troubling sex, and I wonder how it can be redeemed (Baldwin, 149). “I do not know what moves in this body, what this body is searching” (Baldwin, 149) In both quotes, David is naked in front of the mirror while he tries to look for answers about his nature. The incongruity that exists for him between his acts and his sex prevents him from finding his true essence. His personal background captures the dominant beliefs about feminine and masculine behaviours and that interferes with his way of thinking.

Moreover, influenced by a traditionalist environment, from childhood he is imposed on what a man "is supposed" to do. "All I want for David is that he grows up to be a man" (Baldwin, 14). In this conversation between David’s father and his aunt Ellen, it is evident how from an early age this is encased in ideals where sexual orientation is directly associated with gender identity. Repeatedly throughout the novel, this leads the character into an existential crisis about his true nature. An example of this idea can be seen in chapter two of part two. David describes a sailor: "he seemed younger, blonder and more beautiful, and he wore his masculinity as he wore his skin" (Baldwin 82). His peculiar way of describing another man should be noted. What exactly determines whether a person's appearance can indicate whether or not they are a man? David emphasises his own self-doubt in this passage.

All these internal conflicts caused by gender have a direct negative consequence on the way David relates to people and his own way of acting. Having sexual relation and living in a kind of relationship with Giovanni in his apartment makes this collide with what for him symbolises having a partner and masculinity. Because of this, he occasionally acts in a more feminine manner due to his uncertainty. Here, we are attempting to describe how David sometimes tries to take on other roles because he is in a state of confusion and cannot define who he is. His behaviours are a representation of his mental situation. To demonstrate this, it should be considered how David assumes the position of the householder, and he begins to fulfil the role

that at that time the woman would play: “invented in a kind of pleasure in playing the housework after Giovanni had gone to work” (Baldwin, 102). He takes on a more heteronormative position within his "relationship" when his actions and ideas conflict. It is important to note his relentless efforts to keep the area clean and organised. He constantly perceives his surroundings as "dirty," which is a metaphor for how he thinks about the life he is leading. He attempts to "clean" his thoughts of the events by organising the space.

When both characters, Hella and David, are considered together, basic characteristics can be seen. In general terms, this novel portrays how hegemonic masculinity and gender notions generate conflicts in the human mind, and how to understand these conflicts requires examining all the intersections as it could be sex, class, nationality. In fact, Baldwin's story is an exploration of sexuality in all of its complexity, highlighting the turning points in a person's battle with their own sexual identity, from mental self-examination to physical initiation, from the denial of homosexual self-identification to finally giving in and embracing it (Neumeier, 34).

Finally, apart from David and Hella, the third character analysed is Giovanni. The young Italian who left his country and made the decision to start over, leaving his family behind, stands out from the patrons and canons that characterised the society of the period. He ends up being the primary driver behind the narrator's decision to share his own story. David's decline at this time is represented by Giovanni because David changes as a result of learning about American culture. Giovanni, in contrast to the others, does not pursue social approval, as can be seen when we examine the character's behaviour and interpersonal style. Giovanni symbolizes that transgressive figure within the novel that breaks with the traditional and with the bases of what masculinity and being a man at that time means. Although it is the key point on which the main plot revolves, the reader does not know his background or understand his psychology until the end of the work, where he is sincere with David. “In Italy I had a woman, she was very good to me. [...] I thought I was like all other men. I was not unhappy then and I was not lonely” (Baldwin, 122-123).

In this fragment, it can be observed two key arguments of the character. Firstly, Giovanni acknowledges that in the past, he lived a married life with a woman. He formed a family and followed the prototypical model of heteronormative life expected of a young man. He claims he was happy, and that life was enough for him. Until then, the character acknowledged that he felt "like all other men". This statement stands out because it directly shows the way of thinking about the epoch. That is, Giovanni himself is recognized as a person under heteronormativity. However, after the death of his new-born infant, Giovanni suffers a mental

breakdown and leaves everything behind to start over in France with nothing. Although it is noted that the Italian has a conventional upbringing and way of thinking, unlike the other characters, this one goes through an evolution. As it happens with Giovanni, in this case his previous way of living and his educational background do not become a delusional component that affects his way of living and understanding his sexuality. What is more, we must emphasise that Giovanni acknowledges not feeling alone. Later on, this feature will be described.

Regarding sexuality and masculinity, Giovanni depicts freedom in the book and he shatters it with societal stigmas. Giovanni lives his experience by letting himself go, in contrast to David, who, as it was already stated, is constantly trying to figure out what it means to be a man and manhood. He does not experience suffering as a result of not being in a normative relationship or having sexual interaction with men. Consequently, this makes him show a more stable and confident personality. "I mean all the serious, dreadful things, like pain and love, in which you Americans do not believe" (Baldwin, 30). David receives criticism from Giovanni frequently for his inability to understand and deal with the truly essential issues in life, such as love. He does not try to hide his emotions. Love, emotions, and sexual freedom were stigmatized and that did not correspond to what men were supposed to talk about in that period. Baldwin is able to establish a sort of philosophical figure in Giovanni to demonstrate that life is full of inconveniences and challenges, so people must experience it and take full advantage of it while they can. Something totally contrary to the way of thinking of the moment.

Going back to the first example used, it also should be highlighted the element of solitude. What really terrifies the Italian is not being part of social patterns, his biggest fear is loneliness. He is in search of the love that he obtained thanks to David, regardless of the gender of the person. He only seeks love reciprocated. "You want to leave Giovanni because he is not afraid of the stink of love. You want to despise Giovanni because he is not afraid of the stink of love" (Baldwin, 125). This fragment supports the idea mentioned at the beginning of the analysis in which Giovanni is exposed as a transgressive figure in terms of gender roles. The characters themselves demonstrate that Giovanni does not seek to fit into patterns and stereotypes built by a traditional society that encases men and women under a series of concrete characteristics. Giovanni breaks with all this and becomes a man tormented by his past who seeks free love outside gender roles.

7 SPACE AND NON-NORMATIVE RELATIONS.

“I like going from one lighted room to another, such is my brain to me; lighted rooms” –
Virginia Woolf.

From a long time ago, non-normative relations have had no place in all spaces or at all times. These have been restricted to certain limited spaces where people have had a place of freedom to be themselves. However, these spaces delimited and closed at the same time granted the freedom to express themselves and to be able to take out the most real and intimate being of each individual. These spaces, which were both restricted and open at the same time, granted each individual the freedom to express themselves and the ability to extract their most genuine and intimate selves. The effects of space on characters in the book *Giovanni's Room* will be discussed in this section, as the protagonist of the book is primarily moulded by these circumstances. Space includes both nations and rooms, bars, or homes.

In general, our identity and memories can be significantly shaped by space, which can also exacerbate feelings of repression. Physical and societal environments that we live in have an impact on how we feel about ourselves, act, and interact with others. In *Giovanni's Room* for instance, the room is transformed into a place where the characters can explore their desires and feelings without being judged by others. It transforms into a setting for intimacy, safety, and conflict, and the narrative's emphasis on it brings attention to the connection between space and identity. The room also symbolizes a kind of refuge for the characters, as they struggle to come to terms with their feelings and the social norms that seek to suppress them. On the other hand, spaces can also contribute to feelings of repression when they limit our ability to express ourselves or access certain resources. This is often the case in situations where individuals or groups are marginalized or oppressed, and their access to physical and social spaces is restricted. For example, the absence of welcoming public places for LGBTQIA+ people can result in feelings of repression and isolation.

First of all, it should be noted the role of the rooms that appear in the work and the language and narrative used to refer to them. It could be said that Baldwin examines how non-heteronormative interactions are impacted by spaces throughout the story. It is clear that the first sexual experience David has with his friend Joey takes place in a private setting early in the story, specifically, in Joey's room. Paying close attention to the language used, it can be seen that the narrator frequently emphasises the scale and amplitude of the locations while also frequently using words like gloomy, dark, and dismal. “We were horsing around in that small, steamy room” (Baldwin, 6). “It was quite and dark” (Baldwin 6). The use of their lexicon

reveals the significance of these two fragments. The narrator could have chosen to concentrate on other aspects and details of the sexual encounter, but he uses symbolism in his language to also allude to his feelings. Any homosexual relation was viewed negatively and kept secret during the 1950s. This relates to the hidden, the dark, as something that must have a place in a brief moment and space.

Furthermore, as the title indicates, Giovanni's chamber serves as the novel's central space. This space becomes a key scenario where several events occur that determine the development of the work and the condition of its characters. First of all, the room originally symbolizes freedom. That four-walled place on a remote street in Paris is a change in David's life. The fact of being outside the opinion and social judgment allows this one to take out its true essence and do what it really wants. In all the encounters that occur in the room of the young Italian, there is an element in common, the descriptive passages where the same weekly field related to darkness is constantly used. "His room was in the back, on the ground floor of the last building of the street [...]. The room was small, I only made out the outlines of clutter and disorder" (Baldwin, 56).

From this fragment belonging to the first time David visits Giovanni's room, several aspects can be highlighted. First, the narrator's meticulous and thorough use of adjectives and descriptions of the environment in which he is situated. In these two brief lines, a quick examination of the passage's syntax reveals that every word is followed by an adjective that modifies it and gives the reader a more accurate picture of the surrounding area. From this, it can be inferred that the environment is crucial for the character, this place will allow him a series of actions that not everywhere will be able to do, so this is the reason why, he focuses his attention on that. In addition, the location of the building and the lodging is not casual. The room is located on the "ground floor" in the last building on the street. This description is an assimilation of how David perceives what he is living. The setting where the "rupture of the normative takes place" is similar to the act after getting a conservative education where heteropatriarchy is expected, and any other type of life or relationship is categorised as something negative and therefore something that should remain in the secret. In the 1950s, having sex between two men was seen as taboo, dark, and rugged, which is why the environment where that happens remains under the same conditions. Not only in this passage is this terminology used. And finally, this fragment should be highlighted using the word "disorder". The state of physical disorder is also a metaphor that the narrator again uses to talk about his mind. His inner self is in a situation of chaos and confusion by not living according to the patterns created by the society of that moment.

The room develops into a place that offers freedom to the opposite as the story goes on. A place that drowns since it is the only place where they can really be who they are. "The bathroom is tiny and square. It remains me of that claustrophobic room in Paris. Giovanni had had great plans for remodelling the room" (Baldwin, 63). Again, every time the narrator talks about space, he attributes an adjective that modifies the noun "room" making more emphasis on its description. As the relationship between the two young people progresses, as David says, he begins to get caught, feeling claustrophobia as if it were a suffocating place. While referring to this idea, with the concept of claustrophobia the narrator also makes a reference to the state of his head. As he spends more time with Giovanni, it becomes increasingly clear that he has feelings of love for him, and this makes him feel lost and overwhelmed since he does not accept his own sexual condition. In addition, throughout the narration, most of the enclosed spaces and rooms in which it is located are a reminder for David of what he is living, every time he is alone in a closed place, he remembers how he feels about his sexual condition: trapped. The above passage also clearly reflects this idea. It is a moment when David is in the house, he shares with Hella after his relationship with Giovanni, when he enters the tiny bathroom, his memory takes him straight to Giovanni. This concept is expanded upon in chapter two. "One of the walls was a dirty, streaked white where he had torn off the wallpaper" (Baldwin, 76). The description of the chaotic room is used again to express his mood and the thoughts about his condition. There is a direct relationship between the repression he feels towards his person and the repressed and trapped environment makes him feel.

The syntax of the example, characterized for being a sentence where the nucleus (walls) is accompanied by several modifiers that modify each other makes the reading a little higher, giving the reader the impression of the chaos, and the complexity of the thoughts that David has due to what he is living. The state of self-denial and the inability to recognize his personality and sexual condition, causes in David an inability able to establish a truly and complete relationship. In other words, he does not let his emotions flow completely. It produces in the narrator a state of existential and empty anguish that causes David to be wandering from one place to another trying to seek the solution to the question of who he is. In *The Mass of Psychology of Fascism* (1933), Wilhelm Reich claimed that the rejection of a person's natural instincts is what causes modern human illnesses (Jeffries, 2021), in contrast to what Sigmund Freud explained in the theory of psychoanalysis and sexuality. That theory explains the condition of sorrow that David experiences due to the struggle against his own inner desires. In addition, as Jeffries explains in his article "Liberate yourself from sexual repression the

Wilhelm Reich way", the body functions as a storage source for all the emotions we experience and those we reject. With the passage of time, the body somatises everything that rejects and does not allow release by mental and physical illnesses.

The evolution of the room as a symbol of repression not only occurs in the room of the young Italian boy, but this sensation is also transferred to all the enclosed spaces where he is. All of these locations serve as a constant reminder of his mental immobility, which prevents him from defying social convention and turning him into a kind of prisoner. When David attempts to have a sexual relationship with Sue, a woman he meets by chance, he is unsuccessful in doing so and feels the affix there once more, using the same adjectives he used in the earlier situations: "the dark tiny room rushed back. And I wanted only to get out of there" (Baldwin, 89). Finally, after breaking the relationship with Giovanni and having him imprisoned, David from his present time claims to feel like in a "prison". "I walk up and down this house- up and down this house. I think of prison". (Baldwin, 100). David considers his home a prison, a place that reminds him of his inability to accept his true nature. Thus, when referring to prison, he does not only refer to space but also speaks of his own mind. He is a prisoner of his learned ideals that prevent him from living the life he wants. It is in this passage that his circle closes. The room of his friend in the United States and that of Giovanni become the element that impels him to take out his true nature, however, the fact of being only able to do it there, ends up overwhelming him. Ironically, that enclosed space that gives him freedom becomes the cause that takes away this sensation.

Moreover, David's fears about being homosexual are shown by his associations with water, including Giovanni and his room. Water plays an important role during the narration. The novel serves a significant role for water imagery. Acquiring a negative connotation, water has an important role due to the information that the reader gets from David. Repeatedly, when the room of the Italian waiter is presented, it is associated with the ocean and the sea. "I remember that life in that room seemed to be occurring beneath the sea" (Baldwin, 67). The ocean floor and the underwater environment play the same part as the room, which happens to be a scenario that makes the protagonist feel anguish because that is the only place where it can happen. Both are dark corners full of secrets that are far from the reality of the rest of the world. In this way, more emphasis is placed on the effect of the room on David. Through the allusion to the water, the narrator explains the change he experiences inside after moving his life into the room. "Life in that room seemed to be occurring underwater, as I say, and it is certain that I underwent a sea change there" (Baldwin, 82). Under water all objects undergo modifications, just as David experiences in his new environment. With "sea change", Baldwin

refers to the change that the protagonist lives in sharing his life with Giovanni. However, the water and the room are dangerous elements, since both can trap someone inside and cause the anguish of being locked in a place.

On the other hand, in this analysis, it is not only necessary to focus attention on closed scenarios where events happen. Another key point is the geographic locations, the United States and France. People have values, beliefs, and ideologies, each one has a way of thinking, influenced more or less by the country in which we reside, and above all, we have experiences, which shape our character. Translating this idea to the theme addressed in this dissertation, it can be observed how the geographical location, the country, and the culture where people are born, suppose a turning point for the individual, more specifically when it comes to freely displaying a sexual identity that moves away from the canons of society. Identity is a process of self-reflection in which the person considers his or her traits and potentials and becomes aware of who or what he or she is as a person. However, because the person does not exist in isolation but rather in a social context, self-consciousness entails being aware of one's membership in a group, which in turn enables him or her to set themselves apart from members of other groups. Because philosophical and psychological perspectives predominate in the early works on social identity, the idea of identity thus appears to be linked to the individual (Mercado and Hernández, 233).

As both authors state in their article, Henry Tajfel creates a theory of social identity from the viewpoint of social psychology, viewing it as the psychological connection that enables the union of the individual with his group. The Theory of Social Identity is founded on the idea that, “despite how detailed and complex an idea people have of themselves in relation to the physical and social environment in which they live, some aspects of that idea are influenced by a person's membership in particular social groups or categories” (Tajfel, 255). This is directly related to David's situation and his behaviour in *Giovanni's Room*. His entire geographical background directly influences the way he creates his identity and conditions it because not fitting into his social group makes him feel isolated from his community. As a result, all of these variables influence how he develops as a person and cause him to repress his emotions.

As previously mentioned, the work of Baldwin takes place in two main scenarios, the United States and France, precisely in Paris. Both are seen from two very different perspectives, although at the end, the two locations become grounds for repression due to social patterns. On

the one hand, the vision of America that is perceived in the work is of an exceptional and elitist nation impregnated by conservative and traditional thought. The causes of the feeling of exceptionality are due to its historical context and the power that America achieved during its victory during the war. In one of the conversations between Giovanni and David, the Italian shows the widespread idea that foreign people have of the United States. “The Americans are funny. You have a funny sense of time [...]. Time always sounds like a parade, a *triumphant* parade, like armies with banners entering a town” (Baldwin, 30). Using terminology related to the army and the War, referring in this way to the power of America for its historical events, Giovanni speaks ironically of the passage of time. When he uses the adjective "funny", he attempts to transmit the peculiar idea about time that Americans have. Although their stage of glory and power has passed, they continue with that idea and their very present sense of superiority.

David does not have a patriotic feeling and of belonging to America because his way of thinking and his identity differ from what prevails in America. At the beginning of the novel, the character begins by reflecting on the origins of the nation and its predecessors: “conquered a continent, pushing across death-laden plains, until they came to an ocean which faced away from Europe and into a darker past” (Baldwin 3). As Celestin claims:

David now stares at his fading reflection in the darkening window pane, American immigrants found themselves simply staring into the "darker" past despite their efforts to do otherwise. This nation's darker history is characterised by identities that are both lost and denied: identities lost as immigrants fled their home countries in an effort to start new lives; identities denied as the roar of the majority muffles the voice of the minority (Celestin, 1).

Since the beginning of the novel, America is described as a dark and gloomy place. The author not only refers to the physical setting, he also refers to dark environment to describe the way of thinking and acting of its people. A country whose traditional thinking prevents the development of the being of people. This vision continues in the present time of the protagonist. “I am watching in the window as the night comes down outside. It is trapped in the room with me [...], is yet more foreign to me than those foreign hills outside” (Baldwin, 9). “It will all be like – many years from now [...]. Everyone is tired, when the world – for Americans – is not so new” (Baldwin, 29). In both quotes, America is seen as a stagnant place, a "prisoner" as the protagonist feels. An "old" place where its inhabitants live tired in the darkness where they hide their true essences.

All the terminology used to refer to the country is connected with the nouns and adjectives that the author uses to talk about the rooms. Everything is connected to aspects of darkness that show the hidden parts of individuals. In addition, the most traditional part of thinking is embodied by the figure of the father of David, who in a conversation with his sister shows his way of thinking and how David is supposed to act according to his ideas of being a man. "All I want for David is that he grows up to be a man. And when I say a man, Ellen, I don't mean a Sunday school teacher" (Baldwin, 14). As mentioned in previous sections, his father helps to shape that ideal of masculinity that David has and he intervenes directly in his process of repression. After David violates his American definition of masculinity by experiencing feelings of attraction for men, he feels the need to avenge his transgression by acting in a hyper-masculine manner. In his first sexual encounter with his friend Joey, David is sincere and he shows the reader how the vision of the world acquired in America conditions his life. "I could not even admit it to myself; and, while I never thought about it, it remained, nevertheless, at the bottom of my mind, as still and as awful as a decomposing corpse" (Baldwin, 8).

In Pillard's words, the idea that he "could not even admit it to" himself illustrates an identity repression that starts here and is further explored in the remaining portions of the story. David consciously distances this aspect of his identity from his conscious thought because he feels such extreme shame about it (Pillard, 2010). He views his interaction with Joey as a disgraceful burden, a "decomposing body". The notion that being homosexual means losing one's gender identity is strongly reinforced by this image. Instead of attempting some self-reflection, David strives to act like his father to stop acting like "a Sunday school teacher"(Pillard, 2010). Thus, all of the ideas presented above demonstrate how David's conception of manhood is shaped by the setting in which he develops it. For this reason, David makes the decision to leave the setting that limits his ability to fully develop personally in order to find himself and comprehend who he truly is.

"Perhaps, as we say in America, I wanted to find myself. This is an interesting phrase, not current as far as I know in the language of any other people, which certainly does not mean what it says but betrays a nagging suspicion that something has been misplaced" (Baldwin, 18-19).

This is a revealing quote where David displays a lack of self-awareness. In addition, by emphasizing "we say in America", David suggests that the state of emotional distress in which he finds himself is an aspect that many people in America share. Many Americans educated

under the same ideologies were limited to being themselves. It should also be noted the use of "misplaced" to convey his feelings. David's perception that his identity has been in some way "misfiled" indicates that this is not the case; rather, it has been put in the incorrect "file," or location. Therefore, it's possible that David has "misfiled" his sexuality under the heading of his gender identity in some manner (Pillard, 2010). Consequently, David decides to move away from America as a way of escapism and of trying to find out his real identity out of his sociocultural context: "I now present to myself of having run so far, so hard, across the ocean even, only to find myself" (Baldwin, 5).

On the other hand, the reader receives a completely different vision from that of the United States when reading from France, particularly from Paris. Even before embarking on his journey, France is seen as a place of opportunity and freedom, where David can find his answers to his existential questions and his own sexuality. During the novel, there is constant opposition between the two cities, Paris and New York. In part two, chapter one, David and Giovanni are arguing about Hella and their concept of being a woman. In this part, David admits: "It is a crime - in my country, and, after all, I didn't grow up here, I grew up there" (Baldwin, 72). In this passage, the way of thinking of both collides and the great difference between the background of the Italian and the protagonist is exposed. Europe and France are more liberal places where people have fewer social stigmas.

In France, being an American is seen with negative connotations because of the existing prejudices. Giovanni refers to David as "*vrai American*"² (Baldwin, 79) as a kind of offense. However, David is opposed to being qualified in this way and even appears annoyed. This shows that his new location makes him aware of the significant cultural differences and that therefore, being related to the "traditional", which in this case is America. In Paris, David manages to develop a new identity and begins to create a new life that in his country could not have experienced. Geographic identity becomes more significant when travelling overseas due to displacement: those who are travelling do not belong here and, because of their distinctive nature, belong somewhere else (Pillard, 2010).

Furthermore, Paris's social scene and physical spaces are also entirely distinct. Similar to the way that the narrator describes the city, unlike New York which is seen as a place of darkness and "trapped by night", the French metropolis is characterised as a lively, crowded, and noisy place. David is astonished by the place's tolerance for free expression when he gets there. The primary distinction is Guillaume's bar. A homosexual bar where people can socialise and be

² Direct quote from the author. In many cases, Baldwin employs French words in his narrative.

oneself. “I remember that the bar, was more than ordinarily crowded and noisy [...]. There were a table with their gigolos or their lovers” (Baldwin, 23). During the 18th century, after the French Revolution, sodomy was decriminalized. Because of this, queer culture became stronger and began to appear in Paris in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. They were allowed to continue if they were private and discreet. The economic prosperity of *The Belle Epoque* in the late 19th and early 20th centuries gave Paris a reputation as a bohemian and exotic western city, allowing foreign cultures to flourish in Paris. A network of independent open-minded venues has emerged, including lounges, bars, restaurants, and bathrooms. When the concept of open-minded venues is used, this refers to places where different options of sexuality occurred. In addition, in these premises, David discovers the figures of the gigolos and other personalities that break with the canons of the society of the epoch. “There was the boy [...] who came out at night wearing makeup and earrings. Sometimes he actually wore a skirt and high heels” (Baldwin, 24). The fact of living in an environment where the queer world is freely displayed in certain spaces, since not all places this happened, allows the character a certain way of mental liberation. David begins to have "role models": men of his age or older who live their sexuality fully, as Guillaume or Jacques.

With the passage of time, Paris becomes quite the opposite to what it originally meant to David. Living in that city and walking down those streets is a constant reminder to David. This makes him unable to live a relationship with the person he loves, Giovanni, and despite having travelled from America in search of his identity, he still lives in a society in which non-statutory relations are reduced to a number of specific spaces. For these reasons, and because of his inability to break with the social stigmas existing in his mind, David decides to leave the city, and again start in a new place, the south of France. Travel is conceived as a way to escape this repression. Eventually, David's effort to evade his concerns is ineffective, and by the book's ending, he is living a miserable life in the South of France.

8 CONCLUSIONS.

In conclusion, this dissertation has provided an in-depth analysis of *Giovanni's Room*. We have acquired additional information about the book's significance and meaning by closely examining the characters, literary devices, and themes like gender issues and queerness. The analysis of this book has demonstrated that it has relevance to modern issues and concerns. Ultimately, this piece of writing has shown the relevance and worth of studying literature, both

for its inherent artistic excellence and for the insights it may provide into the intricacies of human existence. Authors like James Baldwin continue to give valuable insights and interesting points of view, and his works will likely inspire future research and debates. From my point of view, I believe that many people are still suffering from discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender. Through literature and culture, society must educate in values such as tolerance, respect, and equality so that no one feels repressed and has to live an internal struggle against their true nature.

On the other hand, from a perspective that is more closely related to the themes examined in this work, it can be observed that the complexity of gender and sexuality is compellingly shown in James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*. Baldwin investigates the constraints and standards that society imposes on people depending on their gender and sexual identity through the characters of David and Giovanni. David's tragic actions toward Giovanni are the result of an internal conflict he has with his attraction to men and the pressure from society to fit in. While this is going on, Giovanni's experiences as a queer guy highlight the intersectionality of marginalization and oppression. This shows that from centuries ago, the roles and canons created by society have been oppressive elements in people's lives. Readers are prompted by Baldwin's book to consider the wisdom of rigid gender roles as well as the detrimental impact of society expectations on people's lives. The experiences of the characters serve as a reminder of the value of accepting and embracing various identities and experiences. *Giovanni's Room* adds to the continuing conversation about gender and sexuality by throwing light on their nuances and promoting a more welcoming and inclusive society.

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