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DECONSTRUCTING THE HOMONORMATIVE: QUEER MALE IDENTITIES IN THE NOVEL FROM THE 1960'S TO THE POST-MILLENIUM

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ÖZ

DECONSTRUCTING THE HOMONORMATIVE: QUEER MALE IDENTITIES IN THE NOVEL FROM THE 1960'S TO THE POST-MILLENIUM

ALEKS MATOSOĞLU

Bu çalışma, yapısalcılık sonrası ortaya çıkan *Queer* kuram çerçevesinde erkek vücudundan ve cinselliğinden temel alarak oluşturulan erkek eşcinsel kimliğinin dilde inşası ve yapıbozumu süreçlerini inceler. Kimlik oluşturma sürecinde, vücut ve cinsellik önemli rol oynadığından, incelenen çalışmalarda eşcinsel romanlar kullanılarak, ana akım erkek incelemesinden sıyrılmış ve böylece erkek vücudunun ve cinselliğinin, ötekinin bakış açısından incelenerek verilmesi hedeflenmiştir. Seçilen romanlar, Christopher Isherwood'tan **A Single Man** (1962), Alan Hollinghurts'ten **The Swimming-Pool Library** (1984) ve Jonathan Kemp'ten **Twenty-Six** (2011) olup, 1960'lardan milenyum sonrasına kadar uzanan bir dönemi kapsar. Romanların başkarakterlerinin incelenmesinde yalnızlık ve içe kapanıklılık duygusundan, cinselliğini ifşa etmeye ve kimliğin dilde parçalanmasına kadar giden bir süreç izlenir.

Anahtar Kelimeler:Yapısöküm, *queer*, kimlik,cinsellik.

ABSTRACT

DECONSTRUCTING THE HOMONORMATIVE: QUEER MALE IDENTITIES IN THE NOVEL FROM THE 1960'S TO THE POST-MILLENIUM

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This study analyses the construction and the deconstruction processes of the gay male identities, stemming from the male body and sexuality, in language within the framework of queer theory that emerged after structuralism. As body and sexuality play important roles in the identity making processes novels chosen for this study include gay characters outside mainstream male studies in order to give voice to the "other." The novels selected: Christopher Isherwood's **A Single Man** (1962), Alan Hollinghurts' **The Swimming-Pool Library** (1984) and Jonathna Kemp's **Twenty-Six** (2011) span from the 1960's to the post-millenium. In analysing the protagonists of each novel, a process, starting from loneliness and shyness to camp sexualities and finally to complete deconstruction of identity in language, is traced.

Keywords: Deconstruction, queer, identity, sexuality

PREFACE

This study involves an analysis of the gay male identities from the 1960's to the post-millennium, with a focus on the male body and sexuality. In Isherwood's **A Single Man**, George appears to be a lonely, troubled and aging man trying to get along with the death of Jim, his younger lover. He lives in seclusion as an expatriate and a gay man. His existence seems to be a prolonged mourning of his loneliness as a gay man and as someone who has lost his partner. In Hollinghurts' **The Swimming-Pool Library**, the rich, promiscuous and selfish, William Beckwith lives his sexuality to the full but at a cost when he meets the homosexual Lord Nantwich who not only becomes a father figure to William, but also an intervention to his lazy life. Finally, in Kemp's **Twenty-Six**, anonymous narrators take the place of the protagonist and the characters of the traditional novel in the search of the intense bodily pleasures and with an obsession to express sexual desires and sensuality as realistically as possible through the given language.

This study traces the following structure: in the introduction, the main problematics of each novel and the approaches to be taken in analysing them is given along with a brief introduction to post-structuralism. Before the analysis of the novels, post-structuralism in the field of critical theory is outlined with key thinkers and certain theories. Then, in the following chapters, each novel is closely examined in terms of the representation of the male body and sexuality in order to provide a picture of the textual construction and deconstruction of gay male identity.

This thesis along with the completion of MA courses would have never been possible without the immense kindness and encouragement and pure affection of Asst. Prof. Yıldız KILIÇ. In addition to her patience and ever welcoming attitude when I am at a lost, she has always been more than a tutor throughout my MA years. I cannot think of words to describe my gratitude to her and I hereby present my humble thanks. I also would like to thank all the other members of the English Language and Literature department for accepting and guiding me as a graduate student of a different university.

It seems many great thanks go to mothers and this is not an exception. Through the troublesome times that we went through, we were always alone but we did manage to put the past behind and now we can walk into a better future that we ourselves are to create with the power from the deepest depths of our hearts. This thesis is dedicated to my mother; may she be always healthy and surrounded by the best company.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Until the late 1960's, structuralism was the prominent theory in social sciences. One of the most well-known figures of structuralism was the French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure whose theory not only founded the *école* but also opened the way to post-structuralism. His theory of signs provided multiple ways to examine the language as a phenomenon. Saussure showed the dyadic structure of the sign and claimed that the sign and the signified make a unified whole and placed in a chain-like structure in an instance of linguistic production, which makes it possible to conceive one sign only through its comparative difference to other signs. The emerging post-structuralist movement retained this notion of difference yet attacked the notion of the sign's being a unified whole; asserting the unstable nature of signification. For them, signifier and the signified are not fixed. The meaning flows and signs take on new meanings as the context changes. Even the sign and the signified do not find each other to make unified forms. Every signifier may have several signifieds and each of the signified may become yet another signifier. Thus to make meaning is to catch an instance of flickering signs.

Language becomes then not a tool to reflect a pre-existent reality but itself constructs the reality. Humans are born into language which was already there. Thus, language structures the reality into which one is born. We do not speak *by* language but *through* language. The "I" of the speaker is never identical with the one who is actually speaking but is the very construct of language. The French linguist Emile Benveniste (1902-1976) claimed that the subject position assumed in language does not refer to the ego of the speaker. Instead, the subject pronouns are produced in the instance of discourse and only refer to the subject of enunciation. A prominent structural analyst, Roland Barthes (1915-1980) announced the death of the author, claiming that the author is himself a textual production.

In the field of psychoanalysis, a post-structuralist reading of Sigmund Freud's findings (1856-1939) provided the French psychoanalyst, Jaques Lacan (1901-1981) with a new theory of subject. He suggested that the human subject enters into a pre-existing system of signifiers in which the subject takes a position according to the binary structure of language. However, the period before the entry into the language,

that is the symbolic, is never lost. The unconscious, which has the structure of the pre-symbolic state, is repressed to construct the ordered and regulated domain of the conscious. The subject then is never at peace for the conscious is always threatened by the unconscious desires, making it a split one.

Feminist critics attacked Freud and Lacan in regard to their masculine point of view in their writings. One of these feminist critics was Julia Kristeva (1941) who nevertheless used the basics of Lacan's theory. She wrote about the relationship between what is ordered and rational and what is heterogeneous and irrational, the latter she considers poetic. For Kristeva, humans embody multiple flows of physical and psychic impulses which are gradually regulated and constrained by the rules of society. In the pre-Oedipal state, the child centres his/ her impulses on the body of the mother which gives the child a rough demarcation of his/ her own body parts. This state is governed by the pre-linguistic phase in which the child experiences various movements, gestures, rhythms and sounds. However, all these do not come to an end when the child becomes an adult. They remain active beneath the orderly workings of the fully absorbed language. Kristeva defines this disordered pre-signifying process as semiotic. As in Lacan's theory, the symbolic for Kristeva is that which she regards rational and ordered language. The semiotic ruptures beneath the ordered and rational through literature and distorted images in dreams.

This notion of the unstable and vague nature of language and the whole social construct that is made possible is furthered by the French philosopher, Jacques Derrida (1930-2004) who is widely associated with deconstruction that made a paramount impact on the post-structuralist movement. Derrida reveals the 'centre' which Western metaphysics had relied on for thousands of years as a linguistic construct. For him, outside the play of language there is no centre that is ever-present and never-changing. Given the instability of language, the meaning making process is always a play of signifiers and signifieds in which meaning is deferred and relies on what is excluded. Following Derrida, the French philosopher, Michel Foucault (1926-1984) claimed that the nature of human interactions is textual and produce discourses that are ever-flowing and never free of a network of power relations.

All these post-structuralist endeavours focused on the problems of the formation of the subject and the tension between the individual and society.

Psychoanalysis has shown that sexuality lies at the core of the formation of the subject, and that sexuality is the bodily sensations and pleasures of the self whether felt in actual intercourse or at other times. Knowing and feeling one's body directly takes us to the sexuality of that person. The existence of the body cannot be felt and known without the notion of sexuality. In post-structuralist thought the notion of sexuality is contextualized within the previous brief discussion above. This type of study of sexuality and identity has been accumulated under the umbrella term 'queer' that has evolved from gay and lesbian activism. Queer theory, in this sense, refers to opening up a space that is composed of free-floating multiple sexualities that play at the very heart of the subject formations. Thus the queer theory employed in this study is in close relation to post-structuralisms.

Queer theory or 'queering the theory', complies with the early post-structuralist efforts to examine the subject as a discursive formation in process, decentred from metaphysical assumptions. The term, queer by its own nature, does not refer to any stable notion. It is mainly a deconstruction of hetero-homo binary. Before queer theory, feminist critics have tried to capture the oppressed body of the feminine to release her by forming an identity through the binary structure of language or through forcing the limits of it. However, while feminists thought that they were emancipating the body of the female from the discursive productions that shape it, the male body was not considered which is oppressed by the hegemonic discourses. The examination of the male body as a discursive production in its own right and not as the produced other of the female was needed. Queer theorists realized and focused on this and related issues. If there has to be an emancipation from discursive practices that orders the multiplicity of the bodily senses and pleasures, then it must be done on behalf of both sexes.

Queer theorists had to fight against the hegemonic heterosexuality that has made males and females slave to a system of propagation. Therefore, whether one is actually heterosexual or not, freer sexualities are banned to construct and maintain the social formation of modern societies through exchange of women and marriage. Michel Foucault pays special attention to the period in which emerged the medicalisation of the various sexual practices that were once considered normal. These various forms of sexuality are roughly placed under the title of homosexuality

as an illness at the very emergence of the industrial society, which based itself on the formation of family to provide workers for factories. At this period such 'abnormal' feelings, intentions and practices were encouraged to be confessed to form a knowledge of the 'perverse' sexual acts and then to diffuse the discourses that condemn such 'perversities'. These discourses operate like language as they are made of language. Both oppress and regulate the various bodily senses and desires.

This study focuses the nature and functions of language in producing the discourses that shape and proliferate identities that are mostly cut off from bodily senses and pleasures. As the male body has not received so much attention till very lately, so the novels to be analysed are selected form the 1960's to the post-millennium. The novels deal with the representation of male body and a male's desire for another male. To examine the body in its purely fleshly form, one has to look behind the hegemonic notion of sexuality that causes distortions in sensing the body and the formation of the self. Only through the homosexual misfits in the heteronormative order, can one see the operating structure and function of the flowing discourses. To do so, novels, which reveal the complex discursive structures that shape sexuality and identity will be examined in the light of psychoanalytic and queer theories.

For a discussion of the processes in forming discursive selves and identities, the function of sexuality is crucial. Chosen novels will be analysed through various theoretical frameworks to show how the body and sexuality are transformed discursively to the notions of self and identity. Therefore, homosexuality will be taken not only as the other of heterosexuality, but a means to lay bare the nature of divergence from what is deemed as the 'normal' in order to demonstrate the constructedness of the norms. The main interests of this study are how sexuality is related to the body; how the male body is constructed within a homosexual context; and whether the texts in question place homosexuality as the other to heterosexuality or whether the demarcation between the two is blurred.

The novels chosen for this study chronologically trace emergence of a waking awareness of male sexuality by the individual and in society. As the number of people who practiced multiple sexualities increased, the notion of the homosexual as an individual within society has dramatically changed. This is very much reflected in

the chosen novels. Isherwood's **A Single Man** takes place in the 1960's when the sexual revolution was at its peak but homosexuals were not benefiting from it. The mood of this novella is one of mourning and the homosexuality of George is covert. Therefore, this text can be regarded as the very emergence of the sense of being different from the larger community. George does not dwell much on his own homosexuality but preoccupies himself with the existing construct of society as one strictly ordered by the standards of normality. George manages to discern the identical humans that are produced by the dominating discourses, from the ones who are able to stand against hegemonic identities. His view is enabled by his homosexuality that provides a return to the bodily desires by resisting hegemonic discourses that form and diffuse a heterosexist model of society. George deconstructs the roles he and others have to play so as to interact in social spaces. In addition to the heterosexist society, the loss of his lover literally and metaphorically points to the loss of the bodily sensations which are the result of the subject's immersion in language. Therefore, it is a novella about homosexuality but more than that, it is about an awakening to knowing and sensing the body in its own fleshly senses and desires by disposing of ordering discursive practices. Only in this way can George manage to experience epiphanic instances when he is able to turn to the male body that is best depicted in the very homoerotic scene when George and his student Kenny enjoy a night swimming by forming a homoerotic bond.

As opposed to the shy and mournful George who lives on an isolated island, Alan Hollinghurts' main character William Beckwith in **The Swimming-Pool Library** is always on the move at the very centre of the city chasing after casual sex. He lives his sexuality to the full but this does not make him content with himself on his life. In this study, it will be shown that William, as his name implies, becomes nothing but the 'will' to desire and a stream of casual sex. He is an idle pleasure-seeker who never fully satisfies himself just like the 'homosexual' identified through medical discourses as Foucault claimed. He appears much of a 'pervert' in line with these medical discourses, and one who is thrown into the flourishing AIDS-free sexuality of the 1980's. The tension lies at his connecting himself to the history of homosexuality in Britain by transcribing the biography of Lord Nantwich who embodies the whole history of homosexuality from the turn of the century to the

1980's. William resists writing and maintains his idle life. He resists writing, but reading Nantwich's and James' journals force him to develop a better understanding of himself. Through discursive formations of William's self and sexuality within his *milieu*, a deconstruction of the binary system of heterosexuality and homosexuality will be revealed.

The last novella is Jonathan Kemp's **Twenty Six**: a rigorous exploration of the sexuality of the homosexual male within a language that would capture various instances of fleshly sensations and pleasures. With a loosely structured narrative and almost no plot, the novella is composed of short chapters that can be read individually and/or in connected unison. This novel both forces the limits of language as an oppressive superstructure but all the while acknowledging the binary structure of language that denies the body. In this chapter, the discursive formations of male-male sexuality in its extreme forms, along with an ongoing experiment with language is examined.

1. FROM STRUCTURALISM TO POST-STRUCTURALISM

The Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) offered a new way studying language. Unlike previous linguists who studied the changes in languages over time, Saussure claimed that the object of linguistics should be the language itself in its present form. What Saussure terms as *langue* is the underlying principle of an individual's production of speech and/or writing which is *parole*. The sign is composed of two parts which are the signifier, the word or sound and the signified, or the concept corresponding to that sound or word in our minds. However, the relation between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary and without natural connection between them. Thus, in order to tell one sign form another; we have to rely on the difference between them. However, signifier and the signified must form a unified whole to produce a certain meaning. Post-structuralists oppose this, claiming that the signifier and the signified do not form a unified whole. For one signifier there are many signifieds and even these signifieds become yet another signifiers when the context changes. Therefore, signifiers form chains of meaning with other signifiers. Post-structuralists attack the idea that language is simply a means to express reality outside itself. The critics of structuralism introduced the concept of the "speaking subject" or the "subject in process". The speaking subjects are produced by *langue* itself which is already there before the subject. The utterance of a subject belongs to the level of *parole* governed by *langue.* For example, the French linguist Emile Benveniste (1902-1976) claimed that "I" and "he", "she" and all other personal signs are subject positions that are already constructed and governed by language. The "I" of an utterance is not identical with the actual person who utters it. The "I" in this utterance is called the subject of the enunciation and the person is the subject of enunciating. Post-structuralist thought progressed on this new subject position.

It is worth noting how a prominent structuralist critic, Roland Barthes progressively gives up structuralist premises and turns to adopt post-structuralist views in interpreting literary works. In his "Death of the Author" (1967), Barthes attacks the idea that the author is the sole origin of the text. Barthes strips the author of his/her metaphysical status and reduces him/her to a mere location in the endless

reworking of the various texts out of other texts. This was partly inherent in structuralism as structuralists viewed individual utterances that are *paroles* as the products of impersonal system that is *langue*. In Bathesean model, the reader is free to enter the text anywhere and to open and close the signifying process without being bound to the signified. The reader is thus free to take the pleasure of the texts as the signifier changes its place in a continuous flux, not forming a union with the signified. In **S/Z** (1970), Barthes attacks structuralist narratologists who tried to view all stories in a simple frame of narration. For Barthes, It is useless to uncover the underlying structure in a text because each text refers back to a network of other texts that are already written. Even, the "I" that reads the text is already made up of various texts.

The effects of post-structuralist thought are encountered in psychoanalytic criticism. Articulation of desire and its relation with the formation of the subject in language gave way to psychoanalytical criticism which mainly deals with the pursuit of a literary unconscious or the desire of the author, in the text and the reader. It starts with Freud's approach to literary texts as the expression of the artist's unconscious. Recently, psychoanalytic criticism has taken new forms within post-structuralist thought. In the work of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, a dynamic notion of desire is analyzed within a linguistic context.

The founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud argued that the rise of civilization had caused the repression of basic human instinctual drives most of which are sexual. Sexual instincts had to be redirected to the unconscious for the formation of civilization. Freud divided the psyche into two parts; the conscious and the unconscious. The conscious functions as a controlling medium. It is the storehouse of repressed desires and instinctual drives. Although they are repressed and are out of contact with the conscious mind, they still operate by reappearing in consciousness under certain circumstances. Freud's claim was based upon the investigation of cases of traumatic hysteria in which the behaviour of patients could only be explained in relation to ideas or thoughts which are not in the conscious mind. Freud's theory of the unconscious mind was radical in that it demonstrated that humans are no longer master of themselves but subject to repressed impulses and drives. In this respect Freud's 'unconscious' seemed to have destabilized the

humanist ideal of a stable self to a certain extent.

Writing through the end of Freud's career, Lacan elaborated Freud's model. Whereas Freud relied on an organic model with an aim to find the neurosis, Lacan offered a more linguistically based theory for understanding the human subject's entrance into the social order. Lacan claims that humans enter a pre-existing system of signifiers in which they find a subject position. However, for Freud, assuming a subject position was rooted in the early infantile years when libidinal drives do not have an exact object but originate from multiple erogenous zones of the body. Thus, this multiplicity of pleasure did not allow one stable identity or gender for a certain period of time. This 'pleasure principle' is intervened by the 'reality principle' of the father who poses a threat to male child's oedipal desire. The male infant then has to abandon his desire which has evolved from multiple erogenous zones to the mother and assumes the masculine role of the father.

In Lacan's model, the period prior to entry into language is called "the imaginary" and the period when the child finds himself in language is called "the symbolic". Similar to Freud's model, Lacan claims that in the imaginary state, the infant cannot conceive itself apart from its mother and even its environment and it is subject to drives and desires. Through the mirror stage, the infant enters the symbolic stage in which it is placed in language and thus social and cultural systems. In the mirror stage, the infant misrecognizes itself for it takes the image of itself as its own ego. Thus, a fictional ideal, an ego is produced. This image is still imaginary and it is differentiated as the other. The child is now in the symbolic world of differences.

This misrecognition, Lacan insists, is necessary to form the basis for our identities. We need the response and the recognition of others to construct our identity as we become subjects in interaction with them, when we are subjected to an already existing order. The interactional nature of identity formation suggests that the system in which we find ourselves creates us as subjects and posits us as individuals. Thus, identity is never fixed and stable, it is always subject to constant change. As we are forced to leave our pre-verbal fantasies, desires and drives to the unconscious, this loss of our original state results in desire which can never be fully satisfied but temporarily fulfilled by symbolic substitutes.

Though Lacan has been attacked by feminist critics for his redeployment of Freudian male-centred psychoanalysis, the literary critic and psychoanalyst, Julia Kristeva has followed more or less the model Lacan provided. In her work entitled, **The Revolution in Poetic Language**, (1984) she writes about the relationship between what is ordered and rational and what is incongruous and irrational, the latter she considers "poetic" as opposed to ordinary language. According to Kristeva, humans by birth embody multiple flows of physical and psychic impulses which are gradually regulated and constrained by the rules of society. In the pre-Oedipal state, the child centres his/her impulses on the body of the mother which gives the child a rough demarcation of his/her own body parts. This state is governed by the pre-linguistic phase in which the child experiences various movements, gestures, rhythms and sounds. However, all these do not come to an end when the child becomes an adult. They turn out to be still active beneath the orderly working of the fully absorbed language. This disordered pre-signifying process Kristeva calls "semiotic". As in Lacan's theory, Kristeva terms as "the symbolic" that which she regards as rational and ordered language. The semiotic, however is never lost, it ruptures benaeath the ordered and rational, through literature and distorted images in dreams.

Post-structuralism is often related to "deconstruction" which is a strategy of analyzing human discourses proposed by Jacques Derrida. His paper entitled "Structure, Sign, Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (1966) opened a new critical movement. He questions the metaphysical assumptions of Western philosophy from its beginnings; he argues that there has always been a presupposition of a centre that governs the structure but that it cannot itself be subjected to analysis. The subject that is centred on an "I" becomes the very principle of unity that forms the infrastructure of human discourses. However, Freud broke this illusion of a complete self by introducing the conscious and the unconscious and Saussure introduced the binary system of language that is expanded to the very construction of society. Derrida attacks the privileging of either pole in a binary system (body/soul, man/woman, rational/irrational) to become the centre that operates as an origin to form discourses that devalue the other.

Derrida, in **Of Grammatology** (1967) names this desire for a centre as "logocentricism". *Logos*, being the Greek term for "word" or "ordered discourse" that is supposed to be the origin of all discourses. *Logos* is a spoken word or discourse that comes from the speaker located in time and space. It is thus privileged to a written word whose origin and target is unknown. This privileging of speech over the text is the main feature of logocentrism. To upset this binary opposition, Derrida introduces his concept of *différence*. The verb *différer* in French, means both to differ and to defer. In language, signs can be made out only through a system of differences, and signifiers are endless postponements of presence. In the Western tradition, speech has presence which writing threatens its presence and thus it is considered to be inferior. For Derrida, this hierarchy can be reversed if speech and writing are both taken as signifying processes. Then, speech becomes a part of writing. Writing always takes the place of speech and also supplements it because it is first written. Thus all human activity has this substitution and/or addition in an endless play.

1.1. The Way to the Term "Queer"

Before considering the term "queer", it is worth considering how gay and lesbian studies came to be circulated. The birth of the Gay Liberation movement can be traced back to the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York when gay men resisted police raids in bars through a series of violent demonstrations. This single event had a profound impact on the gay scenes of the United States and Europe and on activists in homosexual rights. The Gay Liberation Front from that time onwards aimed at resisting discrimination and persecution and at making gay people enjoy their sexuality without shame or fear. These activists were a part of the sexual revolution of the 1960's but their resistance was largely focused on hegemonic heterosexuality.

The Gay Liberation Movement mainly fought against *heterosexism* and *homophobia*. Heterosexism means the privileging of a hegemonic heterosexuality to suppress and demonise other forms of sexuality. Homophobia is the bigoted hatred of gays. These two terms owe their existence to the feminist concept of sexism which pointed to the unequal social organization of gender roles throughout the 1970's and 1980's.

Following feminisms, research focused on gay and lesbian identities and sexualities seems to become abundant from the 1970's onwards. Researchers indulged in a reconsideration of cultural phenomena in terms of the construction of sexuality within a context of a network of power relations which become apparent in the discourses and practises of church and state. The main influences on these studies had been followers and critics of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick.

1.2. Sexuality and Identity

Before moving on with major thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick, it may be more productive to consider the notion of sexuality and identity from the late-nineteenth-century to the twentieth. According to post-structuralist theories, sexuality is not simply an essence but a discursively produced notion which constructs the being in historically and culturally determined ways. Therefore, as Foucault points out it is useful to consider the informing discourses surrounding sexuality so as to understand the reasons why certain knowledge, subjectivities and practices emerge and circulate at a particular time and in a particular place and how they function. Same-sex sexual intercourse, which we label 'homosexual', has been conceptualized and practiced differently over the centuries. Foucault's analysis of the shift in conceptualizing the homosexual individual from someone who practises same-sex sexuality to someone whose whole identity becomes his sexuality, raised again the hundred year old question for sexologists and theoreticians in the twentieth-century; whether homosexuality is a sin and/or an illness. It is worth noting briefly the works of sexologists and theoreticians, Ulrichs, Krafft-Ebbing, Westphal, Ellis, Hirschfiled, Carpenter, Broch and finally Freud.

In his various articles and books published between 1864-1879, the German lawyer Karl Heinrich Ulrichs went against the general conceptions of homosexuality of his time. He thought that homosexuality was natural and that some men were born with a feminine inclination whereas some women were born with a male one. He called a feminine male an *Urning* and a masculine female a *Uringin*, after the Greek Goddess of Uranus. He also coined a term for the heterosexual male; *Dioning* after Dione. These *Urnings* and *Uringins* have sexual organs pertaining to their gender but are endowed with the soul or instinct of the opposite sex. Ulrichs claimed that they were as normal as the *Dionings*.

Ulrichs influenced the widely known German-Austrian psychiatrist Krafft-Ebing. (1840-1902) His main work, **Psychopathia Sexualis** published in 1886, was written for doctors and lawyers on whether sexual perversion was a sin or a crime. Krafft-Ebing believed that homosexuality was congenital but that it was a form of a

neuro-psychical degeneration. For him, homosexuals were the examples of a more primitive stage of the human evolution. However, the British sexologist, Havelock Ellis (1859-1939) in his **Sexual Inversion** (1897) and **Studies in the Psychology of Sex** (1933) reworked the idea of degeneration that homosexuals were said to have. For Ellis, nature and culture were both responsible for the construction of homosexuality. He regarded homosexuality as a congenital abnormality yet it was not a disease for him. Ellis considered there was a sexual indefiniteness at some time in puberty that would lead to homosexuality if certain social conditions were met. Since Ellis believed that homosexuality was the result of nature and culture, it did not need to be cured and punished.

While Ulrichs, Krafft-Ebing and Ellis saw no need to cure homosexuality, the German psychiatrist Carl Westphal (1833-1890) suggested that homosexuals needed medical treatment though they did not need to be punished. Many commentators agree on the fact that from 1869 when Westphal's work was first published, the medicalisation of homosexuality began. Not surprisingly, Westphal was also among the first who wrote about female homosexuality. He claimed that the female invert has the soul of a man trapped in a female body as had been claimed by Ulrichs.

Among the sexual theoreticians discussed so far, the Jewish socialist and physician Magnus Hirschfield (1868-1935) was possibly the most revolutionary. He developed a notion called "third sex" for homosexuals and thought that they should not be punished for their biological drives but be treated justly. He later abandoned this idea and started to think about sexual pluralism which was certainly a breakthrough, considering the rigid nineteenth-century paradigm of sexual binaries. Hirshfield attacked the notion of normal and abnormal forms of sexuality. He advocated homosexual rights and suggested a kind of therapy that would make homosexuals accept and perhaps celebrate their sexuality.

A British contemporary of Hirschfield was Edward Carpenter (1844-1929) whose work, **The Intermeadiate Sex** published in 1908, can be considered even more revolutionary compared to Hirshfiled. As the first president of the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology, he suggested that inverts were superior to heterosexuals. His reversal of the heterosexual and homosexual binary was extremely unusual for his age. He believed that the invert had greater insight into human nature

than their heterosexual counterparts.

Iwan Bloch's (1872-1922) **The Sexual Life of Our Times** (1907) is one of the works that sought to provide a scientific explanation of various sexual phenomena. Although Bloch agrees with many parts of the research done by Krafft-Ebing, he remains dissatisfied with Krafft-Ebing's insistent consideration of some sexual behaviour as degenerate. **The Sexual Life of Our Times** focused on the interaction between the evolution of the species and civilization that have functioned to regulate sexual instincts. For Bloch, eroticism was shaped by culture and sexuality and it was born out of the two contrasting innate impulses which are lust and shame. According to Bloch, the practice of covering the genitals derived from an erotic drive and a sense of modesty. To prove how sexuality was born of lust and shame, Bloch provides extensive evidence that the embarrassment caused by eroticism had completely harmless sources. What is most striking in his work is that he totally went against Victorian norms on the topic of masturbation. He refuted the belief that masturbation led to insanity. Referring to Freud's innovative **Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality** (1905), Bloch observed that autoeroticism was a part of psycho-sexual development. Apart from that, Bloch's book concentrates on acquired and congenital forms of homosexuality. Bloch sees in the congenital male same sex lovers specific physical manifestations of inversion. He provides a scrupulous medical gaze over the homosexual body. He enumerates his findings as "the feminine expression of face…*considerable deposit of fat*...the contours of the body being more rounded than in the case of the normal male… (a) *muscular system* less powerfully developed than it is in heterosexual men, (and) the skin that is delicate and soft…"[1] No matter how much this description seems pathologizing to a contemporary reader, Bloch was determined to consider homosexuality as a completely healthy state of being as opposed to Kraft-Ebbing. Moreover, it is apparent that while observing cross-dressers all together, Bloch is lured to the homosexual body on which many fears and pathologizing and punishing gazes had been projected.

[1] Bloch, Iwan, **The Sexual Life of Our Time In Its Relations to Modern Civilization**, New York: Allied Book Company, 1908, pp. 498-9.

The best known theorist of sexuality in the early 1900's is Sigmund Freud. He owes much to sexologists like Krafft-Ebing, Ellis, Hirschfield and others but there is apparently a divergence from them. Freud did not agree with the theories that regarded homosexuality as a degeneracy, asserting that humans by nature were bisexual. He considered that homosexuality was the result of an arrested sexual development and homoeroticism arose from not being able to suppress bisexual disposition sufficiently. Ironically, homosexuality was necessary for the realization of heterosexuality.

Freud presented that psychological development of a child actualizes through a series of fixed stages which involves the fixation of libido (sexual drives or instincts) on different parts of the body. His psychosexual development roughly has three stages: oral, anal and genital. In the oral stage, the infant gets much satisfaction from in its mouth which is the centre of libido. In the following anal stage, the infant derives great pleasure from defecating as libido is centred on the anus. In the phallic stage, the infant becomes aware of the genital difference between sexes. Genitals become the new source of pleasure. The infant experiences jealousy and fear as a result of the developing erotic attraction.

For Freud, the jealously which boys experience is called Oedipus complex and the jealousy experienced by girls is called Electra complex. In both versions, these complexes come to an end through a process of identification in which the child identifies with the same sex parent. The Oedipus complex originates from boy's desire for his mother. He wants to have his mother only for himself. He fears that his father would take away his penis. Hence, he develops castration anxiety. The little boy then resolves this problem by imitating the masculine characteristics of the father and identifies with him.

Freud also formed four different theories for the possible causes or origins of homosexuality. First one is that as a result of the Oedipus conflict, the boy discovers that his mother is castrated which triggers castration anxiety so that the boy develops attraction to woman with a penis. Second, in **The Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality** (1905), he theorised that homosexual child becomes so attracted to his mother and he identifies with her. He then develops the need to find objects of love like himself so he can love them in the way that his mother loved him. Third, if when

a boy seeks his father's love and takes on a feminine identification to attract men, he chooses anal eroticism. Finally, homosexuality could also be the result of a jealousy of father and brothers which is first repressed and then is converted into love of other men.

Psychoanalysis started to receive considerable attention in the United States in the early nineteenth century, when Sigmund Freud delivered a series of lectures at Clark University. Abraham Brill claimed to have treated several homosexuals using Freud's psychoanalysis. By treatment, he meant restoring heterosexuality of the patients. In an article in 1930, Wilhelm Stekel believed that it was quite possible to heterosexuality through psychoanalysis only if it was performed correctly and the patient was willing to be treated. In the 1950's, Edmund Bergler was an important psychoanalytic theorist of homosexuality. He claimed that claimed that if homosexual really wanted to change and if the right therapy was used, the outcome would be highly successful. He used confrontational therapy in which homosexuals were punished in order to make them face their own masochism. From the 1940's to the Stonewall riots in 1969, most of the psychiatric establishments in the USA approved conversion therapies. Following the Stonewall riot, conversion therapy began to be highly criticized. As a result of long activism of the homosexuals and dispute among psychiatrists, homosexuality was not considered to be a mental disorder from the late 1970's onwards. However, even in the twentieth century the debate continues and some institutions in USA still offer certain therapies for the restoration of heterosexuality of their 'patients.'

1.3. Origins of Queer Theory

In 1978 the publication of the **History of Sexuality,** written by Michel Foucault, ushered in an age in which a post-structuralist understanding of sexuality as a discursive product began. Foucault argued that Western civilization is based on the notion of a 'pervert' homosexual. Homosexuality is marginalized because of its 'perversity' yet it becomes central in the discursive level. The effort to control and order 'perversion' through pathologizing discourses inevitably puts homosexuality at the centre of attention. For Foucault, Western civilization has turned all forms sexuality into discourses that enable it to monitor and exercise power.

In the first of volume of the **History of Sexuality**, Foucault's main argument is that the homosexual as an individual dates from the 1870's. Before that time these sexualities were not regarded as expressions of identities of those who did not practise heterosexuality. For the first time, these sexual acts came to be considered the essential nature of those who committed them. Before this turning point, a man who had sexual intercourse with another man was seen in terms of a temporary aberration, but from that turning point afterwards, the homosexual came to be known as "a species." Thus came into existence the homosexual whose whole identity was largely based on his sexuality. This marks a shift from behaviour to identity.

For Foucault, homosexuality and homosexuals were produced by nineteenth-century discourses that claimed a new knowledge of sexuality. This production of homosexuality and other 'perversions' led to their codification and condemnation in medical, legal, psychological and religious discourses. This posed the two identities of homosexual and heterosexual on a binary line and devalued homosexuality. In other words, all this was a result of power that also used homosexuality as an instrument. Power works through us sometimes by victimization, sometimes by working to our advantage, but the authority legitimizes itself by marginalizing homosexuality which is in fact of its own making.

Foucault's significance for queer theory lies on the emphasis he puts on the discursive construction of eroticism; how and why desire has been produced and constrained in the way it has been since the late nineteenth-century. Foucault's view of sexuality is best expressed in the following passage:

> Sexuality must not be described as a stubborn drive, by nature alien and of necessity disobedient to a power which exhausts itself trying to subdue it and often fails to control it entirely. It appears rather as an especially dense transfer point for relations of power: between men and women, young people and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priests and laity, an administration and a population. Sexuality is not the most intractable element in power relations, but rather one of those endowed with the greatest instrumentality: useful for the greatest number of manoeuvres and capable of serving as a point of support, as a linchpin, for the most varied strategies.
>
> There is no single, all-encompassing strategy, valid for all of society and uniformly bearing on all the manifestations of sex. For example, the idea that there have been repeated attempts, by various means, to reduce all of sex to its reproductive function, its heterosexual and adult form, and its matrimonial legitimacy fails to take into account the manifold objectives aimed for, the manifold means employed in the different sexual politics concerned with the two sexes, the different age groups and social classes.[2]

Rather than arguing, western civilization has always tried to repress sexuality; Foucault claims that verbosity concerning sexuality reveals how the power produced, distributed and maintained in society. In this way, Foucault posits sexuality as a "... transfer point for relations of power." He objects to the notion that heterosexuality had been promoted simply to reproduce. Even though, in the eighteenth century, the contemporary ideal of a romantic marriage began to suppress earlier familial models based on kinship and exchange for economic reasons, heterosexual marriages had always entailed other reasons that concerned cultural management between men and women, classes and generations. Therefore, talking about heterosexual marriage makes Foucault think about where relations of power emerge and to which direction they lead, depending on the epoch.

According to Foucault, sex since the Middle Ages through the discourse of purging the sinful, had been the centre of abundant discourses. This is also the case in the Victorian era though it has always been assumed that talking about sex was strictly prohibited. It is a fact that Victorians devised ways to silence sex, but Foucault rejected the notion that all these efforts were made to repress desires. On the contrary, Foucault claimed that sexuality was the subject of an immensely growing body of discourse. Ironically, these discourses originally aimed at

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[3] Foucault, Michel, **The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction**, trans. Robert Hurley, New York: Random House, 1984, p. 103.

suppressing sexual desire, proliferated what they seemingly tried to suppress. In the following passage, Foucault elucidates his phrase, "incitement to discourse":

> Rather than the uniform concern to hide sex, rather than a general prudishness of language, what distinguishes these last three centuries is the variety, the wide dispersion of devices that were invented for speaking about it, for having it be spoken about, for inducing it to speak of itself, for listening, recording, transcribing, and redistributing what is said about it: around sex, a whole network of varying, specific, and coercive transpositions into discourse. Rather than a massive censorship, beginning with the verbal properties imposed by the Age of Reason, what was involved was a regulated and polymorphous incitement to discourse.[3]

Although modern western civilization had devised various ways, which are to be discussed in the following paragraphs, to silence sexuality, these led to an "incitement to discourse." Thus, sexuality becomes space in which contradictory deployment of power occurs. In order to control sexuality, the state must commit the crime of talking about it.

Foucault examines how this kind of power functions through complex discourses revolving around sexuality through a "wide dispersion of devices." Firstly, he claims that the female body came to be scrutinised which led to the definition of "the hysterical women". In this way, women's reproductive capacity, health and 'properness' for being a wife and a mother were examined. Secondly, Foucault identifies "pedagoziaton of children's sex" in which parents, doctors, teachers and psychologists educated the children on their sexual identity. Lastly and the most importantly, Foucault finds a "psychiatrization of perverse pleasure" which meant differentiation of healthy from perverse sexual instincts. All these ways form certain norms and then the state exerts its power to decide which instincts are perverse and which are not. In this way, sexuality is controlled.

However, in Foucault's model, power does not come from a higher authority to be exerted on lower subjects; it is not a top-down model. Instead, Foucault insisted that power is a productive relation: when it exerts its force, it simultaneously creates resistance:

> Power comes from below; that is, there is no binary and all encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations, and

[3] **Ibid**., p. 34.

> serving as a general matrix – no such duality extending from the top down and reacting on more and more limited groups to the very depths of the social body. One must suppose rather that the manifold relationships of force that take shape and come into play in the machinery of production, in families, limited groups, and institutions, are the basis for wide-ranging effects of cleavage that run through the social body as a whole.[4]

According to Foucault contradictions fracture the oppressor and the oppressed in a relational way. Thus, the existence of power relations depends on a "multiplicity of points of resistance." This relational character of power relationships concerning sexuality is best observed in the chapter titled "The Deployment of Sexuality". To elucidate how power can function in polyvalent and sometimes paradoxical ways, Foucault talks about the classification, stigmatization and surveillance of sexual perversions:

> There is no question that the appearance in nineteenth-century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty, and 'psychic hermaphroditism' made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of 'perversity'; but it also made possible the formation of a 'reverse' discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturality' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified.[5]

Foucault claims that as soon as there appeared pathologizing discourses on homosexuality, resistant discourses also appeared and claimed that homosexuality is natural. Thus, the very discourse which aimed at silencing the perverse, paradoxically gave voice to those who were stigmatised. On the one hand, homosexuality can be regarded as an illness but on the other hand it can be considered natural, thus giving homosexuals a space to resist.

Drawing on Foucault's writings Judith Butler in her **Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity** (1990) analyzes how certain categories are constructed to understand sex, gender and desire. Butler argues that feminists work against themselves when they use the word woman for this word reproduces the normative relations between sex and gender which in turn naturalises heterosexuality. It is also the case in gay and lesbian resistance to hegemonic

[4] **Ibid.,** p. 94.
[5] **Ibid.**, p. 101.

heterosexuality. Butler claims that commitment to gender identity works against the homosexual subjects. Gender is reconstructed by Butler as a performative effect of repeated acts. Thus, behind gender, there is not a centre that produces gender performativity. In other words, there is no identity underlying the gender but "that identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that is said to be its results."[6] Heterosexuality, which has been thought of as natural, is also regarded as a cultural product by Butler. It comes to be considered as natural by the repetition of normative gender identities. Butler focuses on a drag who performs a heterosexual role in a gay context: "As much as the drag creates a unified picture of a woman... it also reveals the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience... *In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself-as well as its contingency*."[7] Drag deconstructs the naturalness of heterosexual woman. It reveals the constructedness of any assumption that privileges gender and sexuality in the heterosexist paradigm.

In a later book, **Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex** (1993), Butler elucidates upon the criticism of her work, and the assumption that gender is something that is wilfully performed. Butler emphasizes that "performativity is neither free play nor theatrical self-presentation; nor can it be simply equated with performance."[8] Furthermore, she writes:

> Performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed *by* a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. This iterability implies that 'performance' is not a singular 'act' or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance.[9]

Though gender is performative, it cannot be put off when one wishes to do so. It is always under constraint which is its prerequisite. Performativity is not something the

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[6] Butler, Judith, **Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity**, New York: Routledge, 1990, p. 25.
[7] **Ibid.**, p. 137.
[8] Butler, Judith, **Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"**, New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 95.
[9] **Ibid.**

subject does but a process through when the subject comes to be constituted.

Butler's notion of performativity does not imply a choice. Heterosexuals perform heterosexual acts because it is "… a repetition that can only produce the effect of its own originality; in other words, compulsory heterosexual identities, those … phantasms of men and women, are theatrically produced effects of posture as grounds, origins, the normative measure of the real."[10] Heterosexuality is a copy for which there is no original. It makes itself natural only by degrading the other forms of sexuality through setting up a binary opposition. Heterosexuality needs non-heterosexual desires and practices to centre and maintain itself. Heterosexuality and all other 'perverse' forms of sexuality are implicated in each other and are thus inauthentic.

Apart from Butler, Foucault had also been an influence on Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick who wrote **Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire** (1985). For Sedgewick the binary opposition between the heterosexual and the homosexual is central to the western tradition. She reveals that in a society dominated by men, women are only instrumental as goods for exchanging. In exchanging women between families, men form and maintain inter-male relations which come to contract the society as male-dominated. Therefore, the relations in this type of society are actually male to male. The structure of this male-dominated society is then homological, considering the nature of social relationships. In such a society, male-male desire is made legitimate on a homosocial basis which is regulated by these forms of oppression: homophobia and misogyny. Heterosexual marriage keeps its privileged position only by stigmatizing male-male eroticism.

Although the term "heterosexual" is believed to have been invented slightly after the term "homosexual", the invention of the two terms are quite recent, and date back to the mid-nineteenth century. Considering the relation of the virile man to the effeminate one in Ancient Greece, this dichotomy does not coincide with the modern hetero/homo binary opposition. Foucault states that in Ancient Greece, one's way of taking sexual pleasures determined his femininity or masculinity. As long as a man managed to control his desires and was active in sexual intercourse, he was not

[10] **Ibid.**, p. 21.

charged with effeminacy; however, when he became a slave to his desires, he was considered to be feminine.[11] Contemporary signs of having a feminine attitude were not necessarily associated with effeminate males in Ancient Greece. The queer theorist, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues that it is

> a rather amazing fact that, of the very many dimensions along which the genital activity of one person can be differentiated from that of another... precisely one, the gender of object choice, emerged from the turn of the century, and has remained, as *the* dimension denoted by the now ubiquitous category of 'sexual orientation'[12]

Homosexual practises have been documented in all primitive or civilised societies throughout the centuries. However, till the late-nineteenth-century, when western civilisation demonised homosexual practices along with other forms of non-propagative sexualities, there was no category of men who had same-sex sex acts.

Sedgewick mocks the formation of the two terms: 'homosexuality' and 'heterosexuality'. The word 'homosexuality' wasn't coined until 1869 — so everyone before then was heterosexual"[13]. The term 'homosexual'[14] was originally intended to be a medical and legal prescriptive term to decriminalise and pathologise homosexuals so as to uphold the idea of heterosexual intercourse as natural. Along with Foucault, Judith Butler argues that terms like homosexual and heterosexual function as instruments of regulatory regimes. Even the discourse of homosexuality, as it is produced within the heteronormative discourse reconstructs itself again and again in the very way that opressive regimes form it. In other words, the concept and term of homosexuality is a tool employed not simply to stigmatize homosexual acts but more to privilege heterosexuality.

However, in the 1960's, the term homosexual started to be rarely used as activists for homosexual rights came up with the word 'gay' to point to male and female homosexuals for the word 'homosexual' had negative connotations. The term

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[11] Foucault, Michel, **The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction**, trans. Robert Hurley, New York: Random House, 1984, p. 85.
[12] Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, **Epistemology of the Closet**, California: California UP, 1990, p. 8.
[13] **Ibid**., p. 52.
[14] The term 'homosexuality' was coined in 1869 by a German psychologist, Károly Mária Kertbeny.

homosexual was insufficient for it only referred the sexual acts performed and excluded the whole identity of an individual, men and women. The word homosexual was also apparently connected to the psychiatric discourses and it immediately brought the 'sinful' sexual acts to the mind. Later on, female gays opted for the term lesbian, thinking that the word gay mainly referred to a male homosexual. In a short time, many other terms such as bisexual, transsexual, transgender, and 'queer' started to be circulated. In this way, plurality of sexual identities began to be visible and to force themselves into the heterosexist discourses.

Instead of the word, 'gay', in the 1980's, the term, 'queer' came to be used again by the well-know political activist groups of the time, such as Queer Nation, Act Up and Outrage. 'Queer' was already in use in the 1950's which meant someone who is at odds with the normal but more than that it was used as an offensive term to men who did not conform to certain forms of sexual identity. Its contemporary meaning is still what is at odds with the mainstream culture. However, the term "Queer" was to turn into a theoretical study, gaining impetus from Teresa de Lauretis who traced the emergence of the term 'Queer' along with a discussion of the place of gay and lesbian studies in postmodernism in an introduction to the journal, "Differences". (1991)

Non-heterosexual subjectivity is characterised by plurality and multiplicity and to signify such a state, the term, 'Queer' was reclaimed. In the 1990's, Queer Nation started to use the word 'Queer': "They eagerly resignified the meaning of queerness in the face of what they saw as an inert lesbian and gay politics that commonly refused to admit anyone into its ranks who did not subscribe to an inflexible homosexual politics of identity."[15] They, instead, aimed to embrace all stigmatised and marginalised individuals who did not conform to the requirements of heteronormative ideologies. In this way, Queer emerges as an umbrella term as it is ungendered and welcomes many identities such as cross-dressers, drag queens, hermaphrodites and so on. Queer is an attack to the heteronormative term 'homosexual' and the facile passive-aggressiveness of 'gay.'

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[15] Bristow, Joseph, "Gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer and transgender criticism." **The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: Twentieth-Century Historical, Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives**. Knellwolf, Christa and Christopher Norris, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001, p.219.

That which emerged as Queer Theory in the 1990's, roughly aimed for rethinking of the relations between subjectivity, sexuality and representation. Queer is composed of a vast space of research on cultural and theoretical endeavour on lesbian and gay identities. A post-structuralist evaluation of gay liberationist and lesbian feminist understanding of identity has been life-giving to Queer theory. Queer refers to nothing stable. It opens up a space for multiple identities that are made of ambivalent sexualities. Queer is

> … at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. *There is nothing particular to which it necessarily refers.* It is an identity without an essence. 'Queer' then, demarcates not a positivity but a positionality *vis-à-vis* the normative... [Queer] describes a horizon of possibility whose precise extent and heterogeneous scope cannot in principle be delimited in advance.[16]

For queer theorists, categories of sexuality cannot be defined simply by a process of opposition, heterosexuality/ homosexuality. Drawing on post-structuralist insights into human subjectivity, individual sexuality for Queer theorists is also fluid, fragmented and dynamic collection of possible sexualities. Thus, sexuality is directly determined neither by biological sex nor by gender roles. It seems that sexuality defines norms and has a creativity of its own. Jagose claims that the ambiguity of 'Queer' is its main characteristic, as queer studies analyse mismatches between sex, gender and desire.[17] Richardson and Seidman point to the factors forming sexual identities, such as gender, class, race, and nationality; they argue that there is no universal experience of being gay, and therefore, "Queer approaches to identity emphasize the fluid, performative character of identities"[18] For Halperin, Queer is a positionality rather than an identity; it does not cover only gays and lesbians, but can be taken up by anyone who is sexually marginalised.[19] Jakobsen argues that queer should be taken as a verb rather than a noun to signify that it is not being but doing.[20]

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[16] Halperin, David. M., **Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography**, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995, p. 62.
[17] Jagose, Annamarie. **Queer Theory: An Introduction**, New York : New York UP, 1996, p. 3.
[18] Richardson, Diane and Steven Seidman, Eds. "Introduction", **Handbook of Lesbian and Gay Studies**, London; Thousand Oaks, 2002, p. 5.
[19] Halperin, David M., **Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography**. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995, p.
[20] Jakobsen, Janet R., "Queer is? Queer does?: Normativity and the problem of resistance", **GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies**, Vol. 4, No: 4, 1998, pp. 511-36, (Online) http://glq.dukejournals.org/content/4/4/511.citation, 15 January 2014.

Analogously, Michael Warner states that Queer is not just a resistance to the norm but an undoing of the norm to reveal its constructedness.[21]

In this way, Queer is also a deconstructive strategy. The idea that heterosexuality is the natural effect of one's identity is a classic example of Western metaphysics. Queer theorists rejected the strictly constructed sexual identity by expanding its web even beyond gay and lesbian studies to destabilize accepted sexual categories. Queer theory also takes on from post-structuralism in breaking the illusion of constructed nature of all classifications in terms of biological sex, sexuality and gender. Donald E. Hall argues that: "… It is to abrade the classifications, to sit athwart conventional categories or traverse several… We are all athwart if we expose and repudiate some of the comforting lies told about us and that we tell ourselves."[22] Queer theory emphasizes the revelation of the disrupted and the constructed nature of everything which individuals experience as fractured in the twenty-first century. Queer theory also develops from lesbian criticism which has split off from feminism because it failed to represent the lesbian presence in literature adequately. Lesbian critics claimed that there is a common lesbian identity that is shared by all lesbians and reflected in certain ways in literary texts. However, in the 1990's, some lesbian critics began to reject this essentialism and came to regard sexual identities as social constructs to be deconstructed. Sexual categories are considered to be constructs of repressing and ordering discourses. Multiple sexual orientations are all welcomed and are positioned in such a way that none of them is privileged over the other. This is not simply to dethrone heterosexuality which was considered to be one and only 'natural' form of sexuality but to undermine this assumption and to reveal that its being considered as 'natural' is itself a social construct. Human sexuality spans beyond the genital activity of the opposite sexes. It is an ever going process of sexual acts and theorizing that does not need to be essentially defined in a certain way. In short, there is no truth of sex other than what people make of it.

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[21] Warner, Michael, **Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory**, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p. 58.
[22] Hall, Donald E., **Transitions: Queer Theories**, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p. 13.

2. A SINGLE MAN

The 1960's in the United States saw dramatic changes in attitudes towards sexuality. One of the most fundamental reasons being the introduction of the contraceptive pill which gave women the freedom to make decisions about their own bodies which they had been long since denied. They had the chance to have sexual intercourse without the fear of having unwanted pregnancy. The women could now follow higher education and get better careers. The contraceptive pill caused an increase in the number of women who had sexual intercourse before marriage. What was crucial was that the new conceptualizing of human sexuality in regard to the female body was largely freed from social constraints. Women came to own their bodies and that resulted in new perspectives in human sexuality. The erotic was believed to be celebrated as a part of life and not repressed by social constructs. However, for homosexuals the situation was not much different from earlier times. Homosexuality was still regarded as a sexual deviance and families were warned to control their children of homosexual assaults.[1]

Homosexuals many ways to resist heteronormativity throughout the 1960s. Frank Kameny's Mattachine Society campaigned openly for gay rights as the emerging homophile movement worked to subvert the dominant psychiatric views of homosexuality.[2] Various gay activist groups of the time emphasized that the homosexual oppression originates from a social pattern of strict definitions of gender which make men and women to accept social roles. It was the language used that represented homosexuals as 'deviants'. However, it was not until the Stonewall Riots in 1969 in which a group of gay bar-goers resisted the police raids to bars that the demand by homosexuals for equality gained support from different parts of the society.

Christopher Isherwood's (1904-1986) **A Single Man** (1964), takes place in such a tumultuous climate of social change in America. The novel records one day in the life of George Falconer, a professor of English coming to terms with his sexuality

[1] Stacy Braukman, "Nothing Else Matters but Sex: Cold War Narratives of Deviance and the Search for Lesbian Teachers in Florida, 1959-1963," **Feminist Studies**, Vol. 3, No. 27, 2001, pp. 553–575, (Online) http://www.jstor.org/stable/3178804?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents, 14 January 2014.
[2] Nardi,Peter, **Growing Up Before Stonewall: Life Stories of Some Gay Men**, New York and London: Routledge, 1994, p. 13.

and his lost lover. The tone of the novel is mostly gloomy but at times hopeful for the changes that have been taking place. Many families start to settle in California to start a new life with hopes of a good future. However, their sense of a bohemian life in paradise eventually fails. The American dream reveals itself to be the very traditional life of making children and working.

Isherwood, through the character George reveals the advent of the homosexual male in society by questioning heterosexual identities. With the universal emblems of the traditional family (Garfeins and Strunks), haunting the whole novel, heterosexuality as a social product that forms and controls every layer of social life is criticized. George is neither a hero nor a protagonist, but his being just a homosexual, one of the many is what makes this struggle to live so valuable and poignant. Just as he is imprisoned in a literal and metaphorical island, heterosexist society constructs various invisible prisons for everyone who loses touch with their own bodies and thus their sexualities. **A Single Man** forms a circular pattern in defining a self by constructing the male body in its simplest form that is the flesh. The novel starts with George's metaphorical rebirth into the language to write his body and his sexuality as they are without the medium of language. Isherwood emphasizes the senses and pleasures of the individual prior to placing him in the society. Only in this way is the individual is capable of feeling and knowing his body and thereby able to develop a better identity that originates in him. The individual should not be subjected to the social constructions that imprison him. The very beginning of the novel points to this tension between the fluid and multiple senses and desires of the body and the ordered and stable language that shapes the body in the very way that it has. Before the metaphorical birth into the language, the individual is described as only a biological organism with the complex description of its workings. When it wakes up to the world of language, it is born into a web of existent constructions. Émile Benveniste claimed that the subject position in language designated by the pronouns does not refer to a physical entity outside language. He considers that

> *I* cannot be defined except in terms of 'locution', not in the terms of objects as a nominal sign is. *I* signifies 'the person who is uttering the present instance of the discourse containing *I*'… *I* can only be identified by the

> instance of discourse that contains it and by that alone. It has no value except in the instance of which it is produced.[3]

In the vey formation of a linguistic production the speaker gains subjectivity and this subject is never the actual one who is speaking. Instead, the physical entity, the body that is outside the language is lost. The subject pronouns do not refer to the body but refer to themselves. The language comes to represent the loss of the body. George has to give up the multiple senses originating from his body to be defined in language as George.

George does not wake up with a full consciousness of his body instead he metaphorically forgets his body in order to wake up. His body when it is not defined in language is described as a thing. The waking up of the body that is inhuman and sexless, first is given in highlighted biological tones:

> ... the cortex, the grim disciplinarian, has taken its place at the central control and has been testing them one after another; the legs stretch, the lower back is arched, the fingers clench and relax... The body levers itself from the bed.[4]

An organism literarily and metaphorically comes alive. We know it through the language as "it." It appears to be a mechanical being that is fully autonomous and perfect in itself as the elaborated details suggest. The question raised is do we really know this organism through the net of language? This body itself lies at the very core of its own identity. It has the capacity to know itself and has the sense of its existence only through returning to itself, feeling the great mechanism that continuously gives life to it. However, the social world requires that this body enter into the larger constructions that precede it. They are made possible by language and cannot represent the body as a mechanical autonomous organism. This consequentially will lead to an intuitive awakening.

George's metaphorical rebirth corresponds to Jacques Lacan's theory of the formation of the ego in the early years of a child. For Lacan, the ego that the infant forms is the result of the conflict between the perceived visual image and the

[3] Benveniste, Emile, **Problems in General Linguistics**, USA: University of Miami Press, 1976, p. 218.
[4] Isherwood, Christopher, **A Single Man**, London: Vintage Books, 2010, p. 1.

emotional experience before the perception of that image. At six months, the baby lacks the sense of co-ordination and completeness of his/her own body. However, when the baby perceives his/her reflected image in the mirror or the completeness of the mother's body, this causes a sense of fragmentation in the infant and in an aggressive tension, the infant chooses to identify himself/ herself with the image. The Ego is thus formed as an image of the actual one, a fictional self is produced.[5] This is called the mirror stage. In the symbolic order, the infant enters the cultured world. He/ she enters into the language in which the subject is formed. Like the mirror stage that cuts the ties with the actual body, entry into the language in the symbolic order causes the infant's loss or lack of the sense of being in union with the mother's body. For the subject formation of the infant, he/ she has to differantiate himself/ herself from the outer world which becomes the other. This is the very nature of language for it is through a system of differences that produces the subject. George looks at himself in the mirror and recognizes himself as a mirror image, a copy of his actual body. The image that the subject assumes to be real has nothing to do with the body as it is just an image. It is a secondary representation of the body as is the language that represents the body. In this representation, various mechanisms and sensations of the body are lost. His body comes to be replaced with the construct of the language. What George sees in his image is the very nature of language that is made of differences: "… it sees many faces within its face. – the face of a child, the boy, the young man, the not-so-young man – all present still, preserved like fossils, dead. Their message this live dying creature is: Look at us – we have died…"[6] The past reflexions of his own face come back to him threatening and also preserving the actual mirror image. George is all of them but is none of them at the same time. The mind comes to know the body through language in the structure of the binary oppositions. Thus to be alive is negated to being dead. Only in this way the living body can be represented in language as the organism is referred to as "a live dying creature", pointing to the differential nature of language. To identify the living body, there must be a negation of it. Moreover, to represent the body in language, it has to be located in time: "*Now* isn't simply now. *Now* is a cold remainder one whole day

[5] Lacan, Jacques, **Ecrits: A Selection**, Tr. Alan Sheridan, London: Routledge, 1989.
[6] Isherwood, Christopher, **A Single Man**, London: Vintage Books, 2010, p. 1.

later than yesterday… every *now* is labelled with its date, rendering all past *nows* obsolete…"[7] To perceive now, one has to have an idea of what is not "now" and thus "now" bares traces of past and future to have a meaning in the signification system.

George's mirror image reminds of him the death of Jim for the entry into language is made possible through the lack or the loss of the mother's body. In the case of George, this loss is metaphorically the devastatingly sudden loss of Jim, his partner. His remembrances of his existence are that of a harmonious union of their bodies with their emphasized activeness:

> … two people, living together day after day, year after year, in this small space, standing elbow to elbow cooking at the same small stove, squeezing past each other on the narrow stairs, shaving in front of the same small bathroom mirror, constantly jogging, jostling, bumping each other's bodies...sensually, aggressively, awkwardly, impatiently, in rage and or in love…[8]

These two bodies manage to exist through their own energetic mechanisms. This sense of life, erupting from the body is emphasized with the words "jogging, jostling and bumping" as in the detailed depiction of the biological mechanism of the body earlier. Moreover, the image of the kitchen and cooking further gives the sense of the bodily heat that they create and fuel the energy to live.

However, George has to leave the home, full of memories of Jim, the place that once connected their bodies within its intimate space. As opposed to the emphasized smallness of the home and the union of their (George and Jim's) bodies, in the entry into the society, language cuts the ties between the child and the mother. When going out into the social word, George is cut off from Jim and the house which together take the place of the mother. Thus, the body referred earlier as "it" becomes George and when it gets dressed it becomes a "he". Language as an existent construct absorbs the body and forms it into its own structure. Language has to identify, know and classify the body. Only through such phases the human is formed out of the flesh. As society is itself a construction of language, the individual and the sexuality of that individual becomes a social construct. George, however, resists being identified by language through clinging to the memory of Jim, and thus to the

[7] **Ibid.**, p. 1.
[8] **Ibid.**, p. 4.

sense of the body before the symbolic order. By not being fully absorbed into the system, he manages to view society from different perspectives.

George reveals the constructed nature of the society in which he lives. His starts with his home which is perceived by his neighbourhood through the fictive; it is "shaggy with ivy and dark and secret looking" as found in children's stories, with George himself playing the role of "a mean old story-book monster."[9] This suggests that the individual and the practices of the society that hold them in stable and organized position is managed by the language through its own form. Georges sees through the fictive roles that everyone has to play and realizes their whole conduct in their lives is discursively constructed. By playing the roles, they continuously create and recreate the very nature of language that governs and controls them. George attacks traditional family life through the Garfeins and the Strunks who become the universal examples of a traditional family in which the mother sacrifices herself to support and perpetuate the notion of family as the core of society.

George sees that it has become the Garfeins' and Strunks' habit to define and know him as the language does the body. Mr. Garfein nails George with a simple word, "queer" and does not care what George does as long as he is out of their way. Mrs. Strunk relies much on science as she reads from her psychology book on raising her children and on living with homosexuals. George is almost never amongst them, but watching their daily routines from his home as an outsider or as "the fiend", "the gorgon", "the vampire" and "the bad-smelling beast."[10] As two parties, George and the traditional families are strictly differentiated from one another. They are structured like binary oppositions as they depend on one another to exist. As much as the families condemn George, they need his 'perversity' to confirm their 'normality' and in the same way, George is positioned in contrast to the heterosexual families to differentiate his sexuality from heterosexuality. George is literally and metaphorically single as opposed to the plurality of the family as microcosm of society, yet he manages to threaten their existence by his 'perversity'. This is the only way that language works and once the individuals are placed in the society, they are formed in this way. However, as the example of the self-sacrificing mother, Mrs.

[9] **Ibid.**, p. 5.
[10] **Ibid.**, p. 15.

Strunk proves neither the heterosexist families nor the single homosexual benefits from this binary structure wholly although heterosexuality is privileged in comparison homosexuality. Within this binary structure, it is ironical that only Mrs. Strunk comes to actualize a proper dialogue with George though she is hardly willing.

The communication or rather just a connection with the 'pervert' made by Mrs. Strunk is only for the sake of keeping her family intact as her '**Bible**', the psychology book instructs. Mrs. Stunk plays the role of a priest in 'excommunicating' or driving 'the devil' out of George or at least, keeping it away from the sacred family supported by religion. George notices that instead of bell and candle used to excommunicate one, now there is the science to know, control and marginalize the 'pervert'. As much as Mrs. Strunk avoids seeing George, her discourse centres on his 'perversity'. Mrs. Strunk armed with her psychology book resembles a combination of a priest and a doctor, preaching the sanctioned discourse of orthodoxy both religious and pathologizing. These discourses are constructed through extensive endeavour on knowing, indentifying and controlling the 'sickness' and the 'sick'. Michel Foucault in a series of writings on subjectivity, language and the body, stressed the discursive aspect of language. For Foucault, discursive productions are never innocent for they are woven out of certain power relations that become universal 'truths.' These discourses then are the very products of certain ideologies and at the same perpetuators of them. For Foucault, the homosexual is a discursive construct which originated in the medical discourses of the nineteenth century. He claims that:

> The nineteenth century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood in addition to being a type of life, a life form and a morphology, with and indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality. It was everywhere present in him; at the root of all his actions… written immodestly on the face and the body… Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior... the sodomite was a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.[11]

[11] Foucault, Michel, **The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction**. New York: Vintage, 1990, p. 56.

Before the nineteenth century, the homosexual was considered to be defined by the sexual acts performed. What counted were the acts, not the actual personages. However, with the growing body of medical discourses, homosexuality, with other 'perverse' inclinations became an identity. The homosexual became known only through his sexuality and his sexuality in turn made him the 'pervert'. The homosexual man has no other trait than his sexual practices. By taking on the role of a priest and a doctor, Mrs. Strunk becomes the agent who exercises power over the 'abnormal' who she can know, control and regulate. In the very process, however, she gives up her own body and sexuality to the hegemonic heterosexuality that traps her in the family as the mother.

Indeed, the one who is actually reduced to mere fictive puppet of the system is Mrs Strunk rather than George. She continuously suppresses the notion of fleshly sexuality that is aroused by the image of George and Jim as 'perverts' for they are outside the social conventions and thus the language. Their 'pervert' nature suggests polymorphous sexuality that the symbolic regulates and orders. Mrs. Strunk functions as the medium to translate the actual sensations and pleasures of the body into medical discourses to know, control and diffuse. In this process, her own body and sexuality are denied and sacrificed to the sanctity of motherhood. She lets the hegemony destroy her identity and proliferates the very medical discourse that also bans her own body. She relies much on knowledge and wants to know more about the very nature of the 'illness' that George suffers because of his 'deviant' desires to control and oppress homosexual behaviour. Knowing and writing down the knowledge acquired by scientific ways to be proliferated operates as an exertion of power that stems from various sources and suppresses various individuals in a complex manner.

Language, though it functions as a directive power over desires and bodily sensations, it is not stable in itself, as the participants to production of discourses have the ways to change it. George, through the course of a single day deconstructs the various roles that are given to him in order to resist the stable identities that are discursively produced and at the same to parody the society by revealing their

constructedness. On his drive to work an "anonymous chauffeur-figure" suddenly forms itself out of him. This figure is quite different from the middle aged, ageing man. Meanwhile, George fantasises about the revenge that he would take on enemies as being "Uncle George". Walking to his class, he is the homosexual enjoying sexual attractive bodies of the two tennis players. At lunch, he is the expatriate British professor who defends the American culture at the university and deconstructs his own materiality as he thinks he could be all a "severed head" to lecture in the classroom "from a dish". In the classroom, he still assumes various roles as he becomes an actor, carefully planning his entrance and the attention of his audience. When he is lecturing, his voice changes from the "hammy" to "the voice of a judge, summing up and charging the jury" and even becoming "an attendant at a carnival booth, encoring the crowd to throw and smash their targets."[12] George manages to play many roles out of simple conviction. He becomes an expert at quickly changing and adopting many roles as a defence to the strict order in society. Although this defence seems to be a passive conformity, beneath this, George definitely harbours frustration and anxiety. The brutal image of his severed head, the judge who condemns and from whom one expects justice and an adoption of a robotic personality reveal how society orders the 'perverts' by ongoing judgment and condemnation to mould them into robot-like organisms that would function as the perpetuators of the established system. In expressing his deep seated anger, the very images that he uses to describe the roles he takes up are also mere manifestations of his own punishment by his own hands within the very ways of the society of which he is critical.

The kind of the roles that Gorge plays when he is driving to the university further reveals the power relations in the society. The "chauffeur figure" which is almost like robot as it is senseless with its mechanical working initiates this process. The roles that he assumes are the figures who construct and proliferate the heteronormative order. "Uncle George" is the fascist dictator figure which is used to attract men to war as a positive sign of masculinity, causing deaths of millions for nothing. The British professor appears to be the colonizing English state, bringing

[12] Isherwood, Christopher, **A Single Man**, London: Vintage Books, 2010, p. 22.

the ‘light’ to the ‘savage’ people of America. In this context, the professor represents the science of the ‘natural’ sexual intercourse used against homosexuals to marginalize them because of their sexuality that is ‘against’ nature. The judge is openly connected with the legal processes concerning homosexuals in the history. The homosexual comes to be defined only by his ‘pervert’ sexuality through the legal and medical discourses. Thus, the judge is the one who maintains the system by persecuting homosexuals. The attendant in a carnival booth is like an ideological state apparatus that functions as a controller of a demonstration that everyone laughs at. In this case, the thing to be laughed at is George’s ‘pervert’ sexuality. In this way, the fragility and the constructedness of these roles are revealed.

George continues his day, wearing masks to hide his ‘monstrous’ homosexuality and to avoid the ugly judgment of rebuff of society as other more or less in the same way have to put on their own masks when they interact with one another. In this respect, George questions not only how a homosexual man should be received by the society but also the reasons why everyone has to give their own identities in a social interactions. There are many profiles which the reader comes to scan through George. The Garfeins, the Strunks, the students and the professors are players of roles that are discursively constructed. This is the great discrepancy between the actual male and female bodies and the existent identity forms that are forced upon individuals. To a great extent, various complex social constructions control the individual, making him/ her loose contact with him/ her own physical reality and force him/ her to adopt certain forms of character that must be adopted all their lives. This reality underlies the gloomy, lifeless atmosphere of the greater communities the reader perceives through George’s eyes.

In this way, George as a character enfleshes not only a homosexual but also a universal figure that is at odds with the system. His sexuality is given as a secondary trait of his formation but it is his sexuality that makes him see beyond the present construction of the society. By not emphasizing his homosexuality, Isherwood through the figure of George, captures a human struggle for life with which everyone can easily sympathize. George transcends the boundaries of gayness. In this way, he introduces examination of the individual and the society with little use of sexuality. His foremost problem is that of identities in general and to be a member of a

minority who have a critical view of the larger community. Brian Finney considers how one gains identity within a minority:

> What gives everyone a sense of identity is membership of a minority. It segregates the living from the dead. It also isolates individual consciousness from the universal consciousness. It is responsible for George's courage in confronting the worst that life can offer him and for his loneliness, which is everyone's courage and everyone's loneliness.[13]

Indeed, George struggles mostly for his own life to escape literal and metaphorical death that haunts him throughout the novel. To be alive is to have the energy to force oneself into the community in which he has to be. This becomes also to face the oppression of the larger community by activating the body and bodily desires. George struggles much more for the emancipation of the individual that serves all the others than his own homosexuality. This struggle connotes the physical hardship that George actualizes as a return to the bodily sensations as opposed to the masses.

Among the 'lifeless', seemingly mass-produced humans that George encounters at the university campus he partly manages to slip away from this plastic reality. He is a closeted gay man who is coming to terms with his own homosexuality, questioning the place of the individuality in society. His sexual urges activate the sense of his own body at intervals. He constantly resists being defined and controlled by language. The scene when he comes across two men playing tennis in the very midst of the 'mass-produced' students, parallels the early part of the novel where George was remembering how he and Jim had lead a life of vitality with the highlighted bodily movements of the two. Within the depressing atmosphere of the 'mass-produced' humans, these two male tennis players appear as lively and energetic as George and Jim:

> Only one court is occupied, by the two young men playing singles... The two are stripped nearly naked. They have nothing on their bodies but rubber gym boots and the knit shorts of the kind that cyclist wear, very short and close-fitting, moulding themselves to the buttocks and the loins. They are absolutely unaware of the passers-by, isolated in the intentness of their

[13] Finney, Brian, **Christopher Isherwood: A Critical Biography**, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 254.

> game… Their nakedness makes them seen close to each other and directly opposed body to body like fighters.[14]

This vivid image of the two men who are almost naked intensifies the bodily energy that gives life to one another. George sees their bodies not their identities. The body with its energy lies at the core of producing the identity as opposed to the language that controls it. The tennis players like fighters are in a harmonious movement with one another. They form a union that is fuelled by the energy of their bodies and that in turn fuels to form their identities. At the very moment when George enjoys the view of the two tennis players, he feels that his speaking mind is severed from his body and is talking like somebody else's head which suggest the constructedness of any given social situation However, he can still sense and even sense much better the desires and pleasures that the two tennis players evoke in him. Being able feel in the way that he does and acknowledging the desire that is produced in him is the basis in the formation of a self. A self is primarily multiple desires as in the psychoanalytic tradition of Freud, Lacan and Kristeva. A recognition of the multiple desires and pleasures is the starting point in order to form a self which is not something that given or fixed. Therefore, George finds a much better way of constructing a self through the intense sensations of desires and pleasures. The whole novel comes to demonstrate this process of formation.

Another instance where George manages to form a connection with his own body and others' is when he is in the gym where bodily activities are intense. George favours this little community to the larger communities because of its own ingenuity. His changing into sports outfits before working out metaphorically signals that he is entering a sub-culture that is outside the heteronormativity. The gym is foremostly a homoerotic place for it is composed of males who have strong social bonds between them and are attracted to the highly active male bodies around. However, homoeroticism is not the only element that makes it different from the outer world. George finds the kind of energy to live that he got from the two tennis players. This is not only because of the fact that he finds them sexually attractive but also there is

[14] Isherwood, Christopher, **A Single Man**, London: Vintage Books, 2010, p. 37.

something activating the inner senses and sensations that are mostly regulated and moulded into heteronormative requirements. This is also the situation with the other males at the gym. They may have homosexual desires that they themselves are not even aware of but the physical attractiveness of the male body is not simply sexual. This atmosphere of the intense physical activities in a way lures them all to make a return to the oppressed desires which may have varying goals other than women or men. This in turn forces them to vent what is oppressed in the very form of physical activities. It is a place as secluded as the one where two tennis players are and where a celebration of this returning to the bodily desires is made possible. However, this time it is done mutually between all the men who are there, not just passively by George.

George too notices that he is not the only one who is experiencing one of those epiphanic moments of awakening to the senses. In this sub-society what would be considered abnormal is welcomed without prejudices. One of the men, Buck is "nearly nude; his rolling belly bulges indecently over a kind of bikini, pushing it clear down to the bush line."[15] This depiction with the bulging, rolling belly and the bikini revealing the upper part of the genital subverts the image of a manly man who is expected to be found in a gym. His bulging belly and bikini are overtly related to the female body and connote fleshly female sexuality. No matter how it appears to be 'monstrous' in the heteronormative order, it is considered quite normal in the gym. In contrast to Buck, Rick who has "… a very well-made muscular body, wears a grey wools sweatshirt and pants, covering all…"[16] appears to be quite normal within the standards of the heteronormative order. What is subverting is the co-existence of the two in the same place and their welcoming of George in the most genuine way he has ever received. The gym proves itself to be a community simply composing of not just 'perverts' but of varying characters. The community formed at the gym strips the individuals from the discursively constructed differences. It welcomes everyone just because they are essentially human. Various types of males who would not stand each other out in the heteronormative order here get on well. For example, Rick adopts different discourses to different audiences. Apart from his adult discourse, he

[15] **Ibid.**, p. 84.
[16] **Ibid.**

has a different discourse for boys in which he becomes "a village idiot".[17] Rick does the things that would be considered abnormal in the heteronormative order. He deconstructs the existing roles and goes from one to another. George, too when he is accompanied with Webster, a teenage boy, does not address him as a teenage boy in the way that he would do in the outer world. In a way George becomes his 'peer' and at the same time Webster becomes an 'adult' in their little conversation. Furthermore, George observers that "the god-like basketball player", "the plump banker", "well-known actors" and "the youngest kids"[18] are all stripped from socially given roles to mere individuals who are in the process of constructing their own experimental community. In this "easy-going physical democracy"[19] multiple and flowing desires are not banned or regulated but instead they are made free to flow. The whole novel argues that one must first find ways to communicate better with the fleshy bodies through desires and pleasures and afterwards should sexuality come.

These epiphanic moments which George has been experiences totalizes in the character of Kenny. He is outside the social construct. He manages to attract George sexually but also intellectually. George cannot help but be magnetized by his powers as they come across with one another repeatedly in a short time. George feels empowered by their meeting and wishes to form a dialogue with him yet every time he comes close to voice his desires, he fails. The 'unspeakable' becomes just that. Through the end of the novel, at a café, while George is about to reach a climax in their dialogue, in order to reveal his desires, he breaks off again. In every dialogue that they have, it is not clear what George actually wants to communicate to Kenny. It is not even clear that George actually knows what he wants to say. Ironically, language acts as a barrier to voicing himself or it seems that his homosexual desires cannot be voiced in proper language without being condemned as 'perverse'. Instead of wording his desires, Kenny's suggestion for a swim as a bodily act comes to say the 'unspeakable'. Instead of communicating through language, they talk through the desires evoked in themselves.

[17] **Ibid.**, p. 85.
[18] **Ibid.**
[19] **Ibid.**

Once George and Kenny are in the sea, they are not two male humans but become a part of the sea and one another. In this respect, the wild sea that is welcoming to both of them suggests the mother's womb and/ or all her body. It is a safe, secluded place which George has been looking for since the death of Jim. It is a return to the wholeness of the mother's body and thus to the multiple and flowing desires. In the psychoanalytic tradition, for Freud and Lacan, in the early ages, the infant cannot perceive itself as separate from the mother and its environment. The infant even does not have full control of its own body parts. The infant thus is dependant on the mother and for this reason.[20] This period comes before the entry into the langue therefore the infant is not yet positioned in the cultured world. This period is thus marked by pre-linguistic communication between the infant and the mother that depends on body language. In the same way, George and Kenny cannot resist the temptation of the sea for they unconsciously have been looking for the lack or the loss of the mother's body. In the course of the novel, George constantly looked for and attracted with the bodily union with the ones whom he had substituted with his mother. He returned and returned to the rhythmical, energetic bodily activities that are repressed in the social order governed by language. This scene becomes the most effective of all and in a sense signals the culmination of the seeking for the loss object of desire.

This episode is heavily loaded with the pre-linguistic sense of an infant modelled on the traditional psychoanalytic theories. Kenny gets naked with "wild whooping cries" as if in a frenzy and once in water he becomes "a water-creature absorbed in its own element."[21] George is at first cautious but cannot resist the attraction of the energy that stems from the hurling waves and the nakedness of Kenny. The sea is itself unnaturally wild both welcoming and dangerous at the same time. The waves seem "… tremendous, towering up, blackness unrolling itself from blackness, mysteriously and awfully sparkling…"[22] The emphasized sense of instability and the blackness is in great contrast to the orderly world of language. Being in the sea and the instability of it points to the losing of the demarcations of

[20]Grosz, Elizabeth, **Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction**, England: Clays Ltd., 1991, p. 52.
[21]Isherwood, Christopher, **A Single Man**, London: Vintage Books, 2010, p. 131.
[22]**Ibid.**

the body that is made possible by the entry into the language. With the sparkling of the foam on his body George celebrates the wilderness, the frenzy that he is in. George feels that "… he washes away thought, speech, mood, desire, whole selves, entire lifetimes; again and again he returns, becoming always cleaner, freer, less."[23] The identity that language gives completely dissolves in this metaphoric return to the pre-linguistic stage. Only in this way, George finds a true connection with Kenny. What is failed by the speaking is achieved through a return to the body that is not yet represented by language.

The black and wild sea also acts as a strong metaphor for the unconscious. In the psychoanalytic tradition, unconscious has always been related to the dark, the unknown and the unstable. Freud considers the unconscious as the repository of the oppressed desires, thus a source of traumas, whereas Lacan considerers it as part of the conscious and that it is already structured like language.[24] Following Lacan, Julia Kristeva defines her own term, *chora* as a state before the signification that has corporeal the libidinal material. The infantile drives of this state are not stabilised and have no certain aims, sources and objects.[25] Kristeva's *chora* is close to the Freudian unconscious. In the particular scene that has been discussed so far, it seems that the sea is a metaphor for George's unconscious. George places himself like a child "… within the safeness of Kenny's bigness."[26] He goes back to infantile time before the entry into the symbolic as he becomes attached to the mother and forms a union with her body. The desire for this lack or loss is still restored in the unconscious or in the *chora* that makes it felt through ruptures in the ordered language. Kenny becomes metaphorically the mother who immediately turns into "a water-creature absorbed in its own element."[27] He breaks with the linguistic representation of his body and becomes a part of the sea. In this process, George describes his body as distorted. Kenney's body loses its own demarcations represented by langue and changes into what is perceived by the infant in the *chora*:

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[23] **Ibid.**, p. 32.
[24] Lacan, Jacques, **Ecrits: A Selection**, Tr. Alan Sheridan, London: Routledge, 1989, p. 55.
[25] Kristeva, Julia, "Revolution in the Poetic Langauage," Ed. Toril Moi, Tr. Leon S. Roudiez, **The Kristeva Reader**, 1986, p. 94.
[26] Isherwood, Christopher, **A Single Man**, London: Vintage Books, 2010, p. 133.
[27] **Ibid.**, p. 131.

> Kenny's body seems to have grown gigantic since they left the water. Everything about him is larger than life; the white teeth of his grin, the wide dripping shoulders, the tall slim torso with its heavy-hung sex, and the long legs, now beginning to shiver.[28]

George cannot perceive Kenny's body in its wholeness instead he seems to have developed a better sensory vision for his body parts that he has not has before. Moreover, George cannot discern the demarcations of their bodies until they are completely out of the water.

However, as they go away from the sea, the effect of the scene fades. They are once again born into the symbolic when they wear their clothes and walk into the city. When they are at home, George stars lecturing again but cannot come the actual point that he wants to make. In his lecture, he unwillingly defers the thing that he actually wants to say. His desire for Kenny cannot be voiced. Finally, George likens himself a book that Kenny has to read if he has the capacity to do so. However, Kenny leaves him alone whereas George indulges in thinking about Kenny, Charlotte, Jim and going back to England. George starts to sleep in a short time and his body slowly dies. The novel's tracing of the process from metaphorical birth to the actual death of George suggests a circular structure in presenting a self that the author intends to present. A self is not a given when born into the language governed society but is a perpetual circular process in which one discovers something new each time one takes the voyage into the deeper levels of various discourses of which self is made. A self that is questioned never belongs to the self. George may seem to have failed in producing a self that he wishes to have but what matters is the process he goes through his passage of rites that enabled him to create himself.

[28] **Ibid.**

3. THE SWIMMING POOL LIBRARY

Alan Hollinghurst's first novel, **The Swimming-Pool Library** (1988), is an openly homosexual novel that takes place in the summer of 1983. It was when the Conservative government was very strict in regard to gay rights. The age of consent for homosexual activity was eighteen. It was forbidden to cruise and have sexual encounters in public places for gay men. Society was both racist and homophobic as the National Front was on the rise. AIDS, till then causing a few deaths, was to turn into an epidemic, causing a Western dilemma rather than a gay-related disease. Westerners regarded AIDS as a disease of African origin which never took hold in Western civilization. Hollinghurst takes the reader to the very advent of the AIDS epidemic; to "... the last summer of its kind there was ever to be."[1]

A large part of the novel is concerned with the sexual decadence of the period just before AIDS. At the centre of the novel is William Beckwith, a vain and handsome, twenty-five year old aristocrat with his fortune from his grandfather, Viscount Beckwith. William lives a life of leisure, frequenting the Corinthian Club where he occasionally swims and picks up men. William saves the life of a Lord Nantwich who is having a heart attack in a public lavatory. As they get to know each other, Lord Nantwich asks William to write his biography and supplies him with necessary documents. William is at first resistant for he simply cannot give up on his leisure that he has been enjoying for so long.

The reader follows William's adventures through the clubs, cinemas and back alleys of London. William has sexual intercourse with almost every character appearing in the novel but he manages to have two relationships that are close to being romantic, first with Arthur and then with Phil. Slowly, William falls in love with Phil, a closeted man admired by many at the Corinthian Club. At the same time, William gets to know Nantwich who enfleshes troublesome times for the homosexuals in the history of Britain. Lord Nantwich reveals that William has to acknowledge homosexual suffering that has a long history.

Nantwich was born in 1900, 15 years after the Labouchère Amendment which meant the criminalisation of homosexual activity both in public and private.

[1] Hollinghurst, Alan, **The Swimming-Pool Library**, London: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 3.

Thus, he comes to be the emblem of the homosexual suffering. In spite of living under oppression, his life, covering a whole period from 1900 to 1983, is richer and has great density compared to that of William. Charles Nantwich is a raped school boy during the 1st Word War; later a colonial administrator in Africa; a novice homosexual open to experiences in London during the 2nd World War; but becomes a victim in the oppressive climate of the 1950's; and finally a philanthropist in the 1960's. Compared to William, he is all that William is not.

When William stars to read the fragmented writings of Lord Nantwich, he embarks on a journey in his present life and the past lives of the homosexuals in Britain. On the way to developing his own identity as a homosexual and of homosexuals in general, William epitomizes the young male homosexual who is thrown into the times of the flourishing 1980's from Nineteenth Century when criminalisation and medicalisation of homosexual identity took place. William acts as a homosexual whose whole identity becomes his criminal and 'pervert' sexuality. With an endless craving for casual sex, he becomes the illegal and 'perverted' homosexual in the very sense that constructed in the late Nineteenth Century. The tension of the novel, which is between William and Lord Nantwich, lies at bridging the gap from the 1900's to the 1980's to force William to become a homosexual male who is not identified only by his excessive sexual activity by reading the material given to him and the actual personages around him. Given that he lacks homosexual predecessors, the young William must go through Charles's experiences by reading, which forms a sharing between the two, to write himself into the history of homosexuality to place himself into that history and to provide a link from the late-nineteenth-century to the eighties.

William spends most of his time in the subterranean parts of the city which are allocated to homosexuals, away from the sun-lighted and 'rational' world which heterosexuals occupy. He mostly travels by underground, he frequents a subterranean gay bar, his flat is never depicted in the sun light, his friend James and his lover Phil live in cozy flats and finally there is The Corinthian Club where he frequently visits. The most cavernous part of the club is the swimming pool where William swims and picks up men. Thus William's life is composed of loitering and having casual sex in a variety of locations but always he is away from the heterosexual contact. Les

Brookes likens him to a modern vampire; "... like the vampire he leads a loitering, leisure class way of life that could be seen parasitic."[2] Indeed, William abuses his lovers who are socially and financially inferior to him. His incessant sexual desire becomes all of his identity and that makes him a parasite to heterosexual world for he is largely defined by his sexuality that still deemed to be immoral and considered to be a disease. Joseph Bristow sees the novel as "both a tribute to a distinguished tradition to a homophile writing and a troubling work of mourning for a brief period of liberated sexual practises that – in the light of the epidemic- came to an end."[3] However, the novel is not in the least celebration of "liberated sexual acts" but more of excessive sexual abuses of a young vain and selfish aristocrat who knows nothing of homosexual oppression, even in his own time. Parallel to that, Bristow regards the phrases "summer that is the last of its kind" and "faint flicker of calamity" as an allusion to the approaching AIDS epidemic. However, Ross Chambers thinks that these phrases do not simply refer to AIDS but have wider suggestiveness regarding the whole novel. She contends that "the flicker is in William's conscience: a slight realization of his own inability to perform the radical acts that would profoundly change the world"[4] and his "complicity with the controlling power."[5] William is free to enjoy his sexuality but this excessive sexuality usurps all of his identity and makes him no more than the stigmatised homosexual.

As much as William's *environs* seems to be the places which are clearly separated from the heterosexual world, The Swimming pool in the Corinthian Club[6]

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[2] Brookes, Les. **Gay Male Fiction Since Stonewall: Ideology, Conflict, and Aesthetics**. New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 132.
[3] Bristow, Joseph. **Effeminate England: Homoerotic Writing after 1885**. Buckingham: Open UP, 1995, p. 172.
[4] Chambers, Ross. "Messing Around Gayness and Literature in Alan Hollinghurst's **The Swimming-Pool Library**." **Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices**. Ed. Judith Still and Michael Worton, Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993, p. 208.
[5] **Ibid.**, p.217.
[6] The Corinthian Club with its Greco-Roman architecture and it homoerotic atmosphere with naked males interacting socially and sexually is very reminiscent of a Greek *gymansium* in which males of all ages gathered to practice all kinds of sports naked. The word *gymnasium* means a place where men exercise naked. Apart from exercising, it is a place where men look for boys to satisfy their desires and appreciate their beauty; in return boys could or could not answer the advances made by men thus it is apparent that homosocial and sexual relations were considered quite natural and even sanctioned by the law in various city states.
Greek homosexuality was different from what we conceive of it now. It is generally accepted that it was a form of pederasty. A young boy usually from the age fourteen to twenty is placed in the hands of a man who is in very aspect superior to him and who was responsible for the youth's teaching and

is an exception with its homoerotic atmosphere in which almost every male member feels attracted to the male nudity. It is literarily and metaphorically an underground place isolated from the heteronormativity of the outside. It is a sub-society for males of all nations and sexual orientations in which William observes: "…network of unspoken loyalties, stolen and resented glances, ungainly gambits and humiliating crushes. This naked mingling … produced its own improper incitements to ideal liaisons, and polyandrous happenings which could not survive into the world of jacket and ties…"[7] It is a homoerotic sub-culture in which oppressed desires in the outer world can be followed freely. This is a kind of experimental process in which males have their own minds in creating and acting out new models of social interactions without heterosexist dictates. It is a fragmented and an on-going process for constructing another kind of society other than the oppressing heteronormative one. For William, this place has complexities of its own as does the outer one and is not lesser in value. Males manage to create homoerotic society on their own, out of touch with the heteronormativity.

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protecting and he was to serve as a model of courage, virtue and wisdom. He was called *eraster*, a lover and the youth *eromenos*, beloved. The Greek *paiderastia*, boy love, was accepted and celebrated in every layer of the symbolic construction of society. It was acknowledged and believed to be quite natural in mythology, literature, philosophy, law and politics.
In Aristophanes' (c. 450 BC-388 BC) *Clouds*, Socrates, as a character tries to convince a boy to enter his school, by presenting better and worse arguments.

> BETTER ARGUMENT: Very well, I will describe how the old education was managed, in the days when I and my just cause flourished and it was the done thing to be decent... At the gymnastic trainer's the boys, when they sat down, had to cover themselves with their thighs, so as not to expose to the onlookers anything that was—cruel; and then, when they stood up again, they had to smooth the sand down, and take care not to leave behind for their lovers the impress of their manhood. In those days, too, no boy would anoint himself below the navel, and so on their private parts there was a coat of dewy down like on quinces; nor would he water down his voice to speak tenderly to his lover and walk along making eyes and being his own pimp...
> ...
> BETTER ARGUMENT: ... you'll be spending your time in gymnasia, with a gleaming, blooming body, not in outlandish chatter on thorny subjects in the Agora like the present generation; nor in being dragged into court over some sticky, contentious, damnable little dispute; no, you will go down to the Academy, and under the sacred olive-trees, wearing a chaplet of green reed, you will start a race together with a good decent companion of your own age, fragrant with green-brier and catkin-shedding poplar and freedom from cares, delighting in the season of spring…If you do these things I tell you, and bend your efforts to them, you will always have a shining breast, a bright skin, big shoulders, a minute tongue, a big rump and a small prick…

[7] Hollinghurst, Alan. **The Swimming-Pool Library**, London: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 3.

However, William shuns even this homoerotic atmosphere to make proper relationships with the males but instead he opts for casual sex. The homoeroticism of the place means mostly for William sexual gratification. His appreciation of the whole situation around him is just sexuality that gives fast passing pleasures. There he finds "… stars of a physique magazine. There were Gods – demi-gods, at least…"[8] It is not a place for William to keep fit and to socialize but an underground gallery of naked male bodies set up to for his observation from which he chooses as he pleases to satisfy his desire. Most of the times, it is easy for him to get the boy whom he wants to have but sometimes his desire can be kindled with jealousy. For example, his attraction for Phil, in the first place, largely grows out of rivalry between him and Bill. In relations other than sexual ones, he does not become involved as he says: "I had learned to distance myself just in those moments when I felt them taking hold: I made myself regard them, and even more myself, with a careless, almost cynical detachment."[9] He avoids getting into long, multi-faceted relations. This is largely because of his social status. As he is an aristocrat, he doesn't have to work and as he is a homosexual, it is difficult for him to be in wider social circles other than the homosexual ones so William has almost no acknowledgement of social and moral responsibilities toward those whom he is sexually involved. He aspires a life of amoral self-sufficiency. His rejects to be in socially related to others. However, in the end, he sees that the life he aspires to is an allusion. To be a human, he must be socially involved. It becomes inescapable for him to engage with others and history.

Without the mediation of Lord Nantwich and James' diaries, it seems that William has no will to explore himself and others except following his intense will for sexual interaction. William gains experience not by going through the difficulties that life serves but by reading James' diary, Lord Nantwich's journals and the actual people in his life. Without them, William is unable to read various and overflowing significations in different contexts. When William gives life to Lord Nantwich, his touch, that is metaphorically life-giving, materializes the bodies that he has been exploiting and opens the world of texts that will eventually lead to new dimensions

[8] **Ibid.**, p.16.
[9] **Ibid.**, p. 4.

in knowing himself. William describes himself at the very beginning of the novel as something that flows between the two oppositions. He states that he is "a perfect Gemini, a child of the ambiguous early summer... one of the hedonist and the other… almost a scholarly figure with a Puritanic set to the mouth." [10] He admits that he has been living as hedonist who thinks nothing but his own fleshly pleasures and the side of him that he dismisses is the scholarly one who puts more importance on himself and through himself to others. Furthermore, he exposes his self-centredness when he rejects James' views of him expressed in his diary: "He had even said lately in his dairy that I was 'thoughtless' - he meant cruel… but then he got the idea into his head: Does Will care about anything? Does Will even really *think*? and so on and so forth…"[11]As much as he hates to be criticized, he cannot help wanting to know what James really thinks about him.

One source of forming a notion of his own character is James' diary that is full of statements concerning William's being vain and selfish. It is as if he wants to be punished for his self-centeredness yet he cannot avoid being the same person. This makes him nothing more than the homosexual who is only identified with his 'pervert' sexuality and 'immorality'. Because of his identity, he is the one who deserves continuous condemnation. His character is in parallel with the emergence of the homosexual as we know today portrayed in the work of Michel Foucault in his **History of Sexuality**.

Unlike previously thought, Foucault finds in various discourses of the Victorian age, an encouragement to talk about sex, an increasing quantity of discourses on sexuality. In the part titled "the repressive hypothesis", he rejects the common views that talk on sexuality was strictly prohibited and oppressed. In contrast, he contends that there exists a growing body of discourse, which are in fact knowledge-making processes that construct and categorise sexualities. The space of sexuality, for Foucault, is a historically constructed apparatus; a large system of morals, discourses, and procedures so as to control and preserve sexualities to the desired ends. Through these discourses, Foucault argues, sexuality

[10] **Ibid**.
[11] **Ibid**., p. 5.

> ...was driven out of hiding and constrained to lead a discursive existence. From the singular imperialism that compels everyone to transform their sexuality into a perpetual discourse, to the manifold mechanisms which, in the areas of economy, pedagogy, medicine, and justice, incite, extract, distribute, and institutionalize the sexual discourse, an immense verbosity is what our civilization has required and organized.[12]

Foucault exemplifies the medical discourses which stigmatise homosexuality through a science of perversion during the second half of the nineteenth century. Finally, for Foucault, homosexual as an identity "… appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species."[13] What has been a certain type of behaviour concerning sexuality such as sodomy, in the late-nineteenth-century becomes the whole identity of a person. Thus the homosexual is only identified with his sexuality. In this way, the homosexual is placed as opposed to the heterosexual as it is thought to be illegal and insane. In order to preserve the heterosexuality, the homosexual was continuously stigmatized and subjected to oppression and punishment. William seems to be constructed as a materialization of this identity.

As a reaction to the word, homosexual which is a product of heterosexist paradigm, the word queer, ironically a humiliating word, has been used to signify identity politics against the clear-cut categories imposed by the Enlightenment and Western metaphysics. Queer theory attacks heteronormativity - the institutionalised heterosexual hegemony, and questions the validity of all categories. What it intends to achieve is the decentralisation of heterosexuality and disruption of the principle of difference and, in this way, to reveal the artificial division between the heterosexual and the homosexual. Queer theory does not aim to establish other primary signifiers or organising principles, but to denaturalise and deconstruct gender in such a way that it will not end up in another reconstruction of the heterosexist normative hegemony. Having deconstructed the binary oppositions, queer theorists envisage an alternative systematic in which there are no given, clear-cut identities but free-flowing and always changing categories of plural identities. In this, the hierarchy

[12] Foucault, Michel. **The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction**. New York: Vintage, 1990, p. 33.
[13] **Ibid.**, p. 43.

between the given identities are to be broken as the deconstruction process reveals that genders are no more than political constructs that serve some political ends.

However, Hollinghurst works within the larger systems of heteronormative definitions, forming and diffusing the very *clichés* of heteronormativity concerning gay culture. The subculture he represents is, in fact, a discursive product of heteronormativity which partly covers the white middle-class and male gay community. In other words, his work is in accordance with the mainstream identity politics that have been being produced and proliferated since the appearance of the homosexual as the 'deviant.' It is in this very context that Hollinghurst forms the character of William, his life and his *milieu.* By having casual sex and not following a proper life, William unconsciously creates himself within the very discourse of heteronormativity as the 'other'. He creates himself as 'the pervert' over and over again only to produce and diffuse the known binaries.

At the unconscious level, his sense of this restless craving for sexual gratification turning him into a criminal 'pervert' is apparent. Before knowing much about the prosecution of homosexuals in the previous era and not having suffered from any oppression himself due to his higher social position, Arthur's possible crime makes William have oppressive dreams and provides him with an acknowledgement of his being a 'pervert'. He states:

> I had several dreams of siege, in which the house became a frail slatted box, shadowy exquisite within, the walls all cracked and bleached louvers which fell to powder as one brushed against them. In one dream Arthur and I were there, and the others, old school friends, a gaggle of black kids from the Shaft, my grandfather tearful and hopeless. We knew we had no chance of surviving the violence that surrounded us, closing in fast, and I was gripped by a nauseating terror.[14]

The house where he lives becomes a prison for him and his homosexual *milieu.* Ironically, his income comes from his grandfather who gained his wealth through homosexual persecution thus the house has been built upon the prisons to which homosexuals were sent. The cracked walls which fall into powder point to the breaking down of the illusionary reality in which William lives.

[14] Hollinghurst, Alan. **The Swimming-Pool Library**, London: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 3

In parallel to that, William is always on the move with little attachment to the place he lives. Instead of his house that is metaphorically made up of homosexual persecution, his shelter becomes the swimming-pool. When he is in water, he leaves aside his desire for casual sex, but concentrates on the very exercise he is doing and only this makes him more satisfied than anything else, almost equal to the satisfaction that he gets from sexual intercourse. This moment provides a return to the period when his desire is not searched for in the outside but provided within his own body. Sigmund Freud in his **Civilization and Its Discontents** (1930), states that in the period when the infant is breast-fed, the infant cannot distinguish between his or her own body from the mother's body. This gives the infant a feeling of limitlessness and being one with the mother. He or she cannot perceive that her breast is not a part of his or her own body. Thus he or she finds his or her desire satisfied within the same body. This period lasts until the mother ceases breast-feeding when the child realizes that he or she is different from the mother. The ego is thus formed out of this difference between the body and the outside world. For William, the pool actually takes the place of the mother's body that he desires unconsciously but this desire is prohibited in the symbolic. He describes the pool as a "… shadowy, doorless little shelter – which is all it was really, an empty, empty place – is where at heart I want to be. Beyond it was a wire fence… 'the Wilderness'… Nipping into that library of uncatalogued pleasure was to step into dark and halt."[15] What William describes here is the imaginary before the entry into the symbolic. This unknown space is dark and open to the feminine multiple sexualities and pleasures as opposed to the masculine sun-lit rational world, regulating the desires that is the symbolic or the conscious. It is "doorless" for it is not accessible through language yet it is a "shelter" that nurtures primal urges and desires. The swimming-pool then becomes a place where William finds contentment, a state of pre-sexuality. It is "empty" and "uncatalogued" for it is again inaccessible by heterosexist language. If one tries to gain access to it by language, it is unwritten thus "uncatalogued" and "empty". Its language is that of multiple and chaotic pleasures and senses that cannot be translated into ordinary language. This image of

[15] **Ibid**., p. 141.

the unconscious is furthered by the omnipresent imagery of the swimming pool itself with its being dark, unstable and unsafe and in complete contrast to the clothed world of outside which is rational and ordered.

For its access to easy sexuality, William becomes very much attached to The Corinthian Club with its homoerotic atmosphere luring its members by activating bodily sensations and intensifying the energy of life that they cannot experience in the heteronormative order. William is highly aware of the complex texture of this sub-society formed here. At one instance while observing others, William almost goes beyond the heteronormative language to describe his feelings. He states "… the dozens of bodies, squatting, lying, straining, muscles sliding to the thick surface in thick-veined upper arms, shoulders bending and pumping… the barely perceptible swing of cocks and balls in shorts and track-suits…with, permeating it all, the clank and thud of weights …"[16] William comes close to an exact representation of the body movements through language. This passage is a very long list of subordinate clauses, so that one loses the link to the main clause. The movements of the body parts are given without actually forming propositional sentences but with the verbs signifying actions in series. The rhythmic movement of the body parts with the rhythmic sounds of the weights takes the place of verbal description. In terms of content, various body parts that are not locatable by a certain origin, in other words that are not described as somebody's, may point to an expression of the multiplicity of sexual desires that William feels. This moment is when the symbolic interrupts the ordered language. Language becomes all sounds and the usual syntax is disrupted. The movements of the body parts comply with the syntax of the sentences.

Like William, Nantwich is confined in his own homosexual *milieu*. William observes his residence as "Charles Nantwich's house was in a street off Huggin Hill, so narrow that it had been closed to traffic and was no longer marked in the London *A-Z*… its secrecy and exclusion, to the invalidish world of Edwardian ghost stories, to a world where people never went out."[17] Nantwich as a homosexual lives off the centre of life that is governed by heteronormativity. The pronunciation of the word, Huggin reminds us the words, hug or hold. With the words, "secrecy and seclusion"

[16] **Ibid**., p. 66.
[17] **Ibid**., p. 70.

as a reference to "the love that cannot speak its name", his residence becomes a closet for himself and his homosexual milieu, as it is only to be reached by a narrow street that reminds the anal canal. His residence is also not to be found in heterosexist language as it is "no longer marked in the London *A-Z*." Moreover, William likens the house to an Edwardian one and turns the whole scene into an intertext of works of fiction. Lord Nantwich is indeed an invalid in the sense that he is hardly seen in heterosexual community and he is out of context even at the swimming pool. He is the one who is immediately judged and delineated by his sexuality. In other words, he is 'invalidated' so as not to act in a heterosexual society. In a similar way, William is also an invalid who is portrayed as an unsatisfied sex seeker and an idler. Thus, he is also unable to form proper social interactions even in his homosexual *milieu*. Both as inoperative in the world of the heterosexuality, they find each other to tackle with ghosts of the former lives of Nantwich to write the homosexual not as 'a pervert', but simply as a human.

Lord Nantwich becomes the prime figure in deconstructing William's shallow understanding of himself and others. In William's eyes, Lord Nantwich gains depth as William reads through his journals and in parallel to that, he indulges an evaluation and a revaluation of his own life. In a way, this activity of reading the journals, his own life, people in his life and the interrelationship between them become a form of writing a new self and forcing a new identity on to the outer world. Before his meeting in person with Lord Nantwich, he appears to William little more than as a bulk of flesh that is inhuman:

> He (Lord Nantwich) was not swimming but floating just off the deep end: head back, hands on hips, his body seemed to be buoyed up by the white balloon of his stomach, hung down at an angle below. He was quite still, and his pushed-back goggle gave the impression that his eyes had rolled back into his head, while his body was abandoned to a trance. Though to my mind he looked dead, there was something wonderfully natural about the way he just lay on and in the water, as though half-submerged lilo; among the heavy swimmers and divers he seems serenely disengaged, and I was amused when I realized who it was, that he inhabited the water in a way that was all his own. At every other turn I saw him, from underwater: he revolved occasionally… like some benign though monstrous amphibian.[18]

[18] **Ibid**., p. 99.

William's description of Nantwich with "head back, hands on hips" and who is "just off the deep end" suggests that he appears to be dead. To William, Nantwich appears to be close to death as if he seems to be on thin line between life and death with his "head back, hands on hips" and his body "hung down at an angle below" and indeed for a short time he thinks he is dead. When William cannot appreciate the body in a sexual way, this body under his gaze becomes a lifeless object completely unrelated to its environment. William seems to be failing to give others an identity apart from the sexual image that he continuously constructs. What William cannot see in Nantwich is that he is sexually and socially disengaged and in this way he simply enjoys his existence, stripped off from sexual and social identities. As much as William appreciates the serenity that he is in, he cannot perceive fully his disengagement with identities. Thus, for William, Nantwich becomes a bulk of lifeless body and is even reduced to "some benign though monstrous amphibian". Ironically, Nantwich with his deadly and "monstrous" image like a vampire brings a downfall in William's seemingly ordered life. As the lifeless and the monstrous body opens itself in reading to define and redefine itself in many times, William's own identity breakdowns. In fact, Lord Nantwich reveals William's 'death-like' life that is nothing but casual sex without an aim and the 'monstrous' sexuality that is very much in parallel to the emergence of the homosexual as 'the pervert' in the medical discourse of the nineteenth-century. Lord Nantwich's body becomes a mirror to reflect the reality that William cannot perceive fully.

Upon first meeting with Lord Beckwith, he inquires whether William searched for him in a book or something. To this question, William not surprisingly answers that he has not. Charles cheers up at his answer and contends that the two now have the opportunity to construct their identities through reading and writing. As the Lord Nantwich's journals unfold, they connect William to his early life before his meeting with Nantwich when he simply ignored what others think of him and the act of writing and reading in general.

When Lord Nantwich and William are inside the Roman bath, they read the wall pictures differently. Lord Nantwich interprets the figures as boys going to swim and then to have an orgy. However, William surprisingly has another interpretation of his own for he is unwilling to follow what Lord Nantwich proposes but keeps his

own interpretation to himself. He describes what he sees as "The boy in the full face had his mouth open in pleasure, or as an indication that he was speaking, but it also gave a strong impression of pain"[19] This direct and revealing description signifies a spoken production of a discourse that is very much connected with the reading and writing, revolving around William. Ironically, he reads the painting as both a production of a discourse and an implication of a fleshly pleasure derived from a sexual encounter. His interpretation restates what he had been through so far and foreshadows the approaching need to produce a discourse that is not only the discourse of a sexualized body, which relates him to the 'pervert' homosexual, but another discourse that would produce a homosexual man who is not only identified by his sexuality. The incongruity between pleasure and pain could also suggest William's dissatisfaction his excessive sexual practice as he is never fully satisfied with one partner. It could be a subconscious revelation of his distress with his superficial relations with many partners. However, William produces yet another traditional image of Lord Nantwich as homosexual in describing the cellar to James whom he meets immediately afterwards: "He has a Roman mosaic in the cellar and there are rather awful decorations of Romans with great big willies, Tom of Finland *avant la lettre,* but not what you expect to see in the homes of the aristocracy. Lord Beckwith certainly would frown on them."[20] While William adores the erotic depiction of the male body, he unconsciously sides with the hegemonic aristocracy by incriminating Lord Nantwich. He forgets his own interpretation that slightly goes away from the traditional and surrenders to the dominant culture.

This notion of various possible readings that create and diffuse the individual identities and social constructs is best explored at the episode where William, James and Sir Dennis Beckwith go to see **Billy Budd**. The American author, Herman Melville's (1819-1891) posthumous novella **Billy Budd** (1924) itself sheds light on the tension between the homosexual as individual and the heterosexist society. William shows enough brevity to bring up the issue of sexuality going on in the opera by saying that: "It's an odd piece, though, partly the sex thing, of course, Claggart's bit about beauty and handsomeness could win a prize for general ghastly

[19] **Ibid.,** p. 80.
[20] **Ibid**., p. 85.

creepiness. He's sort of coming out with it and not coming out with it at the same time."[21] William himself proves to be on the thin line between coming out and not coming out. It is a fact that he lives his sexuality to the fullest however it is the very thing that makes him relentless with life. This excessive sexuality that he seems to be enjoying does not help him to create a proper self but consumes the very thing that it has to produce. He never thinks what to do with his life apart from his desires for idle sex to which he becomes a slave. He appears as a figure cut off from his past, his family and himself. His family is entirely absent, except for the grandfather who has provided for him but keeps "his hygienic distance"; in such a context with his financial position, William falls for the lure of sexuality.

In this sense, it is crucial to consider the reference to **Billy Budd** both as a psychological tension and as an intertext. In the novella, Claggart is a closeted homosexual whose oppressed desire for Billy translates into blaming him for spreading a mutiny on board. Billy's inability to read and write corresponds metaphorically with his inability to speak and exist in a heterosexist discourse. Thus the content creates a psychological tension for William, James and Sir Denis Beckwith who are more or less in a similar situation, for Lord Beckwith regards homosexuality as "a male vice" and is the one who hunted down homosexuals like witches. This scene is also an intertext as it refers to the whole novel in terms of homosexual identity and thereby provides a comparative microcosm. The three having come to watch the opera in the box seems to be, in William's own words, "…trapped with this intensely British problem: the opera that was, but wasn't gay…" and "He's [Claggart] sort of coming out with it and not coming out with it at the same time."[22] The opera itself is a reworking of the original text that has undergone several adaptations and the reference to it with the proper characters acting out similar roles as in the opera refers to the whole novel. The question is how to read the various texts that intersect and in continuous flow? One possible answer is that different positions taken in life change the consumption and diffusion of certain texts. To William and James, it is certain that the text raises questions of homosexual identity whether to be lived openly or not, ironically voiced in a naïve way by

[21] **Ibid**., p. 142.
[22] **Ibid**., p. 120.

William. He cannot express his own view clearly, not being able to take a certain position due to the presence of Lord Dennis Beckwith whose answer to William further blurs the whole situation. Dennis Beckwith seems to be missing the actual point that William tries to make, as Dennis Beckwith further comments on the production details of the opera in which whether he wishes the piece to be more open in sexuality remains unclear. However, a direct reference to E. M. Forster (1879-1970) may still catch the actual point that William and the whole scene tries to capture. Forster dealt with homosexuality in his well-known novel, **Maurice**[23] written in 1913-14 and published posthumously in 1971.

Apart from Lord Nantwich with whom William communicates mostly in reading his journals, William has James and Phil to be addressed in writing. They are both sexual novices compared to William and are socially inferior yet they are financially independent and self-sufficent. Reading from his diaries, William likens James to Lord Nantwich who suffered from loneliness. Nantwich's journal-keeping gives him the means to write himself into history. By writing various details of his life, he grants himself a place in the history of homosexuality. In this way, as in the case of Nantwich's journals, James and William form a secret connection other than heteronormative speaking as William wants James to know that he has been reading from his diary. This also proves educational for William who wishes to know himself through others. Thus, the discourse between James and William are multiple given that James himself feels the necessity to write down his own sufferings just because of his sexuality.

James as a doctor appears as a stable figure who judges the ups and downs of William's life. Just after his introduction to the reader, William is seen confessing his "pitiless recollection of every detail" of his sexual encounters all of which he considers "too much sodomy."[24] To this answer James offers a tonic and a rest to get him back to "normal." Even when James asks him to stop telling every detail of his sexual life, this encourages William to tell more. As much as William is open to James, James' private life remains a great secret for William, who doesn't dare to ask. In this respect, James functions both as a priest to whom one confesses and a

[23] **Maurice** follows the *bildung* of a young homosexual who is newly realizing his own sexuality.
[24] **Ibid.**, p. 18.

doctor who medicalises the whole existence of a homosexual as 'the pervert'. William cannot help himself and tells his sexual encounters, his feelings and intentions to James, who is a figure of grandeur for William speaking through the discourse of science, just because William needs to satisfy his ego and perhaps to seduce James.

James' diary has great importance for William who wishes to see what James really thinks about him but shuns criticism. William is harshly criticized by James many times throughout the novel when they are chatting but what most preoccupies William is his diaries. James forms one of the most important outlets that William finds apart from Lord Nantwich. Throughout the novel, Lord Nantwich, James and Phil privilege reading and writing over phallogocentric speech by producing writing. William puts more importance on writing than speaking in evaluating his own character. He does not care much for James' verbal criticisms however he finds it even more disturbing when he reads from his diary. James' utterances vanish but his writings like the Firbank novellas and Nantwich diaries make history. A history that William eventually finds he must place himself. James' criticism in speaking is that of the punishing father who is the state and/or the church that ban homosexuality. However in writing James opens up himself in the way he can't do in speaking. William learns very much about James' inner world when reading from his diary at his flat. James suffers from loneliness and feels that he has been ignored by his own *milieu*. He expresses his sentiments in a very intimate and original way, managing to capture his own sexuality through language. James confesses not to a controlling power but to the language that he himself thwarts to a queer one. William acknowledges that his writing is more touching than his verbal "attacks" which he finds flattering. This underscores the binary oppositions between articulation over writing. James' verbal "attacks" are that of the controlling and oppressive medical discourses that encourages William to confess more of his own sexual 'perversions' and that produces the homosexual as a species.

This secret communication which is made known to James by William parallels William's reading of Nantwich's journals, photographs, art and the actual bodily activities at the Corry. All those readings, that are done openly or in secret, are forms of resistance to write the biography of Lord Nantwich for William fears

that he does not have the means to escape from the language of hegemony as he is the very product of it. Instead, his writing becomes just reading what is already written and deferring the actual writing. His deferral is made possible by his own idle life that he has adopted long ago to escape from the heterosexist ordered life in a way. By always being on the move, he avoids being attached to a hegemonic culture but ironically by being so, he himself creates the homosexual as 'the pervert'.

In one of those epiphanic instances, William realizes that openly homosexual couples are not welcomed by society and they cannot be acknowledged as they are but shaped to the conventional conceptions. When he is with Phil at the hotel, the workers cannot comprehend them as lovers but simply as friends. William writes that "It was hard to believe they didn't see me for what I was, but pretence, a performance, was sustained that we were just pals. Rather like James, Phil cultivated a reserve that grew into a sort of authority. I must have needed their discretion just as they are freed my lack of it. It was all a question of *bjopti*."[25] William once again realizes that his life was not so easy in the past and some still hold the same approaches towards homosexuality, especially when it is visible in the heterosexist environment. Homosexuality is denied when it suggests abnormal sexuality. William criticizes that they cannot see through their prejudices but the words "a pretence" and "a performance" that are used to attack 'perversity' of homosexual relations deconstruct the binary opposition of heterosexuality over homosexuality.

Integrating Foucault's study on power relations and sexuality into her own work, Judith Butler states that sex is always-already normative and that genders do not originate from biological sexes. She considers gender as performative and likens this performativity to what a drag[26] does. She writes "… imitation is at the heart of the *heterosexual* project and its gender binarisms, that drag is not a secondary imitation that presupposes a prior and original gender, but that hegemonic heterosexuality is itself a constant and repeated effort to imitate its own idealizations" [27](125). For her, drag cannot be an imitation since there is no original

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[25] **Ibid.**, p. 193.

[26] A drag is a male who performs in women's clothes. Apart from wearing women's clothes, he mimics the gender stereotypes that are related to women in his performance.

[27] Butler, Judith. **Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'**. New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 125.

man or woman to imitate. She claims that gender is performative, a metaphorical sort of theatrical performance always in the process of iterability and in a framework of regularised and constrained repetition of norms. The repetition she mentions "is not performed *by* a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. This iterability implies that 'performance' is not a singular 'act' or event, but a ritualized production." [28] Thus there is no absolute model of natural sexuality according to which one can model oneself. William thinks that "lack of discretion" in casual sex makes him openly homosexual and that he asserts his own identity by sexual acts. Instead, he consciously performs what heteronormativity dictates to him. His 'homosexuality' is as performative as any other person's 'heterosexuality.'

William does not realize but in appreciating the various lives of Lord Nantwich and the homosexuals of his *milieu*, it is revealed that they have found ways to step outside the heteronormative order. In queer tradition, there emerged a political and revolutionary discourse challenging and parodying heteronormative discourses that is called 'camp'. Moe Meyer associates camp with queer parody and believes that it is both political and critical. For him, camp

> ...is not simply 'a style' or 'sensibility' as is conventionally accepted. Rather, what emerges is a suppressed and denied oppositional critique embodied in the signifying practices that continuously constitute queer identities.... Camp is political; Camp is solely a queer (and/or sometimes gay and lesbian) discourse; and Camp embodies a specifically queer cultural critique[29]"

David M. Halperin, for instance, defines it as a distinctively gay male practice and

> ...a form of cultural resistance that is entirely predicated on a shared consciousness of being inescapably situated within a powerful system of social and sexual meanings. Camp resists the power of that system from within by means of parody, exaggeration, amplification, theatricalization, and literalization of normally tacit codes of conduct."[30]

In his definition, camp is a deconstruction and subversion of the mainstream culture; and it is a form of resistance within power. Moe Meyer takes the term camp a step

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[28] **Ibid**., p. 95.
[29] Meyer, Moe, ed. **The Politics and Poetics of Camp**. London: Routledge, 1994, p. 1.
[30] Halperin, David. M. **Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography**. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995, p. 29.

further and identifies it with queer. He underlines the critical and political significance of the term and adds that camp subverts and deconstructs the artificial homosexual/heterosexual dichotomy imposed and reinforced by dominant ideologies.

Young Charles is introduced to the city that is identified with heterosexuality, in an openly homosexual manner through the camp identities and lives of Otto and Sandy. This couple has made their places in a heterosexist environment through art. Charles observes them as an outsider and considers them as a couple that has a strong connection with each other and with their environment through their art. This relationship of the two is reflected by their residence at the heart of the city. Young Charles describes it as: "It is quite the oddest place, with the balcony which is like a tiny garden, & inside a high, cool studio with steps going up to a kitchen on one side, & to a bathroom on the other. Beyond the studios you can climb out on to a roof where Sandy apparently sunbathes naked with his friends…"[31]Sandy and Otto have found a way to assert their identities both as a couple and as individuals through their bodies to the larger society. The roof of their residence is the place that opens to the outer world and where they sunbath naked with their friends, forming a physical union with one another and their environment, other than by sexual intercourse. This is a metaphoric presentation of their bodies and sexualities that originate from the physical body. The studio where they create is the centre of their residence which is placed between the kitchen and the bathroom where they get their energy to live. Charles realizes that Otto and Sandy are highly capable of creating a life for themselves that is as multilayered as the lives of the heterosexuals and that homosexuals do not need to hide.

Their oppressed desires are projected with excess to their art through which they manage to create a symbolic and physical world of their own that has close links with the mainstream culture. Young Charles observes Sandy's art as such:

> Their colours are unnatural, their subjects are peculiarly distorted but above all they are very large. It is not a largeness I can claim to like, or even believe in. Their largeness is the largeness of Sandy's own gestures, of his own drinking, of his fantastical filthy talk – it is not the largeness of the large pictures. He has an extraordinary study of Otto, naked to the waist,

[31] Hollinghurst, Alan, **The Swimming-Pool Library**, London: Vintage Books, 2006, p. 149.

> seen from somewhere right down on the ground, so that he towers up above, his chin turned heroically, all the features exaggerated almost into brutality.[32]

Charles finds the line between art and the actual personages blurred. The deformed subjects in the painting are the signs of the oppressed desires reflected as distorted images. The translation of desires is nothing more than Sandy himself who appears 'large' to Charles in the sense that he is greater in his own feelings and desires than others. The naked study of Otto, done from an angle that would make him seem "larger" and "heroic" is the very celebration of a homosexual identity with its excessive way of life. It is heroic for it forces a homosexual identity to a heterosexist society.

In great contrast to the camp couple, the reader has little description of William's residence in Holland Park. Much of William's surroundings are city places where he usually cruises for sex. In the very elaborate and moving descriptions of the city, his character becomes lost, as his will jumps from one boy to another and as the scene changes rapidly. Quickly forming desires and letting them go in another instant shows that William's character is fluid. The reader and William find no centre by which William himself can be located and judged. The centre is the link that would place him in the context of a history of homosexuality in Britain. That link is apparently Lord Nantwich in whose residence William feels more at home. Moreover, at Lord Nantwich's, he gives a very detailed depiction of the surroundings as he does when he is out at the city hunting for sex. He almost feels at home with the companionship of Lord Nantwich for a short time. In parallel to that he is hardly seen at his own flat and never seen at his grandfather's or his own family's.

When William is in James' flat he finds it as claustrophobic as any other flat, including his own: it gives him "a bleak and a transitory feel."[33] However for James, his flat is quite convenient because it is situated at the very centre of the city, close to his work and the life of the city. William finds many things that relate his character to his flat. There happens to be a mutual relationship between James and his flat, each forming the other. For William, it's quite awkward to have a homely home, that

[32] **Ibid**., p. 150.
[33] **Ibid**., p. 213.

is the centre of one's life, and returns to at every occasion of his life. William is out of context when he is inside and when he is not having sex.

Phil's flat, which is both cozy and stuffy is no different from James'. Phil stays at the hotel rooms and manages with little furniture. For Phil, even in its derelict state, the flat is the very place that forms the centre of his life to which William is a stranger at all times. There are not many occasions in the entire novel where William is seen indoors when he is not having sex. This rare event occurs when William and Phil are sunbathing on the roof of the hotel in which Phil works. William describes the surroundings in which he is not moving:

> It was a narrow gravelled island we had to lie on, guarded by glaze brick chimneys and … prickly little gothic fence of iron finials and terracotta quatrefoils. Beyond this, on either side, the roofs fell steeply away, caught up here and there into dormers, and punctuated with parapets and turret-like protrusions. On the left we looked out into the upper branches of our close neighbours, the plane trees in the square; from here the road… was lost to view, though we heard its rumbling and squealing far below… beyond all this we were in the company of other tall buildings…[34]

William with his partner, here for the first time in the novel try to open up a space for themselves other than the cozy places allocated for homosexuals which strictly segregates them from others. They are naked for the first time when they are not inside and when they are having sex. This provides a new way for the two to force their own identities to the outside world. They have close links with their own and each others' bodies. From the very fleshy existence of the body, they can form a new self to face the world. Their "feeding up" their bodies with sun lotion and little games they play are just another way to get to know themselves other than having sex. Not continuously having sex and not to be known as just sexually 'deviant' identity holders, they need to produce a discourse that is more humane and that is closer to expressing multiple desires and sensations that their bodies provide, other than mindless casual sex. However, they are still fenced by the enemy-like society that tries to hunt them down. The "narrow gravelled island" that William chooses to name, which signifies the smallness and uncomfortableness of the space that they had to open up for themselves. Surrounding this opening, "glazed brick chimneys",

[34] **Ibid**., p. 142.

“gothic fence iron finials”, “parapets and turret-like protrusions” and such are depicted as rather horrible faces of the outer world that trap and harm them.

This description of the city from a high point also gives a short history of a city in Britain with the people forming and changing it. Britain, itself is a narrow, rocky island, which was industrialized heavily in the Victorian age. The phrase “blackened chimneys” connotes the suffering of chimney sweepers and brings the strict class system of the Victorian age to mind. Women and children were inferiour to men and the homosexual individual was considered by far the lowest of all. They were considered to be sexually ill. From the early industrial city, the description moves to high and post-industrial era when the cities grew larger and automobile and motorbikes were introduced even to the very hearts of the country which necessitated building of asphalt roads, identified by the “rumbling and squealing” of the road heard far below. Finally, the tall buildings that surround them take us to the contemporary times. Through all these times, homosexuals had been sexually objectivised as ‘perverts’, identified solely through their sexuality. Even in contemporary times, this scene in which William and James are at the heart of the city that is the very heart of the social world as they are, naked, shows that they are not construed as simply human beings but still defined solely by their ‘pervert’ sexuality.

It is when William makes a visit to Arthur’s domain, he is described in relation to his environment but in a contrasting way. Only through this contrast, he manages to develop an understating of the relationship between a person and where he lives. He thinks how different his life would have been if he were raised here, in the suburbs of the city, where Arthur lives. His depiction of the scene is of its negative impacts on him. Where he is now is not a playground for his sexual tastes but more of a Dickensian setting where the strict class system is revealed. William manages to decipher the qualities of his surroundings, relating to a person who lives here. His depiction is very detailed and Dickensian: “The buildings, prefabricated units slotted and pinned together, showed a systematic disregard for comfort and relief, for anything that the eye and heart might fix on as homely and decent.”[35]

[35] **Ibid**., p. 169.

While William is usually connected with roaming; the dwellers of the suburban city are oppressively immobile as they are not allowed an open space for a sane identity.

At the very moment, he realizes the conditions of the working class, his own reality as a homosexual is shattered. He is 'queer bashed' and his nose is broken, upsetting his beauty. The imagery of the scene is very strong. Ronald Firbank's[36] (1886-1926) **Flower beneath the Foot** (1924) gets crammed under the boot of the attackers. The imagery of the flower has a long tradition in homosexual writing that goes back to Jean Genet. (1910-1986) It suggests pollination without male and female partners and thus resembles homosexual love making. As there is no child born out of the relation, the union of the two bodies comes to suggest a celebration of bodily desires as opposed to booted attackers representing the rigid control of the state over sexuality, allowing only propagative sexual acts.

Jerking of the novel that is like **The Swimming-Pool Library** seems to signal a new phase in William's mindset. Soon after this incident, he realizes that there exists a fierce homosexual oppression and experiences how it is encountered in actual life that others have been suffering from. It makes the reader feel that he will now develop a new understanding of homosexuality in general until the final paragraph of the novel which suggests that William has driven back to the Corinthian Club for more sexual adventures. The novel then leaves us with no change or at least little change but certainly with circularity as William's life will probably continue as before.

[36] An eccentric gay novelist, contemporary of Virginia Woolf. His major works are homages to Wilde and other *fin-de-siècle* aesthetes. He shows great sympathy for blacks, lesbians, women, homosexuals, and other marginalised identities in the twentieth century. Many Firbank novels are mentioned in **The Swimming-Pool Library** as William grows an appreciation of homosexual writing through his works. **Vainglory** (1915) tells the story of a Mrs. Shamefoot who wishes to achieve immortality. **Inclinations** (1916) is about Miss Geraldine O'Brookomore who desires a lesbian romance which is destroyed when her companion Miss Mabel Collins is married to a man. **Caprice** (1917) tracks the adventures of Miss Sarah Sinquier who is obsessed with acting. Soon after her successful debut in London, she accidentally falls through a trapdoor and dies. In the **Valmouth** (1919), a black masseuse Mrs. Yajnavalkya owns a health resort in which characters engage in polymorphous sexual interactions in secret and are eventually revealed to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual. **The Flower Beneath the Foot** (1924) is about Laura de Nazianzi, who renounces heterosexual romance and joins the lesbian Convent of the Flaming Hood.

4. TWENTY-SIX

From the 1980's to the post-millennium the gay scene in the United Kingdom saw dramatic changes. The most prominent event of the late 80's was the increase of the AIDS epidemic hysteria. Health Minister, Kenneth Clarke in 1985 urged patients with AIDS should be held in hospitals against their will despite the recommendations of medical experts who thought that this might deter others from coming for treatment. In the 1987 party conference, Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher made her notorious statement: "Children who need to be taught to respect traditional moral values are being taught that they have an inalienable right to be gay."[1] Following this, Thatcher introduced another act in 1988, in section 28 of the Local Government Act, stating that a local authority "shall not intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality" or "promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship."[2] Nevertheless, Thatcher's anti-gay campaign did not last long as the 90's and the first decade of the post-millennium, was marked by an increasing gay visibility all over the country. The first gay pride march was held in Manchester but it took almost ten years for the repealing of the notorious Section 28 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In addition, the age of consent finally decreased from 18 to 16 in 2001.

The work chosen for this part of the thesis covers the collective gay experience in Britain from the 1990's to the post-millennium. Written in a post-AIDS period, it is difficult to categorize **Twenty-Six** (2011) under a certain genre. The author, Jonathan Kemp himself states that his work is composed of "...free-floating episodes with an anonymous narrator"[3] elsewhere he considers it as "26 prose poems" and "…neither a novel nor a collection of short stories."[4] The book is certainly indefinable by a certain set of norms as its own author reveals, yet this is

[1] Thatcher, Margaret, "Speech to Conservative Party Conference." (Online), http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106941, 22 October 2014.
[2] **Local Government Act 1988 (c. 9)**, "Section 28.", (Online), http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/9/contents 12 September 2014.
[3] Bryant, Christopher, "Jonathan Kemp: on **Twenty-Six**." (Online), http://www.polarimagazine.com/interviews/jonathan-kemp-on-26/ 22 October 2014.
[4] Kemp, Jonathan, "Dirty Letters." (Online), http://www.timeoutbengaluru.net/gay-lesbian/features/dirty-letters 22 October 2014.

the very thing about it that makes pertinent it this study: it is up to every reader to define a genre for the book if this is necessary.

In an age when the trauma of the AIDS epidemic has long been overcome, gay visibility has been considerably increased and 'normal' sexuality is not clearly separated from the 'perverse', **Twenty-Six** is an extremely queer text in which the sense of self entirely dissolves with anonymous narrators in every chapter and the narration is almost entirely given up for the sake of philosophical musings for describing sex in a language that is self-transcending.

The description of sexual acts in literature is largely considered to be pornography. **Twenty-Six** with its outrageous content is apparently pornography as it is solely made up of sexual acts yet it is not pornography for the sake of it. Narrators do not seek to excite their readers sexually but they are so self-indulged in sexual acts and the problem of describing what they experience in language that the content becomes not simply pornography but the intensity of the senses and pleasures to be represented in language. In his way, narrators look for the ways to write down the homosexual experience in order to establish it as a cultural phenomenon so that it will be demonstrated that homosexuality is just another form of human sexuality posited non-hierarchical way in a vast array of sexualities.

The book is composed of short stories and partly interrelating chapters. Narrators look for new representations of the male body and sexuality in language that would originate from the male body. Short stories and the chapters given as letters of the alphabet explore the ways of representing the body in language. While exploring, the writing becomes an experiment in representation. Each chapter and short story is a pornographic depiction of a sexual encounter in the most explicit way, continuously interrupted by the fragmented musings on finding ways to describe sexuality as realistically as possible. For the narrators, pleasures and senses of the male body are almost unreachable by language. They try to translate senses and pleasures derived from the body in a language that is constructed through the writing process. To achieve this, there seems to be two options for a new writing that would simply express male body and male to male sexuality. It would be through the language that has the potential to subvert itself and the body from which one's senses and desires come.

Each chapter or short story can be considered on its own or can be tied to the others that precede or follow it, in terms of the narrative voice. The narrator of some chapters may be appearing again and again as the narrative voice in a chapter or a short story sometimes become very similar to the voices found in other chapters. The narrator of chapter "A" and chapter "B" have similar concerns about the recording of their sexual encounter through the written word by questioning the binary opposition between speech and writing. Chapters "E" and "F" revolve around the theme of laceration and carving letters onto skin as a means for physical communication between bodies. Several chapters such as "B", "C", "K", "O" and "R" portray sexual encounters stemming from similar fantasies. Nevertheless, most of the chapters or short stories can stand on their own, as well. Every reading provides different standpoints as to the voices of the narratives. As various possible narrators emerge, the speaking of subject of each chapter and/or some chapters considered together is polyvocal, feverishly pointing to the slippery nature of the "I", continuously produced in the instance of discourse. With different anonymous narrators in each chapter, the book becomes an attack on the stable, ordered and an alien speaking subject.

Various different narrators appearing in each chapter or short story parallel with fragmented narration. While on the surface, the writer makes the reader think that he or she is to face a traditional narrative, it is soon revealed that it is only partly so. Jonathan Kemp considers the structure of the novel:

> The book gives up its secrets slowly, after many readings, and yes, there, underneath some of them, there is a loose, linked narrative which includes a lost lover, and which was informed by my own experiences of sexual grief… There are also other ways in which the pieces connect and speak to one another.[5]

In the mazes of the various narratives and their narrators, there appears to be a lost lover with whom the narrator tries to communicate through the process of writing down sexual encounters in order to that he nay work through his "sexual grief." A great need for sensuality and the need to capture it in writing are the main concerns

[5] Baran, Adam, "All Letters are Queer: Jonathan Kemp on **Twentysix.**" (Online), http://keepthelightsonfilm.com/archives/art-and-autobiography/all-letters-are-queer-jonathan-kemp-on-twentysix 15 September 2014.

of various narrators. If a narrator raises the question on how to capture the sensuality of the moment in language, other narrators in different chapters dwell on the same or similar questions. They rethink them in the context of their own experience and add something new to it or restate it. In this way, some patterns are formed. They are formed out of separate subjective experiences with the aim to reach a collective social experience. The reader is invited to make connections between these experiences through the fragmented narratives. These patterns also form diaries of the remembered sexual intercourses that are confessed to and/or are communicated to the others. Narration in some chapters follow a linear line but in some chapters, that do not follow one another, the narrator seems to be the same one continuing the narration that he started earlier on. The whole book then while incorporating the reader in tracing the narration to communicate with him/her becomes communication of the various narrators with each other or one narrator with himself.

In terms of content, that which is communicated through the chapters and/ or short stories are illicit and often animalistic scenes of sexual intercourse possibly intended to shock the reader. This makes the whole experience of reading more subversive. The extraordinary content of the sexual encounter by not being of a heterosexual nature and the very pleasures that are themselves extraordinary, further the breaking of an illusion of sexuality as it is ordered by language as a heterosexual one. Various chapters, in which some fragmented sexual acts are performed, point to the fragmented nature of sexuality that is constructed through the pleasures taken from various parts of the male body. In each chapter or short story, the reader finds new forms of pleasure-making acts that seem to be recreating themselves chapter after chapter. The narrators try to bring together the darker world of the 'perverse' with the sun-lit and rational world of 'normal' sexuality. The 'perverse' with its multiplicity and its immense sexual energy seems to be bursting in and out of the ordinary language. The reader witnesses how the 'perverse' sexualities strive to self-construct through an endless process unlike the pre-given and stable form of sexuality. The tension between two as binary oppositions haunts every chapter as the narrator or the narrators attempt to deconstruct this opposition. In this process, various instances of insight occur that lead to new awakenings in male sexuality.

Sexuality is not simply formed out of the physical act but also through language. For Jonathan Kemp, language "...is queer if we allow it to be and know how to use it subversively. It's a question of finding ways to use language against itself."[6] He considers language as an organic entity that has the potential to subvert itself. What one writes is not always what one thinks and it disseminates various meanings at the same time. Thus that which is considered as an ordered language is most of the time queer. The narration and the content of this work together attack the notion of stable sexuality which is regarded as a discursive production by language that is severed from bodily pleasures. In this way, structure of the society reflected and produced in and by the language, deems the heterosexual sexuality as the norm, while other forms become 'perversions.'

How is sexuality constructed through language and how does a certain form of it become privileged? To answer these questions, we need to consider the notion of the 'speaking subject' in language. The 'speaking subject' is not the one who actually speaks but the one who is continuously produced and reproduced by language, cut off from his/her actual being. After Benveniste, it is remarkable to note Lacan's treatment of the speaking subject. For Lacan, the speaking subject is defined by and in language instead of a Cartesian *res cogitans*; a thinking being. The Lacanian subject is not simply a speaking being but a being who is constituted by being spoken through the language. Thus, the subject is not the master of its own discourse but simply a location in a vast network of articulations of representations, meanings, significances and such. In this way, Lacan attacks the notion of Cartesian *cogito*, the pre-given and unified subject.

Lacan's pioneering treatment of subjectivity, sexuality and language attracted feminist thinkers, one of whom is Julia Kristeva. She introduces some modifications to Lacan while remaining in his overall framework. Kristeva's model of signifying process is modelled on Lacan's reworking of Freudian psychoanalysis and structural semiology. For Kristeva, the subjectivity and language are co-extensive. The subject is a speaking being; a being who means and speaks to another in a social and historical context. Subject and the speaking being are the same and constituted

[6] **Ibid**.

through language.

For Kristeva, the meaning is produced in two modes, "the semiotic" and "the symbolic", with the simultaneous working of the two. These are two kinds of all signifying processes whose interaction is necessary in subjectivity and textuality. Kristeva's semiotic is to be understood in its etymological sense as a "distinctive mark, trace, index, precursory, sign, proof, engraved or written sign, imprint, trace…"[7] The semiotic is the order of the sexual drives and their articulation. This raw material includes the multiple drives whose origins are not locatable and which are not separated and hierarchized. However, the semiotic provides the ground for all signification. It is corporeal and libidinal. It contributes to the meaning produced but simultaneously withdraws from fixed meaning. It does not signify as the symbols do. The semiotic is the rythmic, heterogeneous and dispersed bodily forces that produce pleasures, sounds, and movements in the child's body that is still attached to the mother's. Nevertheless, it has to be repressed and ordered under the rule-governed language.

In the semiotic realm, Kristeva defines *chora*, a phase that governed by the space of the mother's body. This *chora* precedes and conditions the subject of meaning. The chora is "nonexpressive totality" of drive motility that "as full of movement as it is regulated."[8] The term *chora* is borrowed from the Greek philosopher Plato's (424– 348 BC) **Timaeus** (360 BC) where it is described as a level of being that cannot be named or thought but lies beneath the experience of the phenomenal world which is itself shaped by the *chora* and forms. For Kristeva, chora both receives and refuses the form and meaning given to it. Therefore, the chora is "… a space or receptacle, an undecidedly enveloped and enveloping locus from which the subject is both produced and threatened with annihilation."[9] It is neither a subject position nor a representation but it is what makes them both possible.

In contrast to the semiotic, the symbolic is the condition for a system of rule-governed, ordered and regulated signification. The symbolic is a repression of the chaotic drives, regulated under certain rules to function as meaningful signifying

[7] Kristeva, Julia, "Revolution in Poetic Language.", in **The Kristeva Reader**, Ed. Toril Moi, Columbia University Press, 1986, p. 102.
[8] **Ibid**., p. 93.
[9] Grosz, Elizabeth, **Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction**, England: Routledge, 1991, p. 151.

elements, governed by the law of the father. The symbolic organizes subjects, objects and others into a coherent unity. It provides a stable speaking subject and thus a coherent and a meaningful text.

The symbolic functions over the repression or usurpation of the semiotic chaotic drives but it can return as interruptions or excessive and multiple meanings. Semiotic is energetically dispersed bodily forces that become manifest as it breaks the wholeness of the text. Thus, the symbolic has always the possibility of breaking down in certain instances. Nevertheless, the symbolic depends on the semiotic as the semiotic depends on the symbolic.

In **Twenty-Six,** there seems to be an ongoing experimental process with Kristeva's notion of the semiotic and the symbolic. For Kemp, to make meaning is to communicate like Kristeva's speaking subject. However, Kemp turns this symbolic communication[10] into physical sensations and the union of the bodies through a series of sexual intercourses. His desire is not simply a return to the very senses and pleasures in the pre-Oedipal phase when the infant is still attached to its mother's body but to subvert the existing language into a more body-originated system. The first chapter titled "A", as the first letter of the alphabet, begins with the means and need to communicate. The narrator addresses an unknown partner and states that they had been exchanging written notes that are not yet spoken and perhaps will never be spoken. The first chapter inaugurates the motive of the whole book. What follows will be a harsh striving to find a means to communicate with oneself and others through a proper medium that does not encapsulate it like language does. Language extends beyond being just a medium to communicate, is the very thing that constructs the speaking subjects. As a social construction embodying the ideology of the society that produces and is produced by language, language begins its own construction by ordering the multiple bodily drives to one stable and proper way of sexuality. Therefore the oppression and partial annihilation of the senses and pleasures of the body that cannot be captured in the symbolic order causes the loss of one's actual communication with oneself and others. Jonathan Kemp subverts the validity of language but he aims to use language to legitimize the "pervert." The

[10] In the etymological sense, conceptual.

subjective sensual perversion is translated into a lexical physicality which becomes history-making. Various narrators hold the view that in writing, the semiotic rupture becomes more apparent than speech and that writing unlike speech has the potential to diffuse multiple meanings as the context changes.

Jacques Derrida in his **Of Grammatology** (1967) points out that writing has often been considered to be derived from speech. Speech has been thought to be the truth or *logos* of meaning and representation because of the presence of the addresser and addressee whereas in writing without the presence of the speakers, the meaning is not taken for granted. In different contexts, meaning multiplies itself thus speech is privileged to writing in Western thought. However, Derrida argues that language develops through a process of interplay between speech and writing thus neither speech nor writing can be considered as privileged over the other. In **Of Grammatology**, Derrida argues that signification always refers to other signs, and that there is not a single sign that refers only to itself. He suggests that "writing is not a sign of a sign, except if one says it of all signs, which would be more profoundly true."[11] He wants to emphasise the notion of writing in which a process of infinite referral of meaning occurs. According to Derrida, all writing must be able to function in the absence of a determined addressee.[12] Derrida considers deferral to be *raison d'etre* of the written word. The meaning is constantly subject to the changes of the future: when that future comes, its meaning is not realised, but becomes subject to yet another future that can also never be present.

The idea that writing is open to multiple meanings in ever-changing contexts not allowing a fixed meaning mimics multiformed and fragmented sexuality. There is no certain meaning to arrive at as there is no certain sexuality to which one should conform thus to give a certain meaning. Kemp likens the experience of writing to that of experimental sexuality that he employs in his book:

> Because language is a choice, a selection of words to describe whatever it is you're describing, whether it be sex, or a dream we have… When you try and describe a dream it betrays the reality of the dream, because the words

[11] Derrida, Jacques, **Of Grammatology**, Tr. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976, p. 43.
[12] Derrida, Jacques, **Margins of Philosophy**, Tr. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, p. 375.

> that you choose fix it, but the dream itself is unfixable. So in terms of sex, there are many ways to describe it, whether comically or erotically, and each version betrays the truth of what happened. Every time we say something we're betraying what we're trying to articulate.[13]

To describe sex in language betrays its actuality. It is impossible to fix these sensualities as this renders them inaccurate and betrays their sensual actuality. **Twenty-Six** with its fragmented and interrupted narrative actualises the fragmented and multiple forms of sexual acts that every narrator creates again and again. In this way, the notion of sexuality as defined by the heterosexist hegemony is deconstructed. Every sexual act made in every chapter defines the norms of the given sexuality. The bodily acts cannot find a stable meaning in the language; instead the meaning is always deferred so that the notion of sexuality as the signifier does not refer to one stable signified. In other words, through the multiplicity of experiences, he is trying to determine an unfixed and viable form of sexuality. The pre-given form cannot determine our sexuality but individuals continuously create and recreate it and this process does not necessarily lead to forming just another concept of sexuality.

In chapter "B", the narrator who feels "feral hunger" and questions what it means for the other who are like him. Desires and pleasures felt at the very moment cannot be expressed by speech for the bodily sensations are "rendered voiceless by language."[14] However, memories of these moments can be expressed later by the same language in writing: "If identification is a nomination, a designation, the simulation is the writing corresponding to it, writing that is strangely polyvocal, flush with the real. Desire is a part of the infrastructure."[15] Unlike speech, writing becomes "polyvocal" without the intent of the writer as the addressee is not present and the changing context is never saturated to make the reader find the true meaning. Moreover, in writing, the simultaneous working of the semiotic and the symbolic becomes more apparent. "A nomination" or "a designation" in the Saussurean linguistics is a unified whole, therefore is a part of the rational and ordered system. The signifier finds the signified and they together form the sign, in the differential chain of language. For Saussure, this gives us a stable meaning. Nevertheless, on the

[13] Bryant, Christopher, "Jonathan Kemp: on **Twenty-Six**." (Online), http://www.polarimagazine.com/interviews/jonathan-kemp-on-26/, 22October 2014.
[14] Kemp, Jonathan, **Twenty-Six**, Brighton: Myriad Editions, 2011, p. 6.
[15] **Ibid**., p. 120.

surface there is the rational and ordered signifying processes but beneath it, forming the "infrastructure", not visible all the time, is the heterogeniousity of desires which make themselves felt by the semiotic rupture, explained in the theory of Julia Kristeva.

To escape the captivating language and the already made discourses that produce the body and subject, Kemp suggest a return to the body itself. The body has its own language. Its language is that of the sensations and pleasures derived from various parts. The body is considered in its pre-Oedipalized form, still attached to the mother. Although the subject has already entered the symbolic, there is still the body as concrete form to which to return. To be able to take pleasure from our bodies without the heterosexist dictum is possible in a phase like Kristeva's *chora*. Kristeva depicts the state of the infant and the mother attached to one another in this phase but the narrator suggests a subversion of the law of the father from within. The body with its heterogeneous drives should be the space of a system of communication. The body in its concrete form produces the notion of sexuality as an abstract form and they are closely tied with one another. It is their communication that enables creation and recreation of the speaking subject. The narrator contends that

> The possibility of using our bodies as source of very numerous pleasures is something that is very important. Sexuality is part of our behaviour, part of our freedom, something that we ourselves create. It is our creation, and much more than the discovery of a secret side of our desire. With it we make or unmake the world. With it, we speak a different tongue.[16]

Our sexualities should not be prescribed by cultural mediums as is the case through language, but the subject is able to create his or her own sexuality from the bodily pleasures. However, the language that we are born into and shaped by continuously cuts the ties with our own bodies and forms pre-given sexualities. Michel Foucault in the first volume of **The History of Sexuality** regards the acts of sex as "fictitious unity ... (and) a causal principle" that reverses the causal relations so that sex is considered to cause desire:

> ... the notion of sex made it possible to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, pleasures,

[16] **Ibid**., p. 20.

> and it enabled one to make use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle, an omnipresent meaning; sex was thus able to function as unique signifier and as a universal signified.[17]

According to Foucault, the body is not sexed before it is placed within a discourse through which it becomes related to normal or pervert sex. Body gains meaning in the discourse through power relations. Sexuality produces sex as an artificial concept. It becomes a historically specific organization of discourse and power. In this artificial production, some acts of sex and desires are deemed 'perverted' and have to be repressed. Then, we have to look for the desires and bodily sensations that are oppressed in the unconscious. However, they do not need to be oppressed. Kemp considers that it is not the "secret side of ours" that waits to be explored for the exploration within the ordering language will always render it as the 'other' to the rational and ordered conscious. Only through a new form of signification that would derive from the very fleshly sensations and desires can we create a new language that would better represent the body and would not be locked in the binary oppositions of the conscious and unconscious. The unconscious is brought into the light and cooperated with the conscious, not as the 'other' but as a complementary component.

The notion of sexuality is regarded as stemming from bodily derivatives and one must manage to capture its various sensations and pleasures. However, in this conception, the subject does not enter to an already made construction. The subject who creates his or her own sexuality at the same creates his or her own subjectivity:

> The human body shatters beneath a multiplicity of sensations and intensities the overall experience of which results in what has been erringly called 'subject'. My question is this: can the movements and the flows of the body be represented, or does this representation itself only function upon a foreclosure of such nomadic flesh?[18]

The "subject" in this passage is the speaking subject who is a product of language. Thus the "multiplicity of sensations and intensities" of the body is not present in the formation of the subject. Instead, this multiple energy has to be repressed to form the subject. Indeed, the present representation turns upside down what it actually is. The

[17] Foucault, Michel. **The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction**. New York: Vintage, 1990, p. 154.
[18] **Ibid**., p. 32.

language constructs the "flesh" as "nomadic"; and the mind as opposed to the nomadic, as a victory of human culture over nature. However, this binary opposition is reversed here. The narrator tends to turn to the pure flesh in its "nomadic" form to compose a more realistic way to form a speaking subject. Expressing and being is the same thing and happens at the same time with capturing the "multiplicities" and "intensities" of "the movements and the flows of the body" through sensing the pure flesh as a resistance to the symbolic order.

In a bid to create such a language that would be capable of expressing the fleshly experiences, the narrator introduces some kind of marking of the body. The body becomes the sign itself, other than the signs that operate on the symbolic level. The body as a sign is physical and directly refers to the psychical sensations and pleasures, not to the already constructed concepts of them in the differential system of language. This sign could be, the narrator states, a laceration or a wound that would indicate metaphorically the mark of the physical senses outside the language and a way to get together physically as opposed to the abstract communication through conceptualizations. Having a wound or a laceration on one's own body suggest a physical communication of the bodies on their own without the intervention of language. However, the symbolic is a threat to such a communication and union of the two bodies. In chapter "F", the narrator notices that his partner has "… the letters standing out in legible scars across his hairy chest. D-E-N-I-A-L."[19] To have subject position in the symbolic order is to deny the flesh and the fleshy experiences that cannot be regulated and ordered. The letters carved on the body as signifiers direct the reader to the body, to the sense of touch itself but the word "denial" taken as the signified operates like the actual language. To go beyond the limit of the sign system can be actualized through the physical signs carved onto the skin directing us to the body itself but the word "denial" taken as the signified means the denial of the body through language. This keeps the narrator preoccupied and the following chapters seem to be revolving around this very question.

The mark on the body as a wound, a laceration or carved letters are the physical signs that are present on the very flesh and that directs us to the very flesh

[19] **Ibid**., p. 44.

itself. Another narrator in a way translates the spoken words of his partner to physical signs on his skin:

> … His words become dermagraphics that rotate on the surface of my skin, or rather not on the surface but just underneath the first layer, like solid subjects pushing their sharp particularity through the tissue membrane and making the sensations assailing me comprehensible, locatable, though only just, for they never become single discreet units, but rather form a vast network of traces rendering all the part of my body unreachable by language or reason or any other consolations… There no divisions between language and body other than those we create in our need for dissolution: I am not these words these words are not me not mine not his not ours they do not even belong to themselves…[20]

The physical signs actually belong to the body and the bodily interactions. Then, they point to one simple experience that is the body itself. This process makes the sensation comprehensible and actually locatable on the body. Thus, the semiotic in Kristeva's theory gives a concrete and more realistic representation of the body. It provides a passage to the infantile bodily sensations that are multiple, roughly demarcated and not hierarchized within one's own body or in the union of the lovers' bodies in the absence of the mother's body. The semiotic phase takes the place of the symbolic, for the semiotic is depicted as a "vast network of traces" that takes us to the Derridaen notion of trace in writing and speech. In the differential system of language, the sign becomes identified only through its other. The trace of the other, that is the absence of it, is always present in the sign. Words turn into sensations and they form a differential sign system like language. In this manner, the narrator breaks down the binary opposition of the symbolic and the semiotic. He does not suggest a return to the maternal body. He subverts the symbolic from within. There would be a natural correspondence between the sensations and the words but "we create" the separation. Physical sensations are the words, the language of the body: "The letters are sharp and clear, raising like Braille, seeming to crave touch to be complete."[21] Letters carved onto the body metaphorically suggest the sensations that refer to themselves. They gain meaning only by touch which activates communication between the bodies.

[20] **Ibid**., 42.
[21] **Ibid**., p. 30.

In chapter "X", it seems that the symbolic wins over the semiotic. The pleasure taken from sexual intercourse quickly fades away, leaving behind the symbolic. The narrator states: "Language makes the soul possible, yet every statement we make remains a betrayal. This is the way the world begins. Like a dream we try to locate and unpick… It remains like a sensation, like a memory, this other life, rippling beneath my skin…"[22]The narrator seems to be acknowledging the nature of language that is based on binary oppositions. For a human, the experience of the world begins when he or she assumes the speaking subject and interacts within language. Thus, to make a statement, we need to betray our bodies. Infantile sensations and desires that are closely connected to the body remain untranslated into the symbolic and become a memory of a sensation from the life that is before the symbolic order. However, the semiotic ruptures are still felt "rippling beneath" the skin. While binary oppositions between semiotic and the symbolic are broken down in the early chapters, the narrator in this chapter tends to view the semiotic as a threat to the symbolic. He unwillingly privileges the symbolic and contends that there is no escape from it.

The opposition between the symbolic and the semiotic makes them both work for the actualization of the language. In the chapter titled "K", there is a rather long dialogue which is quite in contrast to the forms of other chapters as they are simple and short narratives of various sexual encounters decentralized by sudden interventions on musings for a language that would be capable of rendering the flesh a voice. The narrator is introduced to a place to have sex. Others who are present in the house make some rude remarks and the dialogue flows usually for some time but then is systematically interrupted by propositional sentences:

> Hooded Top turned his face to me, 'You don't wanna touch her love, luv. She's got every disease known to mankind. And the group let out a gaggle of laughter.
> *A limit is not an origin: a limit requires no origin*.
> 'Yeah,' chipped in another, 'she should carry a government health warning...'
> 'Where'd you find this one?' He looked me up and down.
> 'Over by the tennis courts,' you said.
> 'Nice,' Hooded Top said, looking at me.

[22] **Ibid**., p. 111.

> *The unconscious is an orphan; it produces itself within the identity of nature and man.*
> Then, picking up a nightlight and holding it to my face, he said, 'very nice.' He put the light down and said, 'I'm telling you, you don't wanna be bothering with her, love...[23]

These musings, interrupting the flow of dialogue are manifestations of a language that is looked for.

In content, these sentences question the language and offer the very picture of what they propose. They function like the semiotic interruptions but since they are propositional, are in fact symbolic. First intrusion is made by the sentence: "A limit is not an origin: a limit requires no origin."[24] An origin is a foundation of everything that takes us to Western metaphysics. Western thought have always relied on a centre that is ever present, not changing and outside language. Production and diffusion of discourses by building on this very centre determines their content and form. Therefore, they have certain forms and contents that limit them from producing and proliferating other forms and contents. However, Derrida decentred the Western center, revealing that it is also a human production, not something that is never-changing, ever-present and outside the play of language. For a limit we need an origin but an origin as the centre is not outside the language. If no origin exists, there cannot be a limitation to that origin.

The narrator continues to break the known binary oppositions. He claims that "the unconscious is an orphan; it produces itself within the identity of nature and man."[25] The unconscious is regarded as a supplement to conscious but the unconscious needs a conscious and they together form the speaking subject. Without these two, there cannot be a subject whether regarded as discursive production (conscious) or pure "nomadic" flesh (unconscious). However, to speak of such a subject, we regard the unconscious as "an orphan", supplementary and inferior to the conscious. The narrator breaks this hierarchy between them. Neither term becomes privileged to the other. The rational conscious is undermined and the unconscious, the store of drives, is championed over the conscious. It is regarded as playing a

[23] **Ibid.**, p. 52. Emphasis mine.
[24] **Ibid**., p. 58.
[25] **Ibid**., p. 52.

greater part in forming the speaking subject.

The whole book with fragmented and partly interrelating chapters becomes a galaxy of various views on language and subjectivity supporting and/ or conflicting with each other. Various narrators in one chapter or in various chapters capture the changing and overflowing meaning making processes that are inherent in language. This process of creating meaning on the conceptual level is sought on the physical body with its senses and pleasures. In a way, physical signs of and on the body are needed in a kind of language that would not regulate the chaotic drives of the body. The author proves the queer nature of ordinary language by breaking the illusion of a properly developing narration and in content with the application of the various views on the nature of language and subjectivity in language. It is an ongoing experiment with the problematic of expressing the sexual subject in language.

CONCLUSION

There are numerous post-structuralist thinkers who provide examinations of subjectivity from psychoanalytic theory to notions of subject as an agent and as a result of power and knowledge systems in discourses, and to sexually oriented constructivist theories which centre subjectivity on an interactional process between individuals. It is apparent that they all share a definite rejection of the belief that the subject is unified, never-changing and self-aware. Post-structuralists are critical of such a solid construction of self and what it entails. In post-structuralist theories there is an open challenge to the notion of the subject that is unified, rational and autonomous and whose desires and actions are well-known and pre-determined. There is no self before its entrance into culture. The self is constructed through the relations with others and with knowledge and power systems in a web of flowing discourses. Thus, it gains a subject position in language by being constructed in and through it.

Many post-structuralist theorists endeavour to reveal the processes in which the subject comes to be constituted in and through language. Starting from the linguist Saussure, who unintentionally gave the others the opportunity to see the unreliability of language, thereby instigating a new era of examining the subject through language. Drawing on Freud, Lacan considered the subject's immersion in culture purely on a linguistic basis. Psychoanalytic theorists' major contribution to the social sciences, however, has centred on the notion of desire. Desire for psychoanalysts such as Freud, Lacan and Kristeva has not a determined and direct object but always changes its target by the activation of various erogenous zones of the body. Thus, sexuality becomes simply more than genital activity. Undermining genital differences between the sexes paves the way to multiple sexualities which finally denaturalises heterosexuality.

For an abundance of marginalized sexual activities, the word queer has come to be used. Queer theory gains impetus from Foucault's analysis of the demonization of the homosexual as sick and guilty. What had been considered an aberration before the 1870's came to be known as the sole identity of a person. For Foucault, homosexuality and homosexuals were produced by nineteenth-century discourses

which codified and condemned them in medical, legal, psychological and religious discourses with the aim of producing a new knowledge of sexuality. Thus, the homosexual was posited as the other of the heterosexual.

Later on, Judith Butler, drawing on Foucault, claimed that gender is the performative result of repeated acts, so gender itself is not the source of this performativity. There is no identity underlying gender but it is a continuous construction by the expressions that are considered to be its results. In a later work, Butler clarifies further by stating that performativity is not simply a choice and it cannot be abandoned when one wishes to do so. It is a series of repeated acts that constitutes the subject, rather than being performed by the subject. It is always under constraint by the mechanisms of prohibition and taboo and ever burdened by the threat of one's being ostracized.

Apart from Butler, Foucault's work has been influential on Sedgwick. She considers that our society is male dominated and that women's role is as goods to be exchanged. Men exchange women between families to construct the society as male dominated. Thus, social relations are actually male to male. Heterosexuality then preserves its legitimacy by stigmatizing male to male eroticism.

In this study, three forms of gay male identities have been examined to demonstrate how their selves are in a process of construction and deconstruction in relation to their bodies and sexualities. In **A single Man**, George lives the life of an hermit, always away from the heterosexual society whereas William in **The Swimming-Pool Library** is out, chasing after casual sex but still out of contact with the heterosexual world. George takes shelter in his home and William at the swimming pool. George's home with the memories of his deceased lover provides him with a metaphorical union with the mother's body which is threatened by the law of the father; the heterosexual families who live close to him and the society he finds at the university. Similarly, William finds contentment in the pool that becomes the symbolic substitution for the mother's body; referring to in vitro gestation in the womb. However, in **Twenty-Six**, there is not a single character identifiable as the protagonist of the chapters and stories. Instead, the anonymous narrators look for a realistic depiction of the senses and pleasures of body by invalidating language.

George's one day journey into his own ego is full of epiphanic instances in which he comes to reveal the constructedness of the society in which he lives. He experiences epiphanies thanks to his homosexuality which allows him to see through the hypocrisy of the present situation and imagine a better society not just for homosexuals but for everyone. His microcosm for an ideal society for men is the gym where members put aside the roles that are given to them by the heterosexist society and homosocial bond is made apparent. Impositions of age, gender, profession and attire seem to evaporate in the gym where members can socialize without any pretence and can form better relations with one another. At the university and in his neighbourhood, George is highly critical of the people who are simply the products of hegemonic heterosexuality. For George, they are nothing more that puppets for the preservation of heterosexist society which they uphold through power relations and in turn use to demonize the homosexual. However, they do not benefit from this. George thinks their whole mindset is marred so that they can think, act and feel only in certain limited ways. Their individuality is largely hindered.

A similar homosocial space found in **The Swimming Pool Library** is the Corinthian Club, a gym with an atmosphere of a Greek gymnasium in which homoerotic *liaisons* take place irrespective of gender. In his incessant hunt for casual sex, William, the novel's protagonist, stops cruising for casual relationships for a short time when he is at the club. There, he finds contentment and a kind of satisfaction close to a sexual union. His bodily activities provide him with a new form of knowing and sensing his body, other than by sexual intercourse and without the intervention of heteronormative order. He is amazed by the romantic and sensual bonds between the members. The homoerotic atmosphere evokes in him a kind of pre-Oedipal sexuality that he longs for but his sexuality is defined by the heterosexist order as sinful and illegal. Similarly, when he is submerged in the pool, he has a Freudian "oceanic feeling": the pool is William's symbolic substitute for the mother's body, as is George's home and memories of his deceased lover.

In these two novels, the aim of this thesis has been to lay bare the unnaturalness of hegemonic heterosexuality which is constructed in and through language. The protagonists, thanks to their homosexuality, manage to slip out of the

net of heterosexist discourses with a great desire to construct a self in language by invalidating it. **A Single Man** starts with George's metaphorical birth into the language. Before this, the individual is depicted as nothing more than a biological organism with the multiple and overflowing senses and desires. This metaphorical birth into language creates a self who is cut off from his senses and desires and who is forced to search for what he has lost. George mourns after the loss of his partner and is in search for this metaphorical union with the mother's body which is the source and place of the various and overflowing senses and desires. One of his students, Kenny, attracts him; in every dialogue that they have, George is unable to communicate his thoughts clearly. It is not even clear that George actually knows what he wants to say. Language hinders him from expressing his 'pervert' desire. With Kenny's suggestion for a swim, the unspeakable in language comes to be expressed in bodily activities. Kenny gets naked with "whooping cries" and George feels that the sea washes away thought and speech. They break loose from the encapsulating net of language in frenzy. This is furthered by their sense of union with the sea and one another. After this climactic scene, they get dressed and head for George's flat and thus they are reborn into language. When they are back at the flat, they still find it hard communicate with one another. Soon after, Kenny leaves and George slowly dies which ends the novel, giving it a circular structure.

The opportunity to invalidate language to find a place in it for William comes when he meets a Lord Nantwich who embodies the homosexual suffering from the 1900's to the 1980's. He urges William to write his autobiography but William resists writing to keep his idle life. Given that he lacks homosexual predecessors, the young William has to go through Charles's experiences by reading his journals to think of himself as a part of that history and to be able to provide link from the late 1900's to the 1980's. William gains experience by reading Lord Nantwich's journals, James' diary and the actual people in his life. In a way, this activity of reading becomes a form of constructing a new self and forcing a new identity on to the outer world through language; a language that bonds homosexuals. One of those moments, providing a return to the body without the intervention of heterosexist discourses, is when William and Phil are at the roof-top. They are naked for the first time when they are not inside and when they are not having sex. They can sense much better

their own and each others' bodies. From the very fleshy existence of the body, they can form a new self to face the world.

However, unlike George, William cannot control his hunger for sex which seems to be devouring him. Even though he can have sex freely, he is still restless and looking for more in the very way that hegemonic heterosexuality defines him as the 'pervert.' Whereas George is comfortable in a small space and does not want to be out in the society, William is almost always cruising the heart of the city for boys and men. Though George is literarily and metaphorically 'closeted' as his homosexuality is covert, this still forms a resistance to heteronormativity, as he reveals the baselessness of the present construction of society. In contrast, William unwillingly constructs and diffuses the stereotype of a homosexual who is believed to have an endless appetite for 'pervert' sexuality and who has to be segregated from the heterosexuals. Although William promises not to be a protagonist who would learn from his supposed *bildung*, a change however slight, is certainly achieved by him and for the better.

In **Twenty-Six**, the narrators strive to experience various sexual acts to defy and subvert the great signifier of 'normative' sex that refers to genital activity between a male and a female. Each chapter or short story is a creation and recreation of sexuality that is derived from very fleshy pleasures. Unlike the protagonists of the previously discussed novels, the anonymous narrators of **Twenty-Six**, who lose their identities in the process of describing sexual acts, challenge the existing language for a better representation of male-male sexuality. With the various forms of sexual acts portrayed in detail, the so-called 'naturalness' and the arbitrary basis of heterosexuality is revealed. The male body is capable of various pleasures that are not just accessible in a heterosexual intercourse. The binary between heterosexuality and other forms of sexuality, which are deemed pervert, are broken.

Various narrators in the book feel a great desire to find new ways of expressing the male body and making male to male sexuality as realistic as possible through the existing language, which has the potential to be subverted; along with the body, which is the source of actual senses and desires. Every sexual act made in every chapter defies the norms of the given sexuality. They cannot be grouped under a stable signifier thus the meaning is always deferred so that the notion of sexuality

as the signifier does not refer to one stable signified. The pre-given form does not represent sexualities so it is up to individuals to create and recreate it continuously and this process does not necessarily lead to forming yet another one and only concept of sexuality.

Considering the process of homosexual writing from the 1960's to the post-millennia, there have been positive changes in the construction of a homosexual self. The novels chosen in this study are, in a way cultural and historical documents of homosexual history in the English speaking world. Depressed, shy and lonely George, trying to grapple with the death of his partner and an antagonistic society is the epitome of the mourning homosexual in the 1960's when the gay liberation movement was newly emerging and homosexuals were perceived as a source of fear and readily condemned by society. With the Stonewall riots in the 1969, the period from the 1970's to the mid-1980's was marked by an incessant and harsh activism along with demonstrations for the inclusion and normalization of homosexuals in society; William as a character falls into this period. He lives his sexuality to the full yet he and his *milieu* are segregated from the heterosexual world. His homosexuality is tolerated up to a level that would not offend heterosexuals. The Corinthian club, in which a homoerotic atmosphere reigns, promises to be a gay heaven but it is still an underground community which enables homosexual practises only in secret. While William lives his sexuality freely, still he is at lost about his identity in general. He needs to connect himself to a homosexual past and *milieu*. However, this proves to be difficult since heterosexuals can never come to consider homosexuals as ordinary people. Thus, homosexuals find it hard to form affiliations with one another and integrate into larger communities even in the late 1980's. As for the aftermath of the AIDS epidemic, which proves to be a great milestone in homosexual history, we should consider Jonathan Kemp's anonymous narrators whose very anonymity becomes a pre-requisite for access to sexuality in its wildest form. These extraordinary instances of sexuality ironically point to the 'perverse' nature of homosexuality which heterosexuals create in their minds; aligning, in a way, the identity of the homosexual with his 'perverse' sexuality. However, they also suggest that the reality of sexuality is that it is a multifarious phenomenon. As homosexuals can create various forms of sexuality, the great (homo-normative) signifier of

sexuality is undermined. The sexual urge becomes a part of a human whether homosexual or heterosexual; and an experience that no one should be forced to practice other forms of sexuality secretly or anonymously. Thus, the homosexual frees himself from being stigmatized as ‘the pervert’; who with integrity becomes a human who has a multi-faceted self just as the others. He takes his liberty to shape his own sexuality, not be shaped by it.

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