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 **Making Love, Making Friends: Affiliation and Repair in James Baldwin's *Another Country***

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

**Making Love, Making Friends:
Affiliation and Repair in James Baldwin's *Another Country***

Jenny M. James (bio)

In July 1957, James Baldwin stepped onto American soil for the first time in nine years. The previous autumn on the Parisian Boulevard St. Germain, he had come upon a newspaper photograph of white protestors abusively spitting on a fifteen-year-old black girl for daring to enter her recently integrated school in North Carolina. This violent image inspired Baldwin to return to the U.S. to bear witness to and participate in the nascent civil rights movement. His writings published between 1957-1963 express a surprising hope in the movement's ability to counteract such racial persecution. In his 1961 essay entitled "Notes for a Hypothetical Novel," the author reflects on the suffering and early deaths that marked the lives of many of his childhood friends in Harlem, noting that he "has not known many survivors." Burdened by this sorrowful past, Baldwin argues that the writer's task is to imagine a renewed world that can bridge divisions of class and color: the "problem the writer has which is, after all, his problem and perhaps not yours is somehow to unite these things, to find the terms of our connection, without which we will perish."¹ Here then, Baldwin frames fiction as an inventive force to avert the violence that systemic racial discrimination often incurs.

The author's journey to "find the terms of our connection" necessarily navigates the utopian ideals of "brotherly love" and "beloved community" that emerged out of mid-1950s civil rights discourse. In "Notes for a Hypothetical Novel," he explains that as a novelist, he seeks to go beyond the movement's redemptive rhetoric and rediscover the country in a "real sense": "Now this country will be transformed. It will not be transformed by an act of God, but by all of us, by you and me."² In his 1962 novel *Another Country*, Baldwin thus departs from a longstanding American intellectual tradition of depicting **[End Page 43]** interracial fraternity as offering a sure path to national redemption. Instead, his deeply secular novel presents cross-gender bonds of affiliation as an alternative means of repairing those social wounds that may never fully heal. As is evident in the final lines of the essay, and in the "hypothetical novel" made manifest in *Another Country*, this collective transformation

begins with literary attempts at repair: "We made the world we're living in and we have to *make it over*."³

Baldwin's first goal upon his return in 1957 was to travel to the South to document the movement first hand. On his first trip across the Mason Dixon, he met and interviewed Martin Luther King, publishing a biographical portrait of the leader in *Harper's* in 1961. Prophetically entitled "The Dangerous Road Before Martin Luther King," the article foresees King's potential iconicity and martyrdom and testifies to King's moving dedication to openly embrace the enemy.⁴ His authorial perspective on the leader was influenced by King's own writings about love and understanding published in the late fifties. King and his early partners in the Montgomery Improvement Association and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), particularly Bayard Rustin, Stanley Levison and Ella Baker, collaborated to develop an American political philosophy of nonviolence built from Judeo-Christian theology and the writings of Mahatma Gandhi, among others. Together they posed a transcendent and integrative ethics of love that they believed would eventuate the removal of geographic, social, and economic barriers to racial equality.

Seeking to achieve not simply legal desegregation, King and others argued for a truly integrated "beloved community" and posed "love" as the ethical stance that would "cut off the chain of hate" overtaking the country, especially the Jim Crow South.⁵ In his 1958 article, "An Experiment of Love," King claims that "brotherly love," or *agape*, would allow individuals to rise above the erotics inherent to this dialectic cycle of hate.⁶ The leader diverges from popular mid-century philosophies that heralded the revolutionary potential of eros, privileging platonic "brotherly love" as a more powerful expression of "understanding, redeeming good will for all men, an overflowing love..."

Making Love, Making Friends: Affiliation and Repair in James Baldwin's *Another Country*

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