Queer Talk: The Politics of Transgression in the Novels of Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai

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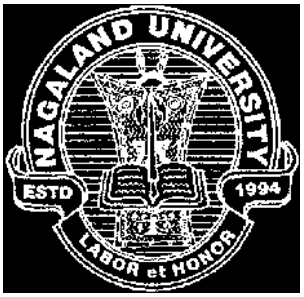
By

NAROLA DANGTI
Ph.D. Regd. No. 434/2011

Under the Supervision of

Professor N.D.R. Chandra
Department of English
Nagaland University
Kohima Campus: Meriema



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NAGALAND UNIVERSITY
KOHIMA CAMPUS: MERIEMA – 797 001
2014

Dr. N. D. R. Chandra
M.A; M.Phil; P.G.D.T.E; Ph.D.
PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH

Vice-Chancellor
Bastar University,
Jagdalpur
Chhattisgarh 494001
Mob No. (0)9436604508
Office No. (07782) 229239
Fax: (07782) 229226
Email:chandra592001@yahoo.com

Date:

SUPERVISOR'S CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "Queer Talk: The Politics of Transgression in the Novels of Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai" is a bonafide record of research work done by Ms.NarolaDangti, Regd. No. 434/2011 dated 12th June 2009. This thesis, submitted to the Nagaland University in fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or any other title and that the thesis as such is an independent and original work on the part of the candidate under my guidance. Ms.NarolaDangti has completed the research work for the full period as prescribed under clause 9 (5) of the Ph.D. Regulations and the thesis embodies the record of original investigation conducted during the period she worked as a Ph.D. research scholar.

(**Professor N. D. R. Chandra)**
Supervisor
Department of English
Nagaland University
Kohima Campus: Meriema

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I, do hereby declare that the thesis entitled **"Queer Talk: The Politics of Transgression in the Novels of Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai"** submitted for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English is a meticulous record of research investigation independently carried out by me under the guidance and supervision of Professor N.D.R. Chandra, Department of English, Nagaland University, during the period 2009-2014. This work has not been submitted either in full or in part to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.

Place: Kohima
Date:

(NAROLA DANGTI)
Regd. No. 434/2011
Research Scholar
Department of English
Nagaland University
Kohima Campus: Meriema

Countersigned

Dr. N. Das
Head
Department of English
Nagaland University
Kohima Campus, Nagaland

Professor N.D.R. Chandra
Supervisor
Department of English
Nagaland University
Kohima Campus, Nagaland

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This thesis is written in memory of my brother AkokAmer, whom I have lost in the recent years.

NarolaDangti

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Chapter I

Introduction

If one really thinks about the body as such, there is no possible outline of the body as such. There are thinkings of the systematicity of the body, there are value codings of the body. The body, as such, cannot be thought, and I certainly cannot approach it.

- GayatriChakravortySpivak
"In a Word: Interview with Ellen Rooney"

1.1 Introduction: Queer Theory

Queer theory is the academic discourse that has largely replaced what used to be called gay/lesbian studies. The term was first coined by Teresa De Lauretis for a working conference on theorising gay and lesbian sexualities that was held at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in February 1990. The theory, as such encompasses a whole range of understanding issues relating to sexual orientation and gender identity. Queer theory is largely based on the works of Michel Foucault, the French Philosopher. Besides Foucault, the works of Derrida, Lacan and Freud have contributed as important theoretical references. Beginning in the nineteenth century, sexuality gradually assumed a new status as an object of scientific and popular knowledge. The last two hundred years or so have seen what the critic and historian Michel Foucault once described as a 'discursive explosion' (Foucault 1998: 38) around the question of sex, by which he did not simply mean that it came to be talked about more widely or more often or more explicitly, relaxing the grip of repressive conventions or taboos but also calling for a genealogical analysis of sexuality as it has been lived and understood in Western culture over the last couple of centuries. The breadth of output in literary and cultural criticism which has investigated the specificities and constructions of

human sexualities is vast and it is a corpus which continues to grow and explore some aspect or representation of sex, sexuality or sexual desire.

Sexuality is much more than a facet of human nature, the seat of pleasure and desire. It has become a principle of explanation, whose effects can be discerned, in different ways, in virtually any stage and predicament of human life, shaping our capacity to act and setting the limits to what we can think and do (Glover & Kaplan 2007: 12). Thus, the growing willingness to put sex into question, even to search for the truth about sexual behaviour, gradually opened up new ways in which the entire field of sexual possibilities and sexual identities could be imagined, permanently transforming people's most intimate sense of their sexual selves. The present study thus aims in studying anomalies of sexual instincts with special emphasis on queering homosexuality in the works of the two novelists - Hollinghurst and Selvadurai.

After 1945, and increasingly since the 1960s, the terms 'bisexual', 'gay', 'lesbian' and 'straight' have been used to index a connection between sexual desire and identity. Although the terms 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual' take their initial meaning from 19th century medical and legal documents, theory and criticism dealing with homosexuality continues to be written. Critical studies of 'homosexual' literary traditions exist alongside works dealing with bisexuality and the politics of representation of transgressive desires, lesbian aesthetics and gay male writing. Over the years, theory and criticism has witnessed the 'queering' of all these terms. Many recent studies propose that all identity categories have been, or should be or must be, disrupted, questioned and queered. Condensing the results of much sexual-textual theory and criticism, Alan Sinfield (1994) has suggested that the central argument in studies of sexuality has ultimately sought to resolve outstanding problems which converge on and surround the notion of sexual identity.

Queer theory is a brand-new branch of study or theoretical speculation; which has only being named as an area since about 1991. It grew out of gay/lesbian studies, a discipline which itself is very new, existing in any kind of organised form only since about the mid-1980s. Gay/lesbian studies, in turn, grew out of feminist studies and feminist theory. Feminist theory, in the mid-to late 1970s, looked at gender as a system of signs, or signifiers, assigned to sexually dimorphic bodies, which served to differentiate the social roles and meanings those bodies could have. Feminist theory thus argued that gender was a social construct, something designed and implemented and perpetuated by social organisations and structures, rather than something merely 'true', something innate to the ways bodies worked on a biological level. In so doing, feminist theory made two very important contributions. The first is that feminist theory separated the social from the biological, insisting that we see a difference between what is the product of human ideas, hence something mutable and changeable, and what is the product of biology, hence something (relatively) stable and unchangeable. The second contribution is related to the first: by separating the social and the biological, the constructed and the innate, feminist theory insisted that gender was not something 'essential' to an individual identity. The humanist idea of identity, or self, on the other hand focuses on the notion that one's identity is unique, that who you are is the product of some core self. These aspects include sex (I am male or female), gender (I am masculine or feminine), sexuality (I am heterosexual or homosexual), religious beliefs (I am Christian, Jewish, Buddhist) stating our core sense of identity. Within humanist thought, these core aspects of identity are considered to be 'essences', things that are unchangeable and unchanging. This concept of an essential self separates 'self' from everything outside self – not just 'other', but also all historical events, all things that change and shift. Feminist theory, by challenging the idea that gender was part of this essential self, caused a 'rupture', a break that revealed the constructedness of this natural self. From this rupture came the post-

structuralist idea of selfhood as a constructed idea, something not 'naturally' produced by bodies or by birth. Selfhood, in post-structuralist theory, becomes 'subjecthood' or 'subjectivity'. The switch in terms is recognition that, first of all, human identity is shaped by language, by becoming a subject in language. The shift from 'self' to 'subject' marks the idea that subjects are the product of signs, or signifiers, which make up our ideas of identity. Selves are stable and essential; subjects are constructed, hence provisional, changing, and quite often redefined or reconstructed. Selves, in this sense, are like signifiers within a rigid system, whose meanings are fixed; subjects by contrast, are like signifiers in a system with more play, more multiplicity of meaning. Thus, ideas about sexuality as an innate or essentialist category became open to reformulation. This is where gay/lesbian studies, as a discipline and as the academic arm of a political movement began, in the early to mid-1980s. It is harder to define sexuality in part because of the way our culture has always taught us to think about it. While gender may be a matter of style of dress, sexuality seems to be about biology, about how bodies operate on the basic level. Our culture tends to define sexuality in two ways: in terms of animal instincts, of behaviours programmed by hormones or by seasonal cycles, over which our free will has no control; and in terms of moral and ethical choices, of behaviours that are coded as either good or evil, moral or immoral, and over which we are supposed to have complete and rigid control.

Gay/lesbian studies – looks at the kinds of social structures and social constructs which define our ideas about sexuality as an act and sexuality as identity. As an academic field, gay/lesbian studies look at how notions of homosexuality have historically being defined. Gay/lesbian studies also looks at how various cultures, or various time periods, have enforced ideas about what kinds of sexuality are normal and which are abnormal, which are moral and which are immoral. Gay/lesbian literary criticism, a subset of gay/lesbian studies, looks at images of sexuality, and ideas of normative and deviant behaviour, in a number of

ways; by finding gay/lesbian authors whose sexuality has been masked or erased in history and biography; by looking at texts by gay/lesbian authors to discover particular literary themes, techniques and perspectives which come from being a homosexual in a heterosexual world; by looking at texts – by gay or straight authors – which depict homosexuality and heterosexuality, or which focus on sexuality as a constructed (rather than essential) concept; and by looking at how literary texts by gay or straight authors operate in conjunction with non-literary texts to provide a culture with ways to think about sexuality.

Queer theory emerges from gay/lesbian studies' attention to the social construction of categories of normative and deviant sexual behaviour. But while gay/lesbian studies focussed largely on questions of homosexuality, queer theory expands its realm of investigation. Queer theory looks at, and studies, and has a political critique of, anything that falls into normative and deviant categories, particularly sexual activities and identities. The word 'queer', as it appears in the dictionary, has a primary meaning of 'odd', 'peculiar', 'out of the ordinary'. Queer theory concerns itself with any and all forms of sexuality that are 'queer' in this sense – and then, by extension, with the normative behaviours and identities which define what is 'queer'. Thus, queer theory expands the scope of its analysis to all kinds of behaviour, including those which are gender-bending as well as those which involve 'queer' non-normative forms of sexuality. Queer theory insists that all sexual behaviour, all concepts linking sexual behaviours to sexual identities, and all categories of normative and deviant sexualities, are social constructs sets of signifiers which create certain types of social meaning. Queer theory follows feminist theory and gay/lesbian studies in rejecting the idea that sexuality is an essentialist category, something determined by biology or judged by internal standards of morality and truth. For queer theorists, sexuality is a complex array of social codes and forces, forms of individual acitivity and institutional power, which interact to shape the ideas of what is normative and what is deviant at any particular moment, and

which then operate under what is 'natural', 'essential', 'biological', or 'god-given'. Broadly speaking, queer describes those gestures or analytical models which dramatise incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire. Resisting that model of stability- which claims heterosexuality as its origin, - queer focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire. Institutionally, queer has been associated most prominently with lesbian and gay subjects- but its analytic framework also includes such topics as cross-dressing, hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery. The association between queer practices and deviancy opens the growth and popularity of the queer culture which as an ideological standpoint represents the queer community - its arts, lifestyles, institutions, writings, politics, relationships and everything encompassed in culture. Eve Sedgwick drawing on the work of Derrida and Foucault offers a summary of what queer theory aims to cover. 'Queer', she writes in *Tendencies (1994)*, can refer to 'the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made or can't be made to signify monolithically'.

The main project of queer theory is exploring the contestations of the categorisation of gender and sexuality. Theorists claim that identities are not fixed- they cannot be categorised and labelled – because identities consist of many varied components and that to categorise by one characteristic is wrong. Queer theory, thus includes a wide array of previously considered non-normative sexualities and sexual practices in its list of identities. The recent intervention of the word 'queer' in academic discourse suggests that queer theory's debunking of stable sexes, genders and sexualities develops out of a specifically lesbian and gay reworking of the post-structuralist figuring of identity as a constellation of multiple and unstable positions. Both the essentialist and the constructionist paradigm became associated with the identity politics which powerfully marked lesbian and gay

activism before and after the Stone Wall riots in 1969. During the Post-Stone Wall era, personal identity was more overtly sexualised and politicised. The debate about identity which is a significant feature in the works of queer theorists like Butler, De Lauretis and Sedgwick connects with an on-going investigation of the notion of identity in the historical-philosophical contests. Queer theorists are wary of identity politics believing as they do that identity is fluid. Queer theorists have also argued that identity politics tend to reinforce a web of heterosexual and heterosexists 'norms'. Building on these insights, queer theorists have questioned the solidarity and pride aspects of homosexual liberation movements. They argue among other things that lesbians and gays should not be grouped together given that their separate histories are defined by gender differences. Judith Butler in this sense, writes, 'identity can become a site of contest and revision' (cited in Barry 1995: 144). Taking this further, she argues that all identities, including gender identities, are 'a kind of impersonation and approximation...a kind of imitation for which there is no original' (ibid. 145). This opens the way to a post-modernist notion of identity as a constant switching among a range of different roles and positions drawn from a kind of limitless data bank of potentialities. Further, what is called into question here is the distinction between the naturally-given, normative self of heterosexuality and the rejected other of homosexuality.

Butler outlines the queer project as activating an identity politics attuned to the constraining effects of naming, of delineating a foundational category which precedes and underwrites political intervention, that it may better be understood as promoting a non-identity or even anti-identity-politics. The 'Other', in these formulations, is as much something within us as beyond us, and 'Self' and 'Other' are always implicated in each other, in the root sense of this word, which means to be intertwined or folded into each other. As basic psychology shows, what is identified as the external 'Other' is usually part of the self which is rejected and hence projected outwards. Another critic, who argues the fluidity of

identity, is Eve Sedgwick in her highly influential *Epistemology of the Closet*. Sedgwick considers how coming 'out of the closet' (openly revealing one's gay or lesbian sexual orientation) is not a single absolute act. Gayness may be openly declared to family and friends but not to employers and colleagues. Hence, being 'in' or 'out' is not a simple dichotomy or a once and for all event. Sedgwick's point, then, concerns the way subject identity is necessarily a complex mixture of chosen allegiances, social position, and professional roles, rather than a fixed inner essence.

Queer, then, is an identity category that has no interest in consolidating or even stabilising itself. It maintains its critique of identity - focussed movements enabled in part by the knowledge that identities are fictitious – that is, produced by and productive of material effects but nevertheless arbitrary, contingent and ideologically motivated. For Halperin, as for Butler, queer 'does not designate a class of already objectified pathologies or perversions...rather, it describes a horizon of possibilities whose precise extent and heterogeneous scope cannot in principle be delimited in advance' (cited in Jagose, http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/ copyright.html). Queer thus, is an identity under construction, a site of permanent becoming. It is likened to language which is never static but is ever evolving. The key element is to view sexuality as constructed through discourse, with no less or set of constituted pre-existing sexual realities but rather identities constructed through discursive operations.

1.2 Post-Colonial Criticism

The past couple of decades have seen the publication of a vast number of cultural critiques of empire and its aftermath designated with the label 'post-colonial'. Despite their many disparities of perspective and subject-matter, what the critical texts and studies which make up this body of discourse share, is a single common reference point. They are all

broadly concerned with experiences of exclusion, denigration, and resistance under systems of colonial control. Thus, the term post-colonialism addresses itself to the historical, political, cultural, and textual ramifications of the colonial encounter between the West and the non-West, dating from the sixteenth century to the present day. It considers how this encounter shaped all those who were party to it: the colonizers as well as the colonized. In particular, studies of post-colonial cultures, texts, and politics are interested in responses to colonial oppression which were and are oppositional and contestatory, and not only openly so, but those which were subtle, sly, oblique, and apparently underhand in their protests. 'Post-colonialism' is thus, a name for critical theoretical approach in literary and cultural studies, but it is also, as importantly, designates a politics of transformational resistance to unjust and unequal forms of political and cultural authority which extends back across the twentieth century, and beyond (Boehmer 2006: 340).

Post-colonial criticism draws attention to issues of cultural difference in literary texts and is one of several critical approaches focussed in the works of Hollinghurst and Selvadurai apart from the issues of gender, class and sexual orientation. The ancestry of post-colonial criticism can be traced to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, published in French in 1961, and voicing what might be called 'cultural resistance' to France's African Empire. Fanon (a psychiatrist from Martinique) argued that the first step for 'colonialised' people in finding a voice and an identity is to reclaim their own past. For centuries the European colonising power will have devalued the nations past, seeing its pre-colonial era as a pre-civilised limbo, or even as a historical void. Children, both black and white, will have been taught to see history, culture and progress as beginning with the arrival of the Europeans. If the first step towards a post-colonial perspective is to reclaim one's own past, then the second is to begin to erode the colonialist ideology by which that past has been devalued. Despite the importance of theoretical concepts like orientalism, subalternity and hybridity some of the

most influential and compelling of post-colonial ideas continue to be those which initially at least, emerge out of post-colonial literatures.

Post-colonial writers reject the claims to universalise canonical Western literature and seek to show its limitations of outlook, especially its general inability to empathise across boundaries of cultural and ethnic difference. Hollinghurst and Selvadurai point out the cultural and social repressions that are experienced by their characters for being homosexual in a heterosexual society. Post-colonial writers also examine the representations of other cultures in literature. They show how such literature is often evasively and crucially silent on matters concerned with colonisation and imperialism. They also foreground questions of cultural difference and diversity and examine their treatment in relevant literary works. Post-colonial writers also celebrate hybridity and 'cultural polypalency', that is, the situation whereby individuals and groups belong simultaneously to more than one culture (Barry 2002). As Shyam Selvadurai states after writing *Cinnamon Gardens* 'It's not a novel that's merely set in that period – it's a parable for today. So far, when I have sat down to write, I have in mind a Sri Lankan readership. The Sri Lankan English-speaking upper-middle class – it's their sacred cows I am attacking. It's them I am addressing. Ceylon is a multicultural society, a mosaic, and we can't use a British system, a Whitehall system here' (Smith 1998: 3). Selvadurai's works have posed creative challenges to Western understandings of the real world and its relations to the smooth unfolding of identity - in formation. It is also within the pages of post-colonial texts that the concept of subversive anti-colonial rewriting – the dismantling and realigning of colonial systems meaning has been practically and forcefully demonstrated.

Post-colonial writers also develop a perspective, not just applicable to postcolonial literatures, whereby states of marginality, plurality and perceived 'Otherness 'are seen as sources of energy and potential change. Hollinghurst and Selvadurai ranks as writers

celebrating this status of marginality, hybridity and the sexual 'other' as represented in their works. Their thematic concerns have been contested as their novels portray richly developed portraits of the ways in which sexuality, class, race, art and history enter into complex interrelationships focusing almost exclusively on the experiences of gay men and gay adolescence. Both Hollinghurst and Selvadurai as post-colonial gay writers mutually project political agendas against repressive authority seeking social justice for the long crisis of sexual definition and setting right the view that same-sex object choice is not a matter of liminality or transitivity. Hollinghurst through his representation of the Margaret Thatcher 1980s Conservative Party and the relationship between politics and homosexuality and Selvadurai by projecting the conventional morality and the power given to such forms of discrimination to downgrade certain cultures in relation to others through the characters of the Mudaliyar and the Mr Chelvaratnam. Hollinghurst and Selvadurai as post-colonial writers thus, questions, overturns and critically refracts traditional set-up authority, its epistemologies and forms of violence and its claims to superiority by engaging in questioning through their works which aims to challenge structural inequalities bringing about social and political justice.

1.3 Review of Literature

Foucault's (1998) book, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality: 1* explores the evolving social, economic and political forces that have shaped our attitudes to sex and shows how we are in the process of making a science of sex which is devoted to the analysis of desire rather than the increase of pleasure. His work in the field of sexuality makes sense in relation to changes in sexuality as well as in relation to his important theorizations of knowledge, discourse and power. It also continues to inform how sexualities and genders are theorised today. Bristow (2007) in his book, *Sexuality: The New Critical Idiom* introduces readers to the most influential contemporary theories of sexual desire. Revealing how

nineteenth-century scientists invented 'sexuality', he investigates why this term has been the source of such controversy in modern culture. Analysing the work of Michel Foucault, Joseph considers how the history of sexuality paved the way for queer theory today. Sullivan (2008) in his book *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* aims to consider critiques of normalising ways of knowing and of being that may not always initially be evident as sex-specific – hence the inclusion of topics such as community, popular culture, race and so on. This sort of approach is crucial, if we are to understand the broader significance of queer theory and the extensive range of ways in which notions of sexuality and gender impact – at times implicitly – on everyday life. Whilst the list of topics covered in the book is far from exhaustive, the theories and issues discussed do lend themselves to other applications. For instance, the analysis of the culturally and historically specific ways in which transsexualism and transgender have been understood and experienced may well prove useful for those interested in intersex issues. The aim of the book is to queer – to make strange, to frustrate, to counteract, to deligitimise, to camp up- heteronormativeknowledges and institutions, and the subjectivities and socialities that are (in)formed by them and that (in)form them. Freud (1905) in his book *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*was originally published by Freud in 1905 and reedited by him over the course of his life. The edition reprinted is the 1949 London edition translated by James Strachey. In this work Freud advanced his theory of sexuality, in particular its relation to childhood. The three essays are 'The Sexual Aberrations', 'Infantile Sexuality' and 'The Transformation of Puberty'.. Freud's work, like Foucault's, is essential reading. While some of his specific arguments surrounding the sexual development of the subject raise rather than resolve problems, his contributions to how we understand sexuality and everyday life, sexuality and desire, sexuality and culture, are fascinating and deeply relevant to contemporary debates. Freud's work has been important to literary, feminist,

Marxist, queer and Lacanian studies that it is worth making the effort to grapple with some of his arguments and ideas

Butler (2007) in her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* states the aim of the text was to "open up the field of possibility for gender without dictating which kinds of possibilities ought to be realised." She further explains that the text sought to wield a discourse of truth to delegitimate minority gendered and sexual practices. *Gender Trouble* had considerable bearings on much of the thinking which took place in the sphere of feminist theory during the 1990's. Butler (1993) in her other book *Bodies That Matter* states the discourse of 'construction' that has for the most part circulated in feminist theory is perhaps not quite adequate to the task at hand. It is not enough to argue that there is no prediscursive 'sex' that acts as the stable point of reference on which, or in relation to which, the cultural construction of gender proceeds. To claim that sex is already gendered, already constructed, is not yet to explain in which way the 'materiality' of sex is forcibly produced. What are the constraints by which bodies are materialised as 'sexed', and how are we to understand the 'matter' of sex, and of bodies more generally, as the repeated and violent circumscription of cultural intelligibility? Which bodies come to matter – and why? This text is offered, then, in part as a rethinking of some parts of *Gender Trouble* that have caused confusion, but also as an effort to think further about the workings of heterosexual hegemony in the crafting of matters sexual and political. *Bodies That Matter* consolidated Butler's place and impact in the sphere of queer theory and studies.

Sedgwick (2008) in her book *Epistemology of the Closet* questions how we, thinking from one fleeting historical moment, can wrap our minds properly around the mix of immemorial, seemingly fixed discourses of sexuality and, at the same time, around discourses that may be much more recent, ephemeral, contingent. We can't even tell reliably which ones are which. So it shouldn't be surprising that, as current as *Epistemology of the Closet* may

feel in many respects, in others it bears the mark of its origin in a different decade – not to mention a different century and millennium. Sedgwick proposes that many of the major nodes of thought and knowledge in twentieth-century Western culture as a whole are structured –indeed fractured – by a chronic, now endemic crisis of homo/heterosexual definition, indicatively male, dating from the end of the twentieth century. The book argues that an understanding of virtually any aspect of modern Western culture must be, not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/ heterosexual definition; and it will assume that the appropriate place for the critical analysis to begin is from the relatively decentered perspective of modern gay and antihomophobic theory. As a critical rearticulation of various theoretical practices, including feminist and queer studies, Sedgwick (1985)in her book, *Between Men: English Literature & Male Homosocial Desire* talks about gender studies, men's studies and gay studies turning queer theory from a latent to a manifest discipline. Sedgwick's work has enlivened and enriched the study of sexualities over the last decade.

Nardi's (2000) book, *Gay Masculinities* attempts to understand men and masculinity providing a comprehensive understanding of gender and gender relationships in the contemporary world. The chapters illustrate the conflation of gender and sexual orientation and raises salient questions about social construction and relational nature of femininity and masculinity. It also attempts to understand how contemporary gay men in the United States engage in contest, reproduce, and modify hegemonic masculinities. Vicinus (1994) has in his article; *TheAdolescent Boy: Fin de Siecle Femme Fatale* discusses the adolescent boy as a vessel where the author as well as the reader could pour his or her anxieties, fantasies, and sexual desires. He also points out the striking feature of the late Victorian culture with its emotional focus on boys.

Aaron (2003) in his article, *Choosing Sides: Gender and Sexuality as Boundaries in Funny Boy and Cereus Blooms at Night* examines gender stereotypes imposed by family and society that explicitly demarcate the separate words of boy and girl. Arjie's sexuality is negotiated solely within the confines of gender, male and female. His exclusion from both the boys and girls suggests that Arjie himself inhabits some third space in between these two, but that third space is merely described as funny and never named. Waters (1998) portrays Shyam's figure as a gay man in relation to his protagonist Balendran in *Cinnamon Gardens* in his article, *Shyam Selvadurai on his Alternate Selves in Cinnamon Gardens*. He imagines Balendran as a phantom figure walking step by step with him. It also relatively brings out Shyam's decision to return to Sri Lanka to get to the emotional core of that 'phantom self' and the hurdles associated with rebelling against conformity. Shankar (1999) in his article, *Love, Rebellion and Punishment in Ceylon* elaborately looks into disturbing stories involving Hindus and Christians, Tamils, Sinhalese and the British – the gays and lesbians and heterosexuals. It also examines the price individuals paid for their rebellion against conventional life. Rigidity around Annalukshmi and Balendran in *Cinnamon Gardens* and around Arjie Chelvaratnam in *Funny Boy* brings out the challenges these characters undertake to meet societal norms.

Hitchings (2004) in his paper *The Double Curve* combines the fathoms of male sexuality as presented in *The Line of Beauty* with an unsentimental moral intelligence and an ear for the glorious fatuities of fine living that recalls Thackeray as well as Firbank. It also talks about the rampant nature of HIV infusing the characters' lusts with a deathly significance. The article casts a revealing light on the implications of the virus for homosexual man. It also points out the vastly disingenuous treatment of homosexuality by politicians. The article also presents characters like Gerald openly demonizing homosexuality and gay self-expressions, laughing at the idea of equal rights during his conversation with

Nick, the main protagonist. Cox (2001) in his article, *The Pain and Joy of The Spell* presents the pain and joy of *The Spell* as a comedy of manners depicting the torrid emotions and passions simmering below a very well bred British unctuous demeanour. It also looks into the inside of life rather than the outside dropping the formal, crusty facade to the real self inside and the experiences associated with homosexuality and the hallucinatory, rapturous narcotics in contemporary London.

Penrose (2001) in his article, *Hidden in History: Female Homoeroticism and Women of a 'Third Nature' in the South Asian Past* talks about the role of 'hijra' which is notably absent in most present-day South Asian cultures as a masculine 'third-gender' role for women. He mentions on 'lesbian invisibility' in South Asia and the South Asian Diaspora, recounting frightful tales of women who identify as lesbians but whose families force them to marry. Although female gender variance now finds little acceptance except in a few remote areas of India, an examination of ancient and pre-colonial texts reveals that distinct social and economic roles once existed for women thought to belong to a third gender. Hidden in history, these women dressed in men's clothing, served as porters and personal bodyguards to kings and queens, and even took an active role in sex with women. Duberman, Vicinus and Chauncey (Ed. 1991) in their book *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* has a really useful collection of essays on lesbian and gay history. Without peer, this volume, gathers together the works of the most exciting scholars in the dynamic field of homosexual studies, making this a ground-breaking and provocative work that reveals the history of gays and lesbians in different cultures and eras.

Misra and Chandiramani (2005) in their volume *Sexuality, Gender and Rights: Exploring Theory and Practice in South and Southeast Asia* documents work across intersecting categories and seeks to demonstrate how linking gender and sexuality issues with human rights can have practical impacts on individual lives. Although the collections of

articles cover sexuality, gender and rights, the weight of the volume is on sexuality, since this area has been the subject of less investigation than the field of gender and rights. The book explains the theoretical underpinnings of the project, tracing the development of the linkages of sexuality, gender and rights, both worldwide and in Asia. It suggests that the concept of 'sexual rights', which links different aspects of sexuality to a range of specific rights claims (e.g., for equality, non-discrimination, freedom from violence and the right to sexual health) is being increasingly used to build the conditions for new claims of inclusion. It then outlines the aims of the volume, before concluding with a discussion of its practical implications. Roy (1999) in her book *Patterns of Feminist Consciousness in Indian Women Writers* states an era of rapid social changes, Indian women writers have a vital role in defining and formulating contemporary consciousness. This book is a significant comparative study of five selected novels on the basis of different patterns of feminist consciousness depicted in the narratives. The study reveals interesting variations in the manner in which different authors handle the problem of female selfhood. Making flexible use of a wide range of feminist theories, the book explores the fictional depiction of various repressive forces marginalising Indian women, the gradual questioning of these forces in the narratives and the ultimate resolutions suggested, either directly through the characters, or indirectly through devices like images, symbols, narrative structures and strategies., making a right contribution to the growing corpus of feminist literature.

1.4 Alan Hollinghurst and His Works

Alan Hollinghurst was born in Stroud, Gloucestershire, England in 1954. He read English at Magdalen College, Oxford graduating in 1975 and subsequently took the further Degree of Master of Literature in the year 1979. While in Oxford, he was awarded the Newdigate Prize for Poetry in 1974. Late in the 1970's he became a Lecturer at Magdalen and then at Somerville College and Corpus Christi College, Oxford. In 1981, he moved on to

lecture at University College, London and joined *The Times Literary Supplement* the same year as the paper's Deputy Editor. Hollinghurst is openly gay (Stephen 2004: 1) and lives in London.

Hollinghurst was one of *Granta* magazine's 'Best of Young British Novelist' in 1993, his writing is therefore, clever and highly literary. His acclaimed first novel *The Swimming Pool Library* (1988) won the Somerset Maugham Award (1989) and was also hailed as 'The Best Book about Gay Life yet Written by an English Author' (White 1988: 2). The novel gives a vivid account of London gay life in the early 1980's through the story of a young aristocrat, William Beckwith, and his involvement with the elderly Lord Nantwich. It focuses on the friendship of two men, William Beckwith, a young gay aristocrat who leads a life of priviledge and promiscuity, and the elderly Lord Nantwitch, an old Africa hand, searching for someone to write his biography and inherit his traditions. A critical chance meeting in a gay locale public toilet between Beckwith and Lord Nantwitch where Beckwith saves the life of the elderly collapsed Lord Nantwich; leads to a friendship between the avuncular survivor and his life saver.

It takes place in London during 1983 and in retrospect constitutes and extended elegy to a pre-AIDS era of reckless sex and open relationships. Lord Nantwitch belongs to a more furtive era in gay life. The peer asks Beckwith to write his biography, and the materials teasingly given out by him piece together the 'crazes mosaic' of his life, as a Colonial administrator in Sudan during the 1920s who later served time in prison for homosexual offences. The novel beautifully balances an air of mystery with a rich portrait of past homosexual history – from the romantic 1920s to the promiscuous 1970s-80s. *The Swimming Pool Library* is an enthralling, darkly erotic novel of homosexuality before the scourge of AIDS. The novel possesses a chilling clarity for ways of life that can no longer be lived with impunity. Disease and death are far from the mind of young connoisseur William Beckwith,

who is initially conscious only of 'riding high on sex and self esteem…it was my time, my *belle epogue'* (Hollinghurst 1988: 6). Beckwith's hedonistic lifestyle revolves around daily exercise-and-gossiping visits to the Corinthian Club, 'gloomy underworld full of life, purpose and sexuality' (Hollinghurst 1988: 13).

The novel's title emerges in chapter 7 of the novel where William explains about his prep school, Winchester College (for some errant Wykehamical reason) where prefects were known as 'Librarians', the designation often taking a prefix to indicate the particular prefect's area of responsibility. 'So there were the Chapel Librarian, the Hall Librarian, the Garden Librarian and even more charmingly, the Running and the Cricket Librarians' (Hollinghurst 1989: 163). Will was a keen swimmer at school as afterwards, so he is appointed 'Swimming Pool Librarian'. His father writing to offer congratulation, amusedly comments, '…you must tell me what sort of books they have in the Swimming Pool Library' (Hollinghurst 1989: 163). Also at Charles Nantwich's home there is a room that has served as a library and was itself once a Roman bath and, Will exchanges trashy homoerotic novels with one of the lifeguards at the swimming pool at the Corinthian club. This as well, then is a swimming pool library.

The novel is pervaded with references to Ronald Firbank, up until the very last page. Many of Ronald Firbank's novels are also mentioned which echoes themes central to *The Swimming Pool Library*; secrets and discretions, extreme old age, colonialism, race and camp; the sense of deeper truths residing behind a thin facade of artifice. Homophobia is addressed in many forms in the novel through getting arrested by the police and by gay-bashing. At Nantwich's house, Will and Charles talk about Ronald Firbank. Charles gives Will a beautiful edition of one of Firbank's novels as a gift. Afterwards, Will goes to Arthur's address in a working class area of London and calls but there is no answer. (Arthur is William Beckwith's black boyfriend). Returning, he encounters a group of skinheads who demand his

watch, attack and queer-bash him, destroying the Firbank novel in the process. The novel is also concerned with the lives of gay men before the Gay Liberation Movement, both in London and in the colonies of the British Empire. It beautifully welds the standard conventions of fiction to a tale of modern transgressions.

It was followed by *The Folding Star* (1994) which was short listed for the Booker Prize for Fiction and won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize (for fiction). This hypnotic and exquisitely written novel tells the story of Edward Manners, a sentimentally detached thirty-three year old English gay man who leaves England to earn his living as a private language tutor in a Flemish city. The exquisite prose of this novel delineates a man's aching melancholy and longing for love despite his odd sexual economy during the few years prior to his arrival in Belgium. Edward falls desperately in love with Luc Altidore, his student. This desire is inflated by continual frustration and is pushed to absurdly funny lengths when the boy later goes on the run. At the same time, he is employed to work with Marcel's father, Paul, on a catalogue of an obscure artist, Orst, a symbolist artist of the 1890s with a tortured love life who, he later finds out, came to a squalid end many years later during the wartime occupation. EdgardOrst's pursuit of his muse, a beautiful English actress, to her death, begins to infiltrate Manners' own desperate feelings for Luc. Edward's obsession with Luc causes more problems than he could possibly imagine, and reveals secrets he could not dream of. The adoration quickly becomes a morbid infatuation that manifests into a pepperoni type of spying on the boy during his weekend excursion. He has no doubt driven Edward mad at times – he feels empty and is aching for him. The boy has affected everything Edward does to the point that he suffers without feeling afflicted. The stream of consciousness reflects Manners's despair over the unfulfilled love. He can only console himself with other affairs to which no sentiment constitutes, other than the minimal trust of two people pleasuring themselves together without much grasp of friendship or understanding.

The Folding Star is about the unrequited love that leaves a man constantly longing, without the prospect of ever finding love. The mixed feelings of anxious longing and fear of commitment constitute a poignant air that hovers over the novel. It delivers the message that the course of true love never runs straight. The novel is a stoic tale about the quest for love. Edward Manners lives among many gay men not only in the regard of the longing for a relationship but also in the sense of the nervousness, excitement, sensuality and anxiety. It exquisitely depicts the nuances of affection, the anticipation for intimacy, and the desire of fulfilment of unconditional needs. This novel has been compared by many critics to Thomas Mann's novella *Death in Venice*. Like his forerunner von Aschenbach in Thomas Mann's novel who obsesses over the beautiful Tadzio, and the artist Orst, Edward is a lover of beauty, not a lover of people and people's beauty is fleeting. The long-lost Jane Byron, beloved model for Orst, had swum out to sea at Ostend, Belgium, decades ago and was never seen again leaving the artist with a life-long obsession for painting her image. The beautiful youth Luc, obsessive love interest of the protagonist Manners, also disappears. Thus, the disappearance of Jane Byron, Orst's beautiful model, and later of Luc, Edward's version of Tadzio, represents how cruel life can be to those who worship at Beauty's altar. Luc is last seen looking out from one of many photographs of missing children on a bulletin board at the beach in Ostend. Thus, like Jane Byron, he ultimately ends up existing only within a frame, and his disappearance is poetically linked to the 'shiftless' North Sea waves at the famous beach. With this novel, Hollinghurst exposes us fearlessly to the consequences of unfulfilling, annihilating desire.

His next novel *The Spell (1998)* is a gay comedy of manners which interweaves the complex relationship between forty year old architect Robin Woodfield, his alcoholic lover Justin and Justin's ex-timid civil servant Alex, who falls in love with Robin's son Danny. The novel is much shorter than his other novels and funnier. The story alternates between Dorset

– where Robin shares a house with the impossibly self involved Justin and London. When Justin's ex, Alex, arrives for a weekend in the country, the atmosphere is instantly rich with jealousy and power plays. And after the trio is joined by a younger gay man, Danny who turns out to be Robin's son the attractions and duplicities multiply exponentially. Various sub-plots and parings of characters are interwoven around a central theme of romantic sexual disillusionment. Most of the characters are metropolitan sophisticates in search of good country life, who drive down from London to the Dorset weekend cottage. Alex is introduced to the drug 'ecstasy' by Robin's son Danny who also introduces him to 'house' and 'techno' music. Alex starts on a journey of self-discovery, feeling himself, 'released' by the drugs, allowing himself to indulge in romantic illusions about Danny. Alex's despairing involvement eventually reconciles him sadder and wiser to life. Money- its capacity for instant access to pleasure, with ambiguous moral consequences is a persistent minor thing in most of Hollinghurst's novels. *The Spell* also has the theme of money, sex and art heartbreakingly, entwined.

The play has musical prose and is highly sensual apart from being deeply witty. Even the birds in this novel modulate their song from somnolent calls to outright chuckles – echoing the pleasures and absurdities of the humans they circle. And the author's feel for the easy intimacies and brutalities that his characters exchange is unmatched. Apart from effectively capturing different generations and bringing in the theme of homosexuality Hollinghurst deals openly with the theme of AIDS and drugs. AIDS is dealt with very obliquely and marginally and as a gay writer this was an expectation in his writing. He explores the lives of gay men, their internal feelings and thoughts with the intention of driving a change in attitudes towards homosexuality. The novel attempts an ambitious exploration of gay male experiences and relationships. Each of the four principle characters muddles along professionally, socially and romantically in the grip of their own distinctive

obsession or spell. Moving confidently among their several viewpoints, Hollinghurst brings these four into an out of varying degrees of intimacy and commitment.

His most recent novel, *The Line of Beauty (2004)* traces a decade of change and tragedy. It won the 2004 Men Booker Prize for Fiction; it was also short-listed for the Whitbread Novel Award, the British Book Award, Author of the Year and Commonwealth Writers Prize. The book touches upon the emergence of HIV/AIDS, as well as the relationship between politics and homosexuality, exposing heterosexual hypocrisy towards homosexual promiscuity. The novel has been compared to Antony Powell's *A Dance to the Music of Time* (Hickling 2004: 4) with special regard to Powell's character Nicholas Jenkins (Quinn 2004: 4). The protagonist has also been likened to Nick Carraway in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Set in the UK in the early to mid-1980s the story surrounds the post-Oxford life of the protagonist, Nick guest who is a James scholar in the making and a tripper in the fast gay culture of the time, is staying in London with the Fedden family – whose son, Toby, was Nick's dearest friend at Oxford. The book is divided into three sections, dated 1983, 1986 and 1987. The first section shows Nick moving into the Notting Hill mansion of Gerald Fedden, one of Thatcher's Tory MPs, at the request of the minister's son, Toby. Nick becomes settled on the less worldly business of post graduate study specifically, a thesis concerned with style in the works of Conrad, Meredith and Henry James. Nick is a typical Jamesian scholar obsessed with aesthetic beauty, who is coming of age against the backdrop of Thatcher – era England. He is an outsider – gay, living with a wealthy family. Nick is typical of the young man who populates Hollinghurst's novel: beautiful, intelligent, scholarly yet thoughtless. His hosts are seduced by his gravity and shy polish and mesmerised by his wit and perspicacity. Nick in the novel is a spectator disguised as an actor. Although Nick is not the novel's narrator, events are consistently seen from his point of view and the result is that the novel's pages are suffused with a queasy aestheticism.

The novel also presents the rampant nature of HIV by infusing the characters' lust with a deadly significance.

As in Hollinghurst's previous books, the theme of sex and lust is minutely depicted. Of necessity, every male character has his sexual potential assayed revealing light on the implications of the virus for homosexual men. He also points out the vastly disingenuous treatment of homosexuality by politicians. Nick by his proximity to the Feddens attends swank parties, packed with MPs, cabinet ministers and nobility, all of whom harbour the expectation that 'the Lady' might appear at any minute. The book explores the attention between Nick's intimate relationship with the Feddens, in whose parties and holidays he participates, and the realities of his sexuality and gay life, which the Feddens accept only to the extent of never mentioning it. Nick has his first romance with a black council worker, Leo Charles whom he meets through a Lonely Hearts Club. The relationship is a sexual education for Nick. Leo dies from AIDS, presumably contracted from his ex-boyfriend Pete. Nick later develops a relationship with Antoine Wani Ouradi, the son of a rich Lebanese businessman and a friend of Nick and Toby from Oxford University. He later contracts AIDS from Nick. He remains closeted until the end. Nick's transgressions in the novel supposedly enlightens Gerald Fedden, father of Toby, a conservative MP, yet, even after several illuminating conversations with Nick, he still maintains the culture of intolerance. Appearing on the BBCs 'Question Time' he laughs off the idea of equal rights with regards to homosexual men. Yet, as Hollinghurst implies, Gerald and his like cause far more damage than any disease, their blithely self-serving policies devastate swaths of Britain and their sexual conduct destroys more families than any amount of gay self-expression. The novel thus, explores the themes of hypocrisy, homosexuality, madness and wealth, with the emerging AIDS crisis forming a backdrop to the book's conclusion. The title of the book *The Line of Beauty* refers to the double 'S' of the ogee shape, described by William Hogarth in his *The Analysis of Beauty* as

the model of beauty. Conjured by Nick to describe a lover's body, it also illustrates the ways in which opposite compulsions and conflicting feelings flow into each other incessantly.

Most of Hollinghurst's novels are conceived brilliantly on the solipsism of love, the rituals of homosexuality, the vertigo of passion and the apocalypse of AIDS. Though most of his writings have been marginalised by its flagrant queerness and its opulently open descriptions of homosexuality and sex, yet perhaps these are strengths in Hollinghurst as a contemporary post-colonial gay writer. Three of Hollinghurst's four novels are tragicomedies of manners in which a history is gradually made explicit through the lives of the protagonist. Through these novels Hollinghurst brings to light a buried history of gay London, from the Romans to the 1950s, its writers and musicians from Shakespeare to Pope, Wilde to James, E.M. Foster and Brittan to Firbank. Themes of violence and racism darken some of these books while some talk about the darkening shadow of AIDS and death. His three novels *The Folding Star, The Line of Beauty* and *The Spell* all talk about the penumbral presence of AIDS with frequent connections between sex, AIDS and money. Although the main protagonists of all his novels are young gay men, his novels strictly speaking do not come under the category of a 'gay novel' but is more about the unravelling of a family that happens to have a gay man at its centre. His novels are a survey of gay life over the past two decades exposing mainly gay London and also revealing shades of his own sexuality. Alan Hollinghurst ranks as one of Britain's premier writers of fiction. He owes this status to a combination of stylistic qualities and thematic interests as well as to the socio-cultural context within which his work has emerged. His style has a touch of wit, lyricism and pitch-perfect dialogue which finds great admiration from many fellow writers as well. His novels are a presentation of richly developed portraits of the ways in which sexuality, class, race, art and history enter into complex interrelationships. They excel at psychological depth and social satire apart from focussing on the experiences of highly educated gay men. It is this

focus that also explains the importance of historical context in the establishment of his reputation as Britain's first and foremost gay novelist – a status which was solidified by the aesthetic merits of his later works, culminating in his winning of 2004 Men Booker Prize.

1.5 Shyam Selvadurai and His Works

Shyam Selvadurai is a Sri Lankan Canadian novelist, essayist and a writer for television, born in 1965 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and is of mixed Tamil and Sinhala background, (mother – Sinhalese, father – Tamil), members of conflicting ethnic groups whose troubles form a major theme in his work. Ethnic riots in 1983 drove the family to immigrate to Canada. Selvadurai was nineteen. He studied creative and professional writing as part of a Bachelor of Fine Arts Programme at York University. Upon graduation, he produced work for magazines and television. His fiction and essays have appeared in journals and anthologies. As a Sri Lankan-Canadian gay writer Shyam Selvadurai's literary output has been relatively modest thus far. *Funny Boy*, his first novel, was published to acclaim in 1994. It won the W.H. Smith/Books in Canada First Novel Award and, in the U.S; the Lambda Literary Award for Best Gay Men's Fiction and was named a Notable Book by the American Library Association. His second novel, *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) was short-listed for the Trillium Award in Canada, the Aloa Literary Award in Denmark and the PremioInternazionale Riccardo Bacchelli in Italy. Selvadurai's third novel, *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* published in 2005 was a finalist for Canada's most prestigious literary award, the Governor's General Awards, in the category of Children's Literature. It was honoured with a Lambda Literary Award in the Children's & Youth Literature category in 2006, the Canadian Library Association Book of the Year Award and the Silver Winner in the Young Adult Category of Foreword Magazine Book of the Year Award. He has also edited a collection of short stories, *Story Wallah: Short Fiction from South Asian Writers* (2004), which includes works by Salman Rushdie, Monica Ali and HanifKureishi, among others. He

is represented in the anthology by "Pigs Can't Fly," the first of the six stories that comprise *Funny Boy*.

Almost all of Selvadurai's works are informed by meticulous research and a haunting evocation of Sri Lanka, which remains vital in his imagination despite his having lived in Canada for so many years. All his novels have a subtle and deeply humane style, wit and perspicacity that establish him not only as an important chronicler of the complexities of social and cultural difference but also ensures his place as a significant figure in post-colonial and gay writing. As the Sri Lankan critic Prakrti has noted, 'Selvadurai's particular gift is to understand how such factors as ethnic tensions and the legacy of British colonial rule are interweaved with dominant ideologies of sexuality and gender' (Hunn 2005: 1).

His first novel *Funny Boy* announced Selvadurai as a major new voice in Canadian, post-colonial and gay literature. *Funny Boy* was set in the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo, in the seven years leading up to the bloodying riots that erupted in 1983 between the Buddhist Sinhalese majority and the minority Hindu Tamils. The novel is autobiographical in certain respects as it was the same communal riots that led Selvadurai's parents – his father Tamil, his mother Sinhalese to migrate from Sri Lanka. As an immigrant writer Selvadurai acknowledges the fact that a homeward pull to Sri Lanka inhabited his creative mind capturing a world that hunted his imagination. He further regards the isolation from that world and the act of migration important for the creation of *Funny Boy*. The novel is a moving and honest coming out story of, Arjie Chelvaratnam as he grows from a ridiculed 'funny boy' more content to dress up as 'bride-bride' with his female cousins than play cricket with the males, to an intelligent, reflective teenager dangerously awakened by his first love, rebellious schoolmate Shehan. Set in Sri Lanka, the novel charts a boy's loss of innocence as he grapples with family conflict, political realities and his homosexuality. *Funny Boy* is innovatively structured as 'a novel in six stories.' In structure, the novel bears

close resemblance to two novels published by gay writers in Canada during that period: Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony* (1995) and Derek McCormack's *Dark Rides* (1996).

The novel gives a brilliant portrait of the anxieties aroused by gender non-conformity, especially in patriarchal societies. The story revolves around Arjie Chelvaratnam who hates sports and enjoys wearing his aunt's jewellery and playing the role of bride in imaginary weddings. His worried father, a wealthy hotelier, sends him to a strict private academy hoping it will force his son 'to become a man' (Selvadurai 1994: 205). Instead, Arjun, rebelling against a sadistic principle, strikes up an intense friendship with a fellow renegade pupil, Shehan, who is rumoured to be gay. After their first sexual encounter, Arjun's immediate feelings are anger and guilt, but he gradually comes to accept his sexuality and his love for Shehan. The story is shot through with the tensions and bloody violence between Sri Lanka's Buddhist Sinhalese majority and it's Hindu Tamil minority. In loving Shehan, a Sinhalese, Arjun, who is Tamil, breaks two taboos. Retribution follows and in 1983 Arjun and his family migrate to Canada as penniless refugees. Selvadurai in the novel captures his protagonist's difficult passage into his own identity as a Sri Lankan and also as a homosexual in Sri Lanka amid the political/ethnic tensions. The novel won the Lambda Literary Award for gay male fiction and the books in Canada First Novel Award. In 2006, CBC radio presented a radio dramatisation of the novel, directed by the filmmaker Deepa Mehta.

His next novel *Cinnamon Gardens (1999)* is about personal courage and liberation. Set in Sri Lanka's wealthy suburb in the 1920s *Cinnamon Gardens* is a novel about the risks and rewards of Independence, whether the relationship is political or personal. It is also wonderfully atmospheric, a fascinating and compiling portrait of time and a place. The name *Cinnamon Gardens* comes from a fashionable district of Colombo and as such the setting is in the tropically lush and socially complex Ceylon of the 1920s. The novel tells the story of two people who must determine, if it is possible to pursue happiness without compromising

the happiness of others. Selvadurai focuses in part on Annalukshmi, one of the main characters in the novel and a young woman from a proper respected family who chafes against the traditional restrictions and pursues a teaching career in favour of an arranged marriage. Annalukshmi is the eldest of three girls in the family, she is very much the new woman: educated, independent and occasionally scandalous. She works as a school teacher and has no desire to give up her job, which worries her family. As a woman Annalukshmi cannot get legally married and remain employed. And, since she is the oldest daughter, this puts her family in a difficult situation: Ceylonese society dictates that she must get married before her sisters. Her father, Murugasu is estranged from the rest of the family and runs a plantation in Malaya. Annalukshmi's troubles begin when Murugasu notifies her mother that he has selected a husband for Annalukshmi and will brook no disagreement.

> AnnalukshmiKandiah often felt that the verse from that great work of Tamil philosophy, the *Tirukkural* – 'I see the sea of love, but not the raft on which to cross it' – could be applied to her own life, if 'desire' was substituted for 'love'. For she saw clearly the sea of her desires, but the raft fate had given her was so burdened with the mores of the world that she felt it would sink even in the shallowest of waters (Selvadurai 1998: 3).

The novel weaves in the complex yet striving story of Balendran Navaratnam along with the social and cultural complexities of Ceylon in the 1920s. It's also a time in which every thing is changing. The British are making tentative steps towards de-colonisation and the Island's inhabitants are just beginning to face the many problems that will come with self-government. Ceylonese society is deeply divided: long standing tensions between the Sinhalese and the Tamils are resurfacing; the introduction of Western political ideology has given birth to new conflicts; labour unions and universal suffrage are becoming prominent

issues; and the primarily conservative members of the upper classes are fervently lobbying the British in an attempt to prevent social change.

Balendran is the steward of his formidable father's holdings, which include a temple and a prosperous agricultural estate. He is a liberal, and is deeply sympathetic to the new movements brewing in the Island. His father, known simply as the Mudaliyar, in contrast is a fervent conservative and a domineering patriarch. Balendran is trying hard to be a dutiful son to his tightly controlling father, the Mudaliyar Navaratnam. Married to Sonia, a beautiful and caring wife and a son who has gone abroad to University, Balendran is unable to forget his lover Richard Howland with whom he left behind in London twenty years ago. Problems arise when Richard Howland arrives from England. He is a journalist covering the Donoughmore Commission hearings (which is examining issues of suffrage, self-government and independence). After an awkward reconciliation, Balendran and Richard resume their affair which leads to all sorts of difficulties as Balendran struggles to balance his familial duties with his love for Richard and his own sense of morality. This uneasy reunion with a lover from the past throws Balendran into turmoil and reignites tensions with his father who had aborted their affair twenty years ago. Balendran thinks of the terrible time when the Mudaliyar had come to his flat in London somehow knowing of his relationship with Richard. Balendran's story bashes against the boundaries of Ceylonese society in a dramatic exploration of both individual and cultural differences.

Cinnamon Gardens is a novel critiquing the foolishness behind the prejudices of its characters while acknowledging the great difficulties facing anyone who attempts simply to shrug off the demands of their culture. Selvadurai's characters in the novel are constantly being confronted with choices, and none of them is simple. It is difficult to claim any moral highground as there are no virtuous heroes or shiftless villains. Selvadurai almost invisibly

links the small, unknown individual with the faceless society, and portrays a nation on the verge of a great change without seeming overtly political or pedantic.

Selvadurai's third novel, *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea*, was published in 2005 and targeted to Young Adult Readers. Set in 1980, Sri Lanka, the novel chronicles a fourteen year old Sri Lankan boy's falling in love with his visiting Canadian cousin, Niresh, who turns up with his father, who has come to sell off family property. Amrith is anxious to make a connection. Eventually, he realises his feelings for Niresh go beyond friendship, which finally makes him aware of his sexual identity. This novel is much closer stylistically to European novels such as Per Nilsson's *You and You and You (2005)* and Andreas Steinhofel's*Centre of the Universe (2005)*. *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* was a finalist for Canada's most prestigious literary award, the Governor General's Awards, the category of Children's literature. It was honoured with a Lambda Literary Award in the same category. The story is of fourteen year old Amrith, a boy orphaned in early childhood when his parents died in a motorcycle accident. Amrith is adopted by old family friends, the felicitously named aunty Bundle and uncle Lucky and their daughters, Mala and Selvi. The family is privileged, cultured; warm hearted and tremendously kind to Amrith. The book explores both the good and bad aspects of family: love and trust, inherited traits and feuds. Amrith is shy, with few friends until his Canadian cousin Niresh visits Sri Lanka. The two boys immediately hit it off. The facts of Amrith's life are slowly and gently revealed over the course of the book and Selvadurai paints a beautiful picture of Amrith's growth and his learning of acceptance.

Swimming in the Monsoon Sea is set in 1980, when being gay is at best the subject of gossip and at worst illegal. Having lived a sheltered life, Amrith does not understand what the gossip is about and becomes even more confused and storm-tossed as his feelings for Niresh strengthen. Shakespeare's *Othello* with its powerful theme of disastrous jealousy is

the backdrop to the drama in which Amrith finds himself immersed. Amrith's jealousy leads to Selvi, telling him 'don't be so jealous, you don't own Niresh' (Selvadurai 2005: 123). The world Selvadurai creates in the novel is both believable and emotionally driven. Amrith struggles with his friendship with Niresh, slowly falling in love with him and also with the social and cultural repressions in the society that he is living in. Selvadurai allows Amrith to be torn apart as he slowly comes out and also comes to terms with being gay in Sri Lanka where homosexuality is not something that's common or even talked about.

While Sri Lanka's ethnic clashes may have led to Selvadurai's family's emigration, the country's homophobic attitudes, as expressed in anti-homosexual laws, have intensified his embrace. He feels virtually alone as an openly gay cultural figure in Sri Lanka, but he sees his first novel as having helped him put the issue of homosexuality on the table. Selvadurai takes seriously both the effect his books may have on other young gay Sri Lankan's and his position as a role model for other gay Asians in North America. In explaining his decision to be openly gay, he remarks, 'I remembered how it was for me feeling there was no one out there who was a role model of any sort. When I decided to be out in public, I was really thinking of that version of me in Sri Lanka who would read my book and feel relieved to not be alone. If I decided not to be out, I would be sending a message to that young person that I was still afraid and ashamed' (Hunn 2005: 2).

Selvadurai's works are informed by meticulous research and a haunting evocation of Sri Lanka which remains vital in his imagination, despite his having lived in Canada for so many years. He clearly has a deep engagement with his country of birth and its troubled history and the ethnic clashes that led his family to emigrate. His novels 'share several thematic pre-occupations with the inherited legacy of the British colonial past; with the more recent strife caused by post-independence ethnic and religious divisions; with journeys of migration and return; with the rending of families by long suppressed secrets, generational

conflicts, duties compelled and traditions neglected. In this regard, Selvadurai's work has much in common with that of other South Asian – Canadian writers like Neil Bisoondath, M.G. Vassanji, Anita Rau Badami and Michael Ondaatje. However, what is distinctive about Selvadurai's novels, and what sets them apart from the above list, is their skilful interweaving of issues of sexuality into the standard narrative of South Asian cultural dislocation' (Dickinson 1998: 1).

1.6 Objectives and Significance of the Study

The study is conducted with the following objectives:

(a) To assess how the creation of queer identities has impacted upon the study of literature.

(b) To study how the politics of transgression contribute to cultural and social repressions in the works of Hollinghurst and Selvadurai.

(c) To critically look at how Hollinghurst and Selvadurai establishes their homosexual identity and ties those stories to larger themes of family and country.

(d) To study how Hollinghurst and Selvadurai offer insights into the contemporary gay world set against a wider backdrop of art in all forms and obsession, in the generally well-to-do-world.

(e) To analyse how Hollinghurst and Selvadurai interweaves various sub-plots and characters around a central theme of romantic sexual disillusionment.

Further, it creates avenues and prospects for future research works and studies on Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai, and on gender and queer studies.

The research study aims to contribute significantly to the realm of knowledge in general and literary studies in particular. The research also was intended to provide a better

critical understanding of the works of Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai. The investigation and interpretation on the proposed line not only enhances the enjoyment of reading literature and contributing to critical studies but also presents how these two writers portray the complex issues around class, sexuality, race and minority groups as social reality truths.

1.7 Materials and Methodology

The researcher undertook a modest study of some major perspectives on the issues of gender and post-modern sexual identities, conflicting accounts of sexual orientation and contemporary emphasis on sexual diversity in the novels of Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai. The researcher finally argues to justify the title of the research consulting, surveying and interpreting all the primary and secondary sources, interviews and other authentic documents. As far as the documentation is concerned the latest edition of *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* was followed.

1.8 Schematization of Chapters

The first chapter introduces Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai as creative writers in English and their position as important post-colonial gay writers. Further, it explores the works of Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai and the recurrent themes of the personal and the political which exists in almost all their novels. The chapter surveys related literatures and journals. The objectives and significance of the study, research methodology is elaborated in this chapter.

Chapter two brings out how homosexuality has either been strategically suppressed or categorically demonised in all straightgeist cultural representations and how it has been read as a crime, sin, a disease and an abnormality in western societies in the later 19th century. The chapter looks into the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in some western countries in

the 20th century and how it has gained credibility as gay communities in literature, religious institutions and civil rights organisations. The chapter looks into recent understandings of queer studies (which include gay and lesbian theories; cultural studies and a portion of gender/feminist debates) that have contributed to complex and nuanced studies of homosexuality. It explains the term queer - long used pejoratively to refer to homosexuals, especially male homosexuals – and how it has been reclaimed and embraced by queer theorists. The work of queer theorists such as Eve K. Sedgwick, Judith Butlerand Michel Foucault is extensively discussed and how their contributions have made to look at homosexuality in a new perspective. The enriching ways that Queer theorists have suggested to understand the on-going debates on gender and desire is developed throughout the chapter.. When used to refer to sexual relations, queer encompasses any practice or behaviour that a person engages in without any reproductive aims and without regard for social or economic considerations. This chapter elaborately looks into contemporary approaches to Gay/Lesbian and queer theories for a complete and comprehensive understanding of homosexuality.

The third chapter addresses the issue of being 'different' in a funny way which does not conform to accepted gender and sexual norms. The novels of Selvadurai give a brilliant portrait of the anxieties aroused by gender non-conformity, especially in patriarchal societies. Arjie Chelvaratnam in *Funny Boy* is 'funny.' He likes to wear saris and play with girls, and hates sports. When Arjie is caught dressed in a sari his grandmother decides manual labour will teach him to be more masculine. This is the first time Arjie is embarrassed about his 'funniness' though he does not understand why. Like Arjie, the other protagonists in the other novels also experiences discomforts and risks associated with being a non-conformist in a country with persistently traditional and conformist norms about sexuality. This chapter focuses on the gradual and ultimate passage of the protagonist to accept their sexual identity.

It also highlights the author's own passage to becoming gay openly. In his own words he remarked 'I remembered how it was for me feeling there was no one out there who was a role model of any sort'. The chapter talks about the concept of a third gender as tendencies of the unnamed third place and the metaphor of twilight moments that stigmatises identities and forbidden acts. It will also bring to light the risks and the rewards of understanding and experiencing sexual liberty and independence.

Chapter four focuses on how the novels of Hollinghurst bring to light a buried history of gay London from the Romans to the 1950's, its writers and musicians, from Shakespeare to Pope, Wilde to James, Forster and Brittan to Firbank focussing mainly on the lives of gay men before the gay liberation movement both in London and the colonies of Great Britain. The chapter analyses contemporary gay life as represented in his novels, *The Line of Beauty* and *The Swimming Pool Library*. The issues about class, family, social politics and sexuality in the 80's era London exploring related themes of hypocrisy, homosexuality, madness, wealth, drugs and the emerging AIDS crisis in novels like *The Spell* and *The Line of Beauty*which forms a central backdrop of modern gay culture. This chapter also brings to light the enticing yet painful panorama of metropolitan gay life highlighting gay parties, gay clubbing and gay cruising.

The fifth chapter focuses on the cultural and traditional repressive forces that act like an institution curtailing homosexual tendencies. It also highlights the importance of the prejudices that the characters of Hollinghurst and Selvadurai are made to face and the great difficulties that they have to endure while simply yet persistently trying to shrug off the demands of their culture. Balendran in *Cinnamon Gardens* by Selvadurai is a character who struggles with his identity and his homosexuality against the strictures of family, marriage, and tradition. While conforming to social and cultural expectations he enters into a sexually unfulfilling marriage, and reveals himself as a decent but weak individual, racked by the

guild he feels for neglecting his wife and for having betrayed his feelings for Richard. But by the end of the novel, however, Balendran is able to see through the hypocrisies and deceits of his society and, though remaining bound by his marriage and family, acknowledges his love for Richard. Lord Charles Nantwich an 83 year old aristocrat is jailed for being a homosexual in *The Swimming Pool Library* by Hollinghurst. The novel is pervaded with homophobia which is addressed in many forms. Through Nantwich's diary in the novel which is given to William Beckwith, the life of gay men before the Gay Liberation Movement is brought to light. From the moment Will starts reading his journals, new truths and new perspectives are opened up to him. *The Line of Beauty* also talks about the tension and the realities of gay life against the backdrop of Thatcher – Era England. Nick, the protagonist, who is new to both his sexuality and the manners of high society, experiences the dangers and rewards of his own private pursuit of a beautiful identity. The chapter opens the discussion to look into the forces of repression and its social and cultural implications. It also mentions the nuances of gender orientation and the policing of homosexuality and homosexuals by political and state institutional forces like law makers, police authorities and social elites.

The concluding chapter contains a summing up of the aspects that have been discussed in the previous chapters. This chapter makes an analysis of the novels of Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai. It covers the far-reaching changes in the various stages of evolving homosexual consciousness. It also brings out the influence of Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai's contribution as writers creating a forum in which the discussion of homosexuality finds a way into social and literary discourse.

Chapter II

Theorising Homosexuality

2.1 Queer Studies: Homosexuality

Homosexuality has been strategically suppressed or categorically demonised in all straightgeist cultural representations. It has been read as a crime, sin, a disease and an abnormality in western societies in the later 19th century. It is only because of the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in some western countries in the 20th century that it has gained some credibility. 'Thus, for much of the twentieth century 'homosexuality' was more than a 'name' that dared not be spoken: within clinical medicine it has been a diagnostic category, a suitable case for treatment, a condition to be cured wherever possible by psychotherapeutic and other less savoury methods like electro-convulsive therapy' (Glover and Kaplan 2007: 89).

Recently, queer studies (which includes gay and lesbian theories; cultural studies and a portion of gender/feminist debates) have contributed to complex and nuanced studies of homosexuality. The term queer - long used pejoratively to refer to homosexuals, especially male homosexuals - has been reclaimed and embraced by queer theorists. The works of queer theorists such as Eve K. Sedgwick, Judith Butler, Jonathan Dollimoreand Michel Foucault have made to look at homosexuality in a new perspective. Queer theorists have suggested enriching ways in which to understand the ongoing debates on gender and desire. When used to refer to sexual relations, queer encompasses any practice or behaviour that a person engages in without any reproductive aims and without regard for social or economic considerations (Murfin and Ray 2003: 386-387). This chapter will elaborately look into

contemporary approaches to Gay/Lesbian and queer theories for a complete and comprehensive understanding of homosexuality.

The word homosexuality has acquired multiple meanings over time. In the original sense, it describes a sexual orientation characterised by lasting aesthetic attraction, romantic love, or sexual desire exclusively for others of the same sex or gender. Homosexuality is usually contrasted with heterosexuality and bisexuality. The word homosexual is both an adjective and a noun. The adjectival form literally means 'of the same sex', being a hybrid formed from the Greek prefix homo, which means 'same' and the Latin root sex – which means 'sex' or 'gender'. The first known appearance of the term homosexual in print is found in an 1869 German pamphlet that was written by the Austrian born novelist Karl-Maria Kertbeny and published anonymously. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in her book *Epistemology of the Closet* states that an understanding of the homo/heterosexual definition, their outlines and their history would bring about an active importance for a primarily small, distinct, relatively fixed homosexual minority and also spread and establish a modern sexual definition as a continuing determinative importance in the lives of people across the spectrum of sexualities.

> The word 'homosexual' entered Euro-American discourse during the last third of the 19th century – its popularisation preceding, as it happens, even that of the word 'heterosexual'. It seems clear that the sexual behaviours, and even for some people the conscious identities, denoted by the new term 'homosexual' and its contemporary variants already has a long, rich history. So, indeed, did a wide range of other sexual behaviour and behavioural clusters. What was new from the turn of the century was the world – mapping by which every given person, just as he or she was necessarily assignable as well to a homo - or a hetero-sexuality, a binarized identity that was full of implications, however confusing, for even the ostensibly least sexual aspects of personal existence (Sedgwick 2008: 2).

2.2 Queer Theorists

Nearly thirty years after the Stonewall rebellion, which launched the movement for gay liberation, the definition of queer identities is still evolving. Homosexual has changed to gay and gay to gay and lesbian. Bisexuals have become more vocal and more recently transgender liberation has also reshaped queer community prompting many organisations to replace gay and lesbian with lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered (LGBT) or simply queer in their self-definitions. The recognition of varying sexual identities and practices has inspired a re-reading of not straight history or queer but the history of sexuality itself. Based on these developments, a number of queer theorists have come up with vast and extensive writings on queer sexualities, its practices and identities. Queer theorists' analyses lesbian/gay political, historical and cultural movements in their writings and promotes strong academic analysis in the history of sexual thought and its relation to the very general and universal categories as well as to formal structures by studying the ideas, institutions and social relationships that constituted this web of power in the past and the present, as well as the resistance that power automatically provokes from those subject to it.

2.2.1 Michel Foucault

Michel Foucault, the French philosopher studied philosophy and psychology and later taught the same in the University of Clermont, the University of Tunis and the University of Vincennes. He was also elected to the Chair in the History of Systems of Thought at the College de France, France's most prestigious Institution of Higher Learning. Foucault formulated bold, innovative and often brilliant hypotheses that have influenced and inspired philosophers, historians, political scientists and sociologists around the world. Foucault's intellectual influence has been strong in the fields of gay and lesbian studies or queer studies. He published an impressive list of articles, essays and books, most of them translated into English. His most important books are *Madness and Civilisations* (1961); *The Birth of the*

Clinic (1963); *The Order of Things* (1966); *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969); *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975); and *The History of Sexuality* (3 volumes, 1976-1984). In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* he, advanced the thesis that homosexuality as we conceive is a recent social construction. Men and women have engaged in same-sex relations, but he claimed until relatively and recently their acts did not confer any specific identity. He also claims in *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Vol 1,* that it was not until the end of the late nineteenth century that particular acts came to be seen as the expression of the individual's psyche. He also shows a shift from sodomy which was considered a crime or a sin against nature until the 1800s to an act that is the expression of an innate identity. He says:

> 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, and morphology, with an 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 because it was their insidious and indefinitely active principle; written immodestly on his face and body because it was a secret that always gave itself away. It was consubstantial with him; less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature…Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species (Foucault 1998: 43).

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault questions the problems attached to the textual construction of identity. Without the discourse which constructs the identity, there seems to be no agency; but the identity which the discourse supplies are also that which constrains the subject. Foucault proceeds to document how the version of sexual identity which came to dominate Western cultures at the end of the nineteenth century was grounded in a discourse which privileged heterosexual object choice. Undoubtedly, non-heterosexual expressions of

desire – same-sex sexual acts - persisted despite some of the actual prohibitions and punishments of the nineteenth century. Foucault famously describes how, during the nineteenth century, the homosexual and not the heterosexual, 'became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life form, and morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology' (Foucault 1976: 43). Unlike the unremarkable heterosexual counterpart, the sex of homosexuals is 'written immodestly' on the face and body, a 'secret that always gave itself away… homosexuality 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' (ibid.: 43). Sexuality was no longer simply one aspect of identity or an aspect conceived in terms of sexual acts, but it was now viewed as a principle truth of the self, something which had to be brought into cultural visibility.

Foucault's work is important because it proposes that sexuality is not simply the natural expression of some inner drive or desire. The discourses of sexuality concern the operation of power in human relationships as much as they govern the production of a personal identity. By stressing the ways in which sexuality is written in or on the body, and in showing how the homosexual is forced into cultural invisibility or visibility, Foucault begins to dismantle the notion that sexuality is a transparent fact of life. If sexuality is inscribed in or the body, then it is texts and discourses (literary, medical, legal and religious) which make the sexual into something that is also textual. In an important essay written in 1981, Harold Beaver, attentive to work on semiotics and discourse, expands some of Foucault's work on sexuality. Beaver's homosexual signs (*In Memory of Roland Barthes)'* positions homosexuality as textual (an arrangement of signs), but maintains that the texts which signify sexuality are both multiple and problematic. 'Homosexuality' is not a name for a pre-existent 'thing', contents Beaver, but is part of a fluid linguistic landscape. The multiplicity and

plurality of signs which have served to structure how sexuality is conceived suggest that no one sign adequately appropriates or contains what sexuality is. Thus, Beaver suggests that it is within and against the grain of texts that sexualities can be rewritten and re-conceived, he further writes that theory and criticism of sexuality should be necessarily and strategically conceived outside the sexual-textual politics of representation.

Despite the fact that sodomy was not necessarily a gender-specific practice historical documents seem to indicate that it was mostly men who were convicted of sodomy. In records of the few rare cases of women being tried for the crime of sodomy, they were mostly convicted for 'acting like men' and apparently termed guilty of 'crime against nature'. In *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality Vol 1* Foucault traces the developmental shift from sodomy as a crime, to an act that is the expression of an innate identity that of a homosexual. Sodomy was conceived of as a sin against nature until the late 1800's. It was used as an umbrella term to cover the range of practices which did not have procreation as their aim meaning 'unnatural' forms of sexual relation. Prior to the late 1800's in Britain, the penalty of sodomy was death. However, it is important to note that during this time laws were directed against acts and not against a certain category of persons – that is homosexuals. He shows how, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, medical analysis of various forms of non-procreative sex as categorisable perversions and deviations came to replace the religious associations of undifferentiated non-procreative sex with sin. 'So too were all those minor perverts whom the nineteenth century psychiatrists entomologised by giving them strange baptismal names: there were Krafft-Ebing zoophiles and zooerasts, Rohleder's auto-monosexualities, and later, mixoscopophiles, gynecomasts, presbyophiles, sexoesthetic inverts, and dyspareunist woman' (Foucault 1976:43).

Foucault states in his book that the transformation of sex into discourse and the forms of sexuality that was not amenable to the strict economy of reproduction was considered as

perverse implantation. In short, a quantitative phenomenon, to constitute sexuality as economically useful and politically conservative governed the discourses on sexuality. He states that upto the end of the eighteenth century, three major explicit codes-governed sexual practices: canonical law, the Christian pastoral and civil law which determined in its own way to divide between the licit and the illicit. They were all centered on matrimonial relations and marital obligations of a male and a female.

> At the beginning of the seventeenth century certain frankness was still common, it would seem. Sexual practices had little need of secrecy; words were said without undue reticence, and things were done without too much concealment; one had a tolerant familiarity with the illicit…But twilight soon fell upon this bright day, followed by the monotonous nights of the Victorian bourgeoisie. Sexuality was carefully confined; it moved into the home. The conjugal family took custody of it and absorbed it into the serious function of reproduction. On the subject of sex, silence became the rule. The legitimate and procreative couple laid down the law…A single locus of sexuality was acknowledged in social space as well as at the heart of every household, but it was a utilitarian and fertile one: the parents' bedroom. The rest had only to remain vague; proper demeanour avoided contact with other bodies, and verbal decency sanitized one's speech. And sterile behaviour carried the taint of abnormality; if it insisted on making itself too visible; it would be designated accordingly and would have to pay the penalty (Foucault 1976: 3-4).

Thus, the famous sixteenth century surgeon Ambroise Pare' could write that 'Sexe is no other thing than the distinction of Male and Female' (cited in Glover and Kaplan 2007: xiii). But with the coming of the nineteenth century different codes began to manifest the understanding of sexuality. The nineteenth century was an age of multiplication: a dispersion of sexualities, a strengthening of their disparate forms, a multiple implantations of perversions. It was an epoch that initiated sexual heterogeneities. 'It was time for all these figures, scarcely noticed in the past, to step forward and speak, to make the difficult

confession of what they were. No doubt, they were condemned all the same; but they were listened to, and if regular sexuality happened to be questioned once again, it was through a reflux movement, originating in these peripheral sexualities' (Foucault 1976: 39). It is 'culture' as opposed to some inner drive or disposition, which is crucial in the work of Michel Foucault. Culture, is understood in terms of the interoperation of knowledge, power and discourse. *The History of Sexuality* thus, marks an important point in the critique of the 19th century sexological and medical formulations of sexuality. One of the principle objectives in Foucault's work is the analysis of 'a certain form of knowledge regarding sex, not in terms of repression or law, but in terms of power'. Power is not a 'group of institutions or mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state'. Power is exercised 'from innumerable points'; power relations are concerned with prohibition, but 'have a directly productive role'; and there is no 'binary and all – encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations'. Rather power come[s] into play in the machinery of production in families, limited groups, and institutions (Foucault 1976: 92-94).

In *The History of Sexuality*, psychoanalysis is viewed as a 'normalising discourse'; and if sex is repressed, silenced and prohibited, then the simple fact that one is speaking about sex has 'the appearance of a deliberate transgression'. Foucault contends that sexuality is an especially dense transfer point for relations of power. He further points out that sexuality is not the most intractable element in power relations but one of those endowed with the greatest instrumentality. But power is also described by Foucault as 'polyvalent'. One of the central points in *The History of Sexuality* is that the complexity and instability of discourses mean that a discourse can be an 'instrument' and 'effect' of power. Discourses, he continues, can be a 'hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an overlapping strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but it

also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it (ibid.:100-101). The 'tactical' polyvalence of discourses can be understood by examining how Foucault charts the 'identity' of the homosexual subject in nineteenth century sexology. Discourses manage and label subjects on the basis of definitions which simultaneously produce the identity in question. But the polyvalent nature of discourse means, according to Foucault, that discourses also produce the terms for their own resistance and deconstruction. Nineteenth century sexology names, labels and pathologises the homosexual at the same time as it creates a space for a counter discourse. In subjugating some identities, discourses simultaneously enable these same identities to 'speak' or become 'visible'. 'These fine names for heresies referred to a nature that was overlooked by law, but not so neglected of itself that it did not go on producing more species, even where there was no order to fit them into. The machinery of power that focussed on this whole alien strain did not aim to suppress it, but rather to give it an analytical, visible, and permanent reality...' (Foucault 1976: 44). In *Madness and Civilisations* (1961), he had argued that the homosexual first appeared as an 'abnormal' in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and he returned to this view in the interview given in the 1980s. he much admired the study of 'gay people' in the Middle Ages published by John Boswell in 1980 and agreed that 'the feeling among homosexuals of belonging to a particular social group…goes back to very early times' (Aldrich and Wotherspoon 2001: 143). Further Foucault through his works tries to explore not only the discourses but the will which sustains the resentment and negation towards sex. The basic notion as to why sex should be hidden and silenced. How and what has anchored repression. Foucault works to establish – a science of sexuality to understand sexuality and its movements in a schematic way from certain historical facts that serve as guidelines in his writings.

2.2.2 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the belief that homosexuals were identifiably different coexisted with the belief that these same people were invisible. Throughout the nineteenth century, literary, visual, and dramatic texts, alongside legal and political disputes, reveal varying degrees of trepidation and anxiety about the hidden world of homosexuals. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick probably the most influential and ground breaking of the queer theorists whose work re-charted gay and lesbian studies in the 1990s earned her PhD at Yale, with a thesis which formed the basis of her first book, *The Coherence of Gothic Convention* (1980) reconsidering some of the conventional aspects of gothic fiction in the manner which forecasts some of her later more well-known work, along with its pre-occupational issues of sexuality. With the publication of *Between Men* (1985), Sedgwick's ambitious re-charting of the relationship between literary studies and questions of sex and gender become explicit. Sedgwick explored the nature of 'Homosexual' relations specifically, what constituted a basis for social relationship between men and how social networks of male associations both eschew and yet always signal an interest in the idea or figure of the homosexual. Sedgwick's work, which depended upon a series of exacting and creative interpretations of largely canonical literary texts, profoundly affected the way in which literary studies sought to define questions of narrative and the thematic elaboration of sexual issues. Her work similarly cast familiar texts in new light, in particular, her exploration of the inter-dependency of homosociality (masculine social bonding), homophobia and homosexuality as three relations which structure masculine contact re-casting the ways in which those topics were to be debated within literary studies for the coming decades.

Between Men, as an innovative social as well as literary analysis, extended the reach of Sedgwick's work beyond the confines of literary scholarship, paving the way for the 1990

publication of *Epistemology of the Closet*, her most famous work. Following the lead given by Foucault's analysis in *The History of Sexuality* of the ways in which sexuality may be spoken of, Sedgwick makes the audacious claim that the idea of knowledge itself must be understood in terms of the question of sexual knowledge. According to Sedgwick culture might best be understood through an epistemology of the closet, that is, through the cluster of secrets that revolve around the question of gay identity and self-identification. Sedgwick's claims are based on a series of axioms which both defined and re-structure the ways in which sexual identity might be understood. She questions the very nature of sexual definition as it revolves around object-choice, rather than a host of other possible definitional parameters. For Sedgwick, the variety of sexual subjectivities that may be available for the task of self-definition is matched only by the various different ways in which we might understand those sexualities. The closet, in Sedgwick's analysis stands not merely for the concept of secrecy, but more interestingly for the secret of having a secret or telling a secret. In other words, secrets are interesting as much for what they reveal as for what they fail to disclose. Similarly, Sedgwick is interested in broadening an understanding of the relationship between power and knowledge by including an appreciation of the various kinds of epistemological and political powers vested in ignorance. The cultural and sexual practices of lesbians and gay men are associated with secret knowledges and codes, discussed in Eve Sedgwick's *The Epistemology of the Closet.*

> The gradually reifying effect of this refusal meant that by the end of the nineteenth century, when it had become fully current – as obvious to Queen Victoria as to Freud – that knowledge meant sexual knowledge, and secrets sexual secrets, there had in fact developed one particular sexuality that was distinctively constituted as secrecy: the perfect object for the by now insatiably exacerbated epistemological/sexual anxiety of the turn-of-the-century subject (Sedgwick 1990: 73).

Inside yet outside, public but also private, homosexuals have been visualised in the paradoxical terms of secrecy, concealments and visible isolation. Central to many of the debates in lesbian, gay and queer criticism are the issues of visibility, representation, transgression and dissidence. Homosexual identities are thought to cohere extra-textually or as textual constructions which take shape in discourse and without the discourse which constructs the identity, there seems to be no agency. In some works, all sexual identities are also textual constructions which take shape in discourse.

> The process, narrowly bordered at first in European culture, by which 'knowledge' and 'sex' become conceptually inseparable from one another - so that knowledge means in the first place sexual knowledge; ignorance, sexual ignorance; and epistemological pressure of any sort seems a force increasingly saturated with sexual impulsion...In a sense, this was a process, protracted almost to retardation, of exfoliating the biblical genesis by which what we now know as sexuality is fruit- apparently the only fruit- to be plucked from the tree of knowledge. Cognition itself, sexuality itself, and transgression itself have always been ready in Western culture to be magnetized into an unyielding though not an unfissured alignment with one another, and the period initiated by Romanticism accomplished this disposition through a remarkably broad confluence of different languages and institutions (Sedgwick 1990: 73).

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* stands out for understanding the potent fusion of homophobic stigma, the punishing stress of loss and social fracture related to the potency and vigorated magnetism of gay self-disclosure. The book had argued that the foundational methodology of Western sexological formulations was grounded in an organised understanding of radical incoherence. In Sedgwick's argument, this incoherence is stated in terms of 'minoritising' and 'universalising' notions of sexuality and identity. In her own words, Sedgwick states that:

> The gay closet is not a feature only of the lives of gay people. But for many gay people it is still the fundamental feature of social life; and there can be few gay people, however courageous and forthright by habit, however fortunate in support of their immediate communities, in whose lives the closet is not still a shaping presence (Sedgwick 1990: 68).

Sedgwick argues that a lot of the energy of attention and demarcation around the issues of homosexuality since the end of the nineteenth century in Europe, has been impelled by the distinctively indicative relation of homosexuality, to wider mappings of secrecy and disclosure, of the private and the public which were and are problematic and critical for the gender, sexual, and economic structures. Sedgwick considers that the closet is the defining structure for gay operation and the mappings have become dangerous incoherences in certain figures of homosexuality.

> Most moderately to well-educated western people in this century seem to share a similar understanding of homosexual definition, independent of whether they themselves are gay or straight, homophobic or antihomophobic. That understanding is close to what Proust's probably was, what for that matter mine is and probably yours. That is to say, it is organised around a radical and irreducible incoherence. It holds the minoritising view that there is a distinct population of persons who 'really are' gay; at the same time, it holds the universalising views that sexual desire is an unpredictably powerful solvent of stable identities; that apparently heterosexual persons and object choices are strongly marked by same-sex influences and desires, and vice-versa for apparently homosexual ones; and that at least male heterosexual identity and modern masculinist culture may require for their maintenance the scapegoating crystallization of a same sex male desire that is widespread and in the first place internal (Sedgwick 1990: 85).

Sedgwick's development of Foucault's work enables her to underscore the degree to which discourses about sexuality are as much concerned with the operations of knowledge and power as they are about an assumed or definitionally coherent sexual identity. The

languages of sex and sexuality not only intersect with, but also transform the other languages which we use to construct social realities, contends Sedgwick. Her extensive list of binary categories observes how sexuality and desire cannot be addressed in isolation from a whole network of other cultural discourses.

> I think that a whole cluster of the most crucial sites for the contestation of meaning in twentieth century Western culture are consequentially and quite indelibly marked with the historical specificity of homosocial/homosexual definition, notably but not exclusively male, from around the turn of the century. Among those sites are, as i have indicated, the parings secrecy/disclosure and private/public along with and sometimes through these epistemologically charged parings, condensed in the figures of the 'closet' and 'coming out', this very specific crisis of definition has then ineffaceably marked other pairings as basic to modern cultural organisation as masculine/feminine, majority/minority, innocence/initiation, natural/artificial...So permeative has the suffusing stain of homo/heterosexual crisis been that to discuss any of these entices in any context, in the absence of an antihomophobic analysis, must perhaps be to perpetuate unknowingly compulsions implicit in each (ibid.: 72-73).

Sedgwick's expansion of perspectives in anti-homophobic theory constitutes an attempt to contest the centring and settled definitions of heterosexuality and homosexuality. In addition, one of the principle arguments in *Epistemology of the Closet* is that notions such as sameness/difference, public/private and secrecy/disclosure structure identity formulations seem to underscore heterosexual relations as normative and hegemonic. Sedgwick's analytic strategies combined with Foucault's theories of discourse, knowledge and power shows that many of the major discourses in the twentieth century are structured and splintered by a crisis of homo/heterosexual definition. Sedgwick's work highlights the confusing context which established rigid sexual boundaries and exclusions. She further notes how the oppressive, homo/heterosexual system was generated on the basis of repeated decentrings and exposures. Sexual identity rapidly accrued the status of an epistemology and was placed in a privileged

relation to identity, truth and knowledge, transforming almost every issue of power and gender. Despite endemic incoherence of definitions, sexuality in general, and heterosexuality in particular, powerfully regulated a matrix of other binarised markings, groundings in the belief that heterosexual provided the normative and veridical model of human individuation. Sedgwick notes that even after the formation of sexual species, other, 'less stable' understandings of sexual choice persisted, often among the same groups and often interlaced in the same systems of thought.

> Recent gay male historiography, influenced by Foucault, has been especially good at unpacking and interpreting those parts of the nineteenth century systems of classification that clustered most closely around what current taxonomies construe as 'the homosexual'. The 'sodomite', the 'invert', the 'homosexual', the 'heterosexual' himself, all are objects of historically and institutionally explicable construction. In the discussion of male homosexual *panic*, however – the treacherous middle stretch of the modern homosocial continuum and the terrain from whose wasting rigors *only* the homosexual-identified man is at all exempt – a different and less distinctly sexualised range of categories needs to be opened up. Again, however, it bears repeating that the object of doing that is not to arrive at a more accurate or up-to-date assignment of 'diagnostic' categories, but to understand better the broad field of forces within which masculinity – and thus, *at least* for men, humanity itself – could (can) at a particular moment construct itself (Sedgwick 1990: 187-188).

Sedgwick's work in *Epistemology of the Closet* was deepened and expanded in the essays collected as *Tendencies* (1993); whereas the *Epistemology of the Closet* mostly consisted of extended readings of literary texts. *Tendencies* ranged more widely to consider the questions of autobiographical and ficto-critical writing. *Tendencies* furthered some of the earlier books' investigation of the matter of sexual identification and definition. *Tendencies* animated Sedgwick's familiar themes with extended meditations on queer as both activist and

contemplative. Sedgwick profoundly affected the burgeoning field of queer theory both in her practice and in her support of the work of other theorists.

2.2.3 Judith Butler

Judith Butler, an American philosopher and a gender theorist, has significant influence in the fields of feminist, queer and literary theory, philosophy and political ethics. She is best known for her works *Gender Trouble, Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* and *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex,* where she challenges the sex/gender distinction and develops her theory of gender performativity. Butler questions the belief that certain gendered behaviours are natural illustrating the ways in which gendered behaviour is an act of sorts or a performance or in other words the assumption that a given individual can be said to constitute himself or herself. She wonders to what extent our acts are determined for us by our place within language and convention. She underlines the linguistic nature of our position within what Jacques Lacan terms the symbolic order, the system of signs and conventions that determines our perception of what we see as reality. Identity itself, for Butler, is an illusion retroactively created by our performances. She takes her formulations even further by questioning the very distinction between gender and sex. Feminists in the past made a distinction between bodily sex and gender. They accepted the fact that certain anatomical differences do exists between men and women. Accordingly for traditional feminists, sex was a biological category and gender a historical category. Butler questions that distinction and states that sex 'not only functions as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs' (Butler 1993:1). For Butler sex is an ideal construct which is materialised through time. Butler is influenced by the postmodern tendency to see our very conception of reality as determined by language.

Homo/heterosexual definition thus, can be placed not in the context of 'analytic impartiality', but against the backdrop of a homophobia which served to devalue one term at

the same time as it valorised the other. Though Sedgwick content's that the conceptual instability of heterosexual and homosexual binarisms does not render these opposition as 'inefficacious or innocuous'. She further asserts that the critical exposition and explanation of the ambiguous nature of the discourses of sexuality remain important tasks in attempts to contest and challenge heterosexual hegemony. It is the troubled management of sexuality and gender in the late 20th century which prompts Judith Butler's investigations in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (1990)*. She argues most powerfully that identities figured as feminine or masculine do not axiomatically require the anatomical grounding which has traditionally differentiated sex and gender identities.

> Can we refer to a 'given' sex or a 'given' gender without first enquiring into how sex and/or gender is given, through what means? And what is 'sex' anyway? Is it natural, anatomical, chromosomal, or hormonal, and how is a feminist critic to assess the scientific discourses which purport to establish such 'facts' for us? Does sex have a history? Does each sex have a different history, or histories? Is there a history of how the duality of sex was established, a genealogy that might expose the binary options as a variable construction? Are the ostensibly natural facts of sex discursively produced by various scientific discourses in the service of other political and social interests? If the immutable character of sex is contested? Perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all (Butler 1990: 9-10).

Gender Trouble (1990) and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex (1993)* probe and question models of sexuality and identity which cohere around the assumed stability of heterosexuality. Butler's investigation also displays a similar indebtedness to the work of Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment* as well to post-structuralist theorisations of the subject and language which reveal the influence of Derrida and Lacan. Butler in *Gender*

Trouble interrogates the seemingly inevitable contradictions between sameness and difference which mark identity formulations based around gender and sexuality. It is in *Gender Trouble* that her refinement of the Nietzschean and Foucaultian concept of genealogy is established as a critical tool in the analysis of gender and sex. Butler explicitly challenges biological accounts of binary sex, reconceiving the sexed body as itself culturally constructed by regulative discourse. Butler's appropriation of genealogy allows her to show how the assumed causes and origins of sexuality are the effects of discourses and institutions whose points of origin are multiple. Despite such multiple points of origin, Butler's stresses that a genealogical approach nevertheless works within and against the broad framework of a heterosexual and hetero-normative matrix.

> The 'coherence' and 'continuity' of 'the person' are not logical or analytic features of personhood, but, rather, socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility. Inasmuch as 'identity' is assured through the stabilising concepts of sex, gender and sexuality, the very notion of 'the person' is called into question by the cultural emergence of those 'incoherent' or 'discontinuous' gendered beings who appeared to be persons but who fail to conform to the gender norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined (Butler 1990: 23).

The crux of Butler's argument in *Gender Trouble* is that the coherence of the categories of sex, gender and sexuality are culturally constructed through the repetition of stylized acts in time. These bodily acts, in their repetition, establish the appearance of an essential, ontological core gender. This is the sense in which Butler famously theorises gender, along with sex and sexuality as performative. The performance of gender, sex and sexuality, however, is not a voluntary choice for Butler, who locates the construction of the gendered, sexed, desiring subject also called the gender intelligibility under regulative discourses. Regulative discourse includes within it disciplinary techniques,

coercing subjects to perform specific stylized actions, maintaining the appearance in those subjects of the core gender, which the discourse on sex and sexuality itself produces.

> 'Intelligible' genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice and desire. In other words, the spectres of discontinuity and incoherence, themselves thinkable only in relation to existing norms of continuity and coherence, are constantly prohibited and produced by the very laws that seek to establish causal or expressive lines of connection among biological sex, culturally constituted genders, and the 'expression' or 'effect' of both in the manifestation of sexual desire through sexual practice (Butler 1990: 23).

Butler redefines the notion of knowledge and power in *Bodies that Matter*, she notes how one effect of such hegemonic heterosexuality is the attempt to naturalise and stabilise sex, gender, and identity. Extending her analysis of naturalised genders, Butler suggests that performances associated with drag illustrate how gender is open to imitation. Rather than being a constantive or substantial expression of who or what one is, drag helps to highlight the ways in which gender can also be figured in terms of stylized repetitions of acts for which there is no origin or copy. Butler emphasises the role of repetition in performativity making use of Derrida's theory of iterability, a form of citationality, to work out a theory of performativity in terms of iterability. Performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularised and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed by a subject but this repetition is what enables the subject and constitutes the temporal condition of the subject. This iterability implies that performance is not a singular act or event, but a ritualised production, a ritual under the force of prohibition or taboo. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler argues that drag plays upon the difference between the anatomical body

of the performer and the gender that is being performed. In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler strengthens her case, suggesting that drag is not confined to lesbian or gay rituals or queer cultures. Drag is not understood as a secondary imitation or enactment of a prior, original gender. Rather, heterosexuality is itself part of repeated effort to imitate its own socially constructed idealisations. Although gender trouble argues for the proliferation of drag performances, Butler underscores that there is necessary relation between drag and subversion. At best, drag can be understood as a site of certain ambivalence, one which reflects the more general situation of being implicated in the very regimes of power that one opposes. Butler offers parody, the practice of drag as a way to destabilise and make apparent the invisible assumptions about gender identity. By redeploying those practices of identity and exposing the attempts to become one's gender, Butler believes that a positive, transformation politics can emerge.

Butler's main contention is that gender does not axiomatically proceed from sex. Although the sexes might seem binary in their morphology and constitution for Butler there are no grounds to assume that genders ought to remain as two. Consolidating and expanding a key argument in *Gender Trouble*, that the relation of gender to sex is not mimetic, the other books of Butler abandon the notion of an innate or intrinsic gender identity. She further claims that sexual differences are in-dissociable form discursive demarcations and that it is not the same claim that discourse causes sexual difference. She categorises sex from the start as normative and agrees with Foucault that it is a 'regulatory ideal'. In this sense, 'sex' not only functions as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs, a regulatory force producing a productive power. Thus, according to Butler, sex is a regulatory ideal whose materialisation is compelled, and this materialisation takes place through certain highly regulated practices. In other words, sex is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialised through time. Butler states that it is not a simple fact or static condition

of a body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialise sex and achieve this materialisation through forcible reiteration of those norms. That this reiteration is necessary is a sign that materialisation is never quite complete, that bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialisation is inbuilt. Indeed, it is the instabilities, the possibilities for re-materialisation, opened up by this process that mark one's domain in which the force of the regulatory law can be turned against itself to spawn re-articulations that call into question the hegemonic force of that very regulatory law.

Butler then relates the notion of gender performativity and its relation to the conception of materialisation. In this sense Butler states that, performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate act, but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names. She constitutes the fixity of the body, its contours, its movements and its relation to the effect of power and comes to a point that

> 'Sex' is, thus, not simply what one has, or a static description of what one is: it will be one of the norms by which the 'one' becomes viable at all, that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility (Butler 1993: 2).

Butler concerns herself with those gender acts that similarly lead to material changes in one's existence and even in one's bodily self and contends that our sense of independent, self-willed subjectivity is a retroactive construction that comes about only through the enactment of social conventions. Butler proposes the practice of drag as a way to destabilise the exteriority/interiority binary, finally to poke fun at the notion that there is an original gender and to demonstrate that all gender is in fact scripted, rehearsed and performed.

Looking at 'sex' from the long term, historical perspective recommended by Foucault, the identity of one's sexual behaviour and for those who felt themselves to be 'different' narrows down to one question 'Do we truly need a true sex?' After all, isn't what truly

matters 'the reality of the body and the intensity of its pleasures' (Foucault 1980: vii). The modern system of sexuality that is organised around the heterosexual or the homosexual self is approached as a system of knowledge, one that structures the institutional and cultural life of societies. As such, queer theorists view heterosexuality and homosexuality not simply as identities or social statutes but as categories of knowledge, a language that frames bodies, desires, sexualities and identities, which erects moral boundaries and political hierarchies. 'Modern Western homophobic and gay affirmative theory has assumed a homosexual subject. Dispute materialised over its origin (natural or social), its changing social forms and roles, its moral meaning, and its politics. There has been hardly any serious disagreement regarding the assumption that homosexual theory and politics have as their object "the homosexual" as a stable, unified and identifiable agent. Drawing from the critic of unitary identity politics by people of colour and sex rebels, and from the post-structural critique of "representational" models of language, queer theorists argued that identities are always multiple or at best composites, with an infinite number of ways in which "identity-components" can intersect or combine' (Seidman 1994: 173).Approaching identities as multiple, unstable and regulatory, queer theorists presents new and productive possibilities of rendering gay theory and politics as permanently open and contestable as to its meaning and political role. In other words, decisions about identity categories are pragmatic, related to concerns from the public surfacing of differences or a culture where multiple voices and interests are heard that helps shape gay life and politics.

2.3 Gay Community: World Cultures

The development of lesbian and gay studies arose in response to political activism of the 1960's although its incorporation within formal education was much slower. After World War II, a time during which homosexual identity politics began to emerge with Harry Hay's Mattachine Society. The aims of the Mattachine Society was to bring homosexuals and

heterosexuals together, to educate both homosexuals and heterosexuals, to lead a movement for legal reform, and to assist those who found themselves victimised on a daily basis in the context of entrenched homophobia. Similarly CAMP (Campaign against Moral Persecution) Inc., an Australian group founded in 1970, described their political agenda thus:

> As far as the wider society is concerned, we should concentrate on providing information, removing prejudice, ignorance and fear, stressing the ordinariness of homosexuality and generally reassuring and disarming those with hostile attitudes. Concerning homosexuals, we think a policy of development of confidence and lessening of feelings of isolation and guilt, where they exist is vital (cited in Sullivan 2003: 23).

Gays and lesbians were forced to remain 'closeted' if they wished to lead 'normal' lives. It was not until the late 1960's – most memorably in 1969 with the famous Stonewall riots at a New York gay bar that 'Gay Liberation' became an open public issue. The slogan of the Stonewall riot fired the imagination of many persecuted gays and lesbians – 'We are queer. We are here. Accept it!' The gay community in a retaliatory expression of self-liberation then appropriated the derogatory epithet 'queer' to its own use. The term 'queer' has since then come to be accepted in many circles as an all-encompassing idea that identifies a wide range of sexual minorities. 'Queer' includes homosexuals, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people of all varieties. When appended by the word 'theory' the term is recognised as an academic discipline, which is still struggling against the straitjacketing effects of institutionalisation. However like all theoretical concepts 'queer' theories are constantly redefining themselves, primarily by expanding the boundaries of what it means to be queer and straight, and the multiple grids of negotiations that fall within.

The issues concerning queer theory revolve around basically two schools of thought. One, the 'essentialists' who believe that homosexuality is a biologically determined fact of existence i.e. one is about 'coming out' or 'she or he was always different', followed by a

discovery of the 'truth' about oneself. Usually the discovery is described as traumatic or anxiety – ridden since the individual has imbibed the lesson from parental, peer and other societal apparatuses that homosexual behaviour/love is 'bad' and 'unnatural'. This form of discovery is, in queer theory jargon, called 'homosexual panic' where the individual recognises that his/her sexuality is aberrant from what society perceives to be the acceptable form of sexuality and sexual identity, but finds him/herself helpless to do anything about it. The other school that could be called the 'antiessentialits' believe that forces of social conditioning, and not some amorphous unverifiable 'essence', determine one's sexual identity. Sexual identities, these theorists believe, are a matter not of some 'inborn' biological instinct but a result of an assortment of socio-cultural factors, contingent to specific times and culture. In other words, these groups took an assimilationist approach to politics and to social change. The aim of assimilationist groups was and is still to be accepted into, and to become one with, mainstream culture. Consequently, one of the primary tenets of this group is to come together as a common humanity to which both homosexuals and heterosexuals belong. And this commonality – the fact that we are all human beings despite differences in secondary characteristics such as the gender of our sexual object choices – is the basis, it is claimed on which we should all be accorded the same human rights, and on which we should treat each other with tolerance and respect. As Daniel Harris, citing Ward Summer puts it:

> Gay propaganda from the 1950s…is characterised by what might be called the Shylock's argument, the assertion that a homosexual is not a…dissolute libertine well beyond the pale of respectable society, but 'a creative who bleeds when he is cut, and who must breathe oxygen in order to live' (Harris 1997: 240-241).

In short, these groups tried to make differences invisible or at least secondary between homosexuality and heterosexuality in and through an essentialising, normalising emphasis on sameness. Often assimilationist groups drew on the writings of theorists like Ulrichs, arguing

that homosexuality is biologically determined and therefore should not be punishable by law. However unlike Ulrichs, such groups allegedly tended to accept the medical model of homosexuality articulated by sexologists such as Westphal and Krafft-Ebing and, as a consequence, sometimes represented themselves as victims of an unfortunate congenital accident who should be pitied rather than persecuted (Sullivan 2003).

One debate which is central to any discussion of gay/lesbian literature is what exactly is gay/lesbian literature? Is it writing by lesbians/gays? Can heterosexual/bisexual people write stories that may profitably be included in gay/lesbian literature? What about writers who 'came out' after a long time – does one go back to their writing and pick 'clues' about their sexual repression and make that writing also part of gay/lesbian literature? Finally, is sexuality a valid barometer for a critique of literature – or does one marginalise it in favour of historicist/Marxist/cultural readings that appear to be more socially useful than the investigation into a writer's sexual identity? The questions are several, and finding answers is never easy, primarily because we live in cultures where the imagination is more or less 'homophobic'. The homophobic imagination deems any known-procreative form in sex in general as aberrant, deviant and unnatural. Defined as a fear of homosexuality, *homophobia* is the condition in which a person or a group of persons predicating themselves on heterocentric assumptions marginalise gays and lesbians as freaks and deviants and practice active/passive discrimination. Homosexuality in a majority of countries across the world is till synonymous in legal parlance with sodomy. Widespread and vociferous religious condemnation of homosexuality is also a strong factor that has reinforced it in the popular mind as abnormal and aberrant. For decades, homosexuality was pathologised and psychoanalysed as a disease, treatable/curable by medication, therapy, even voodoo. Finally the influence of the AIDS crisis across the world landscape has made it an integral part of any discussion of gay and lesbian issues. Issues about AIDS hold powerful influence in lesbian

and gay life, in political activism and in the literature. Clearly then no discussion of gay or lesbian studies or queer theory is complete without a fundamental questioning and reconsideration of what it means to be a gay/lesbian in our varied cultures. As a result, queer theory is a deeply introspective discourse that draws strength from the questioning deconstructive temper of contemporary post-modern and literary and aesthetic practices as well as from the embattled and beleaguered conditions that have constituted, and in a large measure still constitute, the material reality of many gay and lesbian people's everyday existence.

Societal attitudes towards same-sex relationships reflected in the attitude of the general population, the state and the church have varied over the centuries and from place to place, from expecting and requiring all males to engage in relationships, to casual integration, through acceptance, to seeing the practice as a minor sin, repressing it through law enforcement and judicial mechanisms, to prescribing it under penalty of death. Most nations do not impede consensual sex between unrelated individuals above the local age of consent. Some jurisdictions further recognise identical rights, protections and privileges for the family structures of same-sex couples, including marriage. Sexual customs have varied greatly over time and from one region to another. Modern Western gay culture, largely a product of the nineteenth century psychology as well as the years of post-Stonewall Gay Liberation, is a relatively recent manifestation of same-sex desire. Looking back at the history of homosexuality and homosexuals in different cultures across the world shows its existence as an 'understudied relationship' understanding sexuality as a part of human identity and not merely as a sexual act.

Homosexual expression in native Africa took a variety of forms. Anthropologists Murray and Roscoe report that women in Lesotho have engaged in socially sanctioned 'long term, erotic relationships' named *motsalle*. E.E. Evans Pritchard reported that male

AzandeWarriors in the Northern Congo routinely married male youths who functioned as temporary wives. In North American native society, the most common form of same-sex sexuality seems to centre on the figure of the two-spirit individual. Such persons seem to have been recognised by the majority of tribes, each of which had its particular term for the role. Typically the two-spirit individual is recognised early in life and is given a choice by the parents to follow the path and if the child accepts the role then the child is raised in the appropriate manner, learning the customs of the gender it had chosen. Male two-spirit people were prized as wives because of their greater strength and ability to work.

In Asia, same-sex love has been known since the dawn of history. Homosexuality in China, known as the pleasures of the bitten peach, the cut sleeve, or the southern custom, has been recorded since 600 BC. These euphemistic terms were used to describe behaviours, but not identities. The relationships were marked by differences in age and social position. Homosexuality in Japan, variously known as *shudo* or *nanshoku*, has been documented for over 1000 years and was an integral part of Buddhist monastic life and the *samurai* tradition. This same-sex love culture gave rise to strong traditions of painting and literature documenting and celebrating such relationships. Similarly, in Thailand, *Kathoey* or 'ladyboys', have been a feature of Thai society for many centuries, and Thai kings had male as well as female lovers. *Kathoey* are men who dress as women and are generally accepted by society. Thailand has never had legal prohibitions against homosexuality or homosexual behaviour. The teachings of Buddhism, dominant in Thai society, accept a third gender designation.

Coming to Europe, the earliest western documents in the form of literary works, art objects concerning same-sex relationships are derived from ancient Greece. They depict a world in which relationships with women and relationships with youths were the essential foundation of a normal man's life love. Same-sex relationships were a social institution

variously constructed over time and from one city to another. The practice, a system of relationships between an adult male and an adolescent coming of age, was often valued for its pedagogic benefits and as a means of population control. Plato praised its benefits in his early writings, but in his late works proposed its prohibition, laying out a strategy which uncannily predicts the path by which same-sex love was eventually driven underground.

The Roman emperor Theodosius I decreed a law, on August 6th, 390, condemning passive homosexuals to be burned at the stake. Justinian, towards the end of his reign, expanded the proscription to the active partner as well warning that such conduct can lead to the destruction of cities through the 'wrath of God'. Notwithstanding, these regulations, taxes on homosexual boy brothels continued to be collected until the end of the reign of Anastasius I in 518. During the Renaissance, cities in northern Italy, Florence and Venice in particular, were renowned for their widespread practice of same-sex love, engaged in by a majority of the male population and constructed along the classical pattern of Greece and Rome. The eclipse of this period of relative artistic and erotic freedom was precipitated by the rise to power of the moralising monk Girolamo Savonarola.

Among many Middle Eastern Muslim cultures, homosexual practices were widespread and public. Persian poets, such as Attar (1220), Rumi (1273), Sa'di (1291), Hafez (1389) and Jami (1492), wrote poems replete with homoerotic allusions. Recent work in queer studies suggests that while the visibility of such relationships has been much reduced, the frequency has not. The two most commonly documented forms were commercial sex with transgender males or males enacting transgender roles exemplified by the *baccha* (dancing boy). In Persia homosexuality and homoerotic expressions were tolerated in numerous public places, from monasteries and seminaries to taverns, military camps, bath houses and coffee houses. In the early 1501 – 1723 era, male houses of prostitution (*amradkhane*) were legally recognised and paid taxes. A rich tradition of art and literature sprang up, constructing

Middle Eastern homosexuality in ways analogous to the ancient tradition of male love in which Ganymede, cupbearer to the gods, symbolised the ideal boyfriend. Muslim – often Sufi-poets in medieval Arab lands and in Persia wrote odes to the beautiful Christian wine boys who, they claimed, served them in the taverns and shared their beds at night. In many areas the practice survived into modern times as documented by Richard Francis Burton, Andre Gide and others.

In South Asia, a gender variant category, hijra, remains intact despite the efforts of British colonials to eradicate what they called 'a breach of public decency' (Nanda cited in Penrose 2001: 4). This third gender consists of hermaphrodites, women who do not menstruate, as well as passively homosexual and castrated men all who proclaim they are neither men nor women. Generally though not always, hijras wear female attire and have female mannerisms and patterns of speech. Hijras group together as devotees of a Hindu mother goddess, Bahuchara Mata. They sing and dance at birth and wedding ceremonies. As an Indian proverb states 'Truth is a many sided diamond' Nanda calls the role of the hijra as ambiguous, like the many other facets of Indian society (cited in Penrose 2001: 6-7). Hijras are simultaneously mocked, feared and shown respect. SudhirKakar helps contextualise the position of Hijras by saying that the Hindus are more accepting of deviance or eccentricity than are the Westerners, who treat sexual variance as anti-social or psychopathological, requiring correction or cure (cited in Penrose 2001: 7). In the Hindu view, the status of Hijra is the working out of a particular spiritual life task of the individual who is travelling on the path to moksha, final release from the cycles of human existence. This aspect of religion, on which the caste system is built, allows institutionalised gender variance to exist within Hindu society, despite its highly patriarchal nature. In southern India transvestite males and females serve as devotees of Yellamma, a goddess of skin disease who is believed to have the power to change the sex of individuals. Jogappa are her male attendants who wear female clothing

and Jogamma, her female attendants who dress as men. Jogappa, though apparently not castrated, fulfil some of the traditional functions as the Hijras as in dancing and singing at birth and wedding ceremonies. While Jogamma just carry the images of the goddess and other sacred items. Since the goddess is thought to have the power to change the sex of both men and women, the gender- deviant states of both Jogappa and Jogamma are considered to be a direct result of the possession by the goddess. Bradford notes that they are regarded as divine rather than queer (Bradford cited in Penrose 2001: 9).

The ancient Sumerians believed in people of a third type. In the Sumerian myth of 'The creation of Man, the god Ninmah fashioned seven variant persons, including one who has no male organ, no female organ and a woman who cannot give birth' (Murry and Roscoe cited in Penrose 2001: 11). Roscoe uses the expression 'state third genders' when describing gender roles in ancient Mediterranean and Asian societies. He cites the evidence from places like Rome and Persia to show that third gendered individuals worked as domestics in palaces, temples and other large estates. A system of multiple genders, according to Roscoe, can only exist outside dichotomous gender systems, which polarise sex, gender and sexuality into categories of male and female. In a binary gender system, androgyny becomes the only available alternative. 'Third and fourth genders, on the other hand, help us to perceive all that is left over when the world is divided into male and female – the feelings, perceptions and talents that may be neither' (cited in Penrose 2001: 30-31).

2.3.1 Civil Rights

Shortly after World War II the gay community began to make advancements in civil rights in much of the western world. A turning point was reached in 1973 when, in a vote decided by a plurality of the membership, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, thus negating homosexuality as a clinical mental disorder. Since the 1960s in part due to their history of

shared oppression, many gays in the west have developed a shared culture. To many gay men and women, the gay culture represents heterophobia and is scorned as widening the gulf between gay and straight people. Legislation designed to create provisions for gay marriage in a number of countries has polarised international opinion and led to many well-publicised political debates and court battles. At the start of 2006, six countries (the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Canada and South Africa) had legalised same-sex marriage. In the United States, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and New York have legalised gay marriage while the States of Vermont and Connecticut allow civil unions. Majority of European Nations have enacted laws allowing civil unions, designed to give gay couples similar rights as married couples concerning legal issues such as inheritance and immigration. Numerous Scandinavian countries have had domestic partnership laws on the books since the late 1980s. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in its section 15(1) has provided protection against discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation since 1995. The supreme court of Canada unanimously agreed that sexual orientation was a protected category under the charter. In education, this decision has resulted in Canadian teachers' federation and associations of teachers' rights and responsibilities to include sexual orientation as a character of person to be protected against discrimination in keeping with the law of the land. The modern lesbian and gay rights movement can be traced to the massive, social and political upheavals in the United States in the late 1960's generating vibrant cultural and political work. Among the agendas, one main agenda is that ofparenthood and adoption by same-sex couples which is still a contentious issue in many countries that has become a part of the platform of many gay rights organisations and movements. Lesbian and gay liberation, even in its earliest days, had a significant rights component based on equality under the law. The first lesbian and gay liberation protest at the Federal Parliament Buildings in Ottawa during 1971 was organised around a series of political demands explicitly calling for equal treatment

in terms of age of consent, immigration and participation in the armed forces. In addition, the Canadian Charter has helped move lesbian and gay activism towards a more specific strategy of rights talk and has legitimised their presence within Canadian civic culture.

In 1977, Quebec became the first state-level jurisdiction in the world to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. During the 1980's and the 1990's most developed countries enacted laws decriminalising homosexual behaviour and prohibiting discrimination against lesbian and gay people in employment, housing and services. In the United States President Bill Clinton's Executive Order 13087 prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation in the competitive service of the Federal Civilian Workforce. In the United States, there is no federal law discriminating potential or current tenants on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Hate crimes also known as bias crimes are crimes motivated by bias against an identifiable social group defined either by race, religion, disability, ethnicity or sexual orientation. In United States, 45 states and the District of Columbia have statutes criminalising various types of bias- motivated violence or intimidation. Thirty two of them cover sexual orientation, twenty eight cover gender and eleven covers transgender and gender identity. Robinson says conservative Christian organisations typically use the term 'special rights' rather than 'equal rights' because they believe that rights based on sexual behaviour are quite different from more traditional rights. The latter are based on sexual behaviour are based on unchangeable factors, like race, colour, ability, status, nationality and gender. Publicly gay politicians have attained numerous government posts, even in countries that had sodomy laws in the past. Gay British politicians who were Cabinet Ministers were Chris Smith and Nick Brown. Guido Westerwelle, Germany's Vice Chancellor, Peter Mandelson, a British Labour party Cabinet minister and Per-kristian Foss formerly a Norwegian minister of Finance.

The first strategic re-deployment of the word 'queer' came in 1990 with the founding of the activist group 'Queer Nation" in New York, a movement that directly grew out of political work on behalf of people suffering from AIDS. The popular slogan "We're here! We're queer! Get used to it!' became the combined slogan to point a critical finger at existing institutions articulating a far-reaching demand for change in the unexamined lines of symbolic demarcation between gays and straights. With the outbreak of AIDS in the early 1980's, many LGBT groups and individuals organised campaigns to promote efforts in AIDS education, prevention, research, patient support and community outreach and to demand government support for these programmes. Gay Men's Health Crises, Project Inform and ACT UP are some notable American examples of LGBT community's response to the AIDS crises. The bewildering death toll by the AIDS epidemic seemed at first to slow the progress of the gay rights movement but in time it motivated and galvanised some parts of the LGBT community into community service and political action, and challenged the heterosexual community to respond compassionately. Queer Nation as an activist group combined the sardonic and the provocative, the theoretical and the confrontational to create vivid, highly charged moments of recognition. George Chauncey in his path breaking book *Gay New York* (1994) combines personal recollections and private desires to chart the changing fortunes of the city's gay male communities and also examines the conflict and the mutuality – between the nations 'gay capital' and 'normal' or 'straight' world. Although different terms were used by different categories of people to define gay men like 'inverts', 'perverts', 'degenerates' or sometimes 'homosexuals' or 'homosexualists', 'faggots' or 'queens' by the 1910 and 1920s according to Chauncey the word most often employed to indicate 'a distinct category of men' who were sexually interested in other men was queer (1994: 15-16). Since the 1960's, many LGBT people in the West, particularly those in major metropolitan areas, have developed a

gay culture which is often exemplified by the gay pride movement, with annual parades and displays of rainbow flags.

2.3.2 Religious Institutions

Though the relationship between homosexuality and religion can vary across time and place and between different religions and sects, nonetheless one can look into the different attitudes that the church and doctrines of the world have towards homosexuality and bisexuality. Current authoritative bodies and the world's largest religious communities generally view homosexuality negatively. This can range from quietly discouraging homosexual activity, to explicitly forbidding same-sex sexual practices and actively opposing social acceptance of homosexuality. Some religion teach that homosexual orientation itself is sinful, while others assert that only the sexual act is a sin. Some claim that homosexuality can be overcome through religious faith and practice. On the other hand, voices exist within many of these religions that view homosexuality more positively. Some view same-sex love and sexuality as sacred and a mythology of same-sex love can be found around the world. Yet the authority of various traditions and religious denominations and the correctness of their translations and interpretations are still being disputed. Other ancient civilizations, like that of the ancient Israelites, were motivated to exterminate homosexuals because they tended to have fewer children. One writer states 'Religious objections to homosexuality spring from two sources. One is the ancient patriarchal warrior-clan religion on which several modern religions are based. In their clans it was every male's duty to breed, to produce more soldiers and any who didn't were violating cult taboo: it was taken as a sign of non-male weakness, of "sin" against their warrior Father' (Athenadorus cited in Robinson 2004:1). The same writer continues 'The other source of these condemnations has been the need of religious and political leaders, who, in trying to force their religion and it observance on the people of their communities, have created mythic polemics that attempt to denigrate and destroy the

religious beliefs and practices of others. This is the origin of the myth of Sodom and Gomorrah, and of the opprobrious dicta of Saul/Paul' (ibid. 2004: 1-2).

The overall trend of greater acceptance of gay men and women in the latter part of the twentieth century was not limited to secular institutions alone but it was also seen in many religious institutions. Reform Judaism, the largest branch of Judaism outside Israel had begun to facilitate religious weddings for gay adherents in their synagogues. The Anglican Communion encountered discord that caused a rift between the African and Asian Anglican churches on the one hand and North American churches on the other when American and Canadian churches ordained gay clergy and began blessing same-sex unions. Other churches such as the Methodist church had experienced trials of gay clergy which were claimed as a violation of religious principles.

2.3.3 Literature

In 2005 Haworth Press withdrew from publication a volume on homosexuality in classical antiquity titled *Same Sex Desire and Love in Greco-Roman Antiquity and in the Classical Tradition of the West*. This was in response to criticism from American conservative groups which objected to the discussion of positive aspects of classical pederasty. One of the main ways in which the record of same-sex love has been preserved is through literature and art. Homer's *Iliad* is considered to have the love between two men as its central feature. Plato's symposium also gives readers commentary on the subject, at one point putting forth the claim that homosexual love is superior to heterosexual love. The European tradition was continued throughout the ages in the works of Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. In Islamic societies it was present in the works of Omar Khayyam and Abu Nuwas. *The Tale of Genji*, called the world's first real novel fostered this tradition in Japan and in the Chinese literary tradition works such as BianErZhai and Jin Ping Mei advocated the same tradition.

Perhaps the most troubled and troubling representation of homosexuality is James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* (1957). Despite the success of his first novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), *Giovanni's Room* was turned down by Baldwin's American publishers because they were afraid that the book would make him known as a black homosexual writer. Baldwin's own views about homosexuality provide an instructive counterpoint in *Giovanni's Room*. Baldwin sought both to transcend the reduction of homosexuality to mere sexual behaviour, whether natural or not and at the same time to insist that the division of the world into 'two sexes' was an unavoidable fact with which everyone must in some way come to terms, 'no matter what demons drive them'. For Baldwin humankind's greatest need was 'to arrive at something higher than a natural state', to strive towards the 'genuine human involvement of love and friendship that must necessarily include communion between the sexes' (Baldwin 1985: 101-105). The word queer has been historically used in a number of different ways to signify something strange such as madness or worthlessness. Queer is also a term that has been virtually reinvented by gay critics and gay activists in recent years. Roughly speaking the term queer seems to have passed through three main phases. When it first came into use in the United States it was not a mark of obloquy or disdain as told to George Chauncey by one of the respondent who had been part of New York's gay world in the 1920s. According to him: 'it wasn't like kike or nigger…it just meant you were different Chauncey 1994: 101). To identify oneself as queer tended to indicate a quietly controlled, 'manly' demeanour and a desire for other queer or perhaps straightmen. One of Chauncey's central claims in his book was that same-sex desire was necessarily a solitary, secretive longing that could not be given public expression which he felt was a myth. In recent years, 'Queer Theory' as an academic discipline has been developing new modes to make literary or cultural criticism. Most queer critics have been developing different interpretations of literary texts or are asking new questions of them. The results have been varied: 'queer readings' of

major writers as James Joyce and Henry James have given new modes and insights into understanding their works.

Revealing 'queer' also had another meaning in the 1950s. When David in *Giovanni's Rome* tells one of his male companions in a gay bar that 'I'm sort of queer for girls myself', he is turning the word against a would-be lover and also using the word in a somewhat different sense to indicate both the sources and the intensity of this desire. Mad for men, yet preferring women: this figure of a passion that is aberrant precisely carries over into queer's latest incarnation, a phase in which queer becomes a signifier of attitude, of a refusal to accept conventional sexual and gendered categories, of a defiant desire beyond the regular confines of 'heteronormativity'. John Rechy (1963) in his classic novel of pre-stonewall gay life, *City of Night* describes a bar off Hollywood Boulevard:

> Among its patrons are the Young, the good-looking, the masculine – the sought after – and, too, the effeminate flutterers posing like languid young ladies, usually imitating the current flatchested heroines of the Screen but not resorting to the hints of drag employed by the much more courageous downtown Los Angeles queens (1963: 186).

One of the first major articles on 'Homosexuality in America' depicted a San Francisco bar where men 'wear leather jackets, make a show of masculinity and scorn effeminate members of their worlds', in contrast with the 'bottom-of-the-barrel bars' where one finds 'the stereotypes of effeminate males – the 'queens', with orange coiffures, plucked eyebrows, silver nail polish and lipstick' (Welch 1964: 66-68). A part owner of one leather bar hangs a sign that says, 'Down with sneakers!' – described as the 'favourite footwear of many homosexuals with feminine traits' – and is quoted proudly as saying, 'this is the antifeminine side of homosexuality…. We throw out anybody who is too swishy. If one is going to be homosexual, why have anything to do with women of either sex?' (ibid. 68). The most recent examples in attempting to justify one's sexual identity can be related to Dean Hamer's*Gay*

Gene and Simons LeVay's*Gay Brain* studies. The 'gay brain' became a frequently used term in 1991 after Simon LeVay, a neurologist, published a study which showed physical differences between a heterosexual and a homosexual brain (cited in Rixecker 2000: 267). He cited a difference in the nucleus of the hypothalamus which appeared larger in straight heterosexual men than in gay men, resulting in the idea that gay brains are fundamentally different from the straight men's brain, and this difference means that homosexuality, or at least gay male homosexuality could no longer be discriminated against because it was innate or generic rather than by choice or lifestyle. Pat Cadigan's novel *Synners* challenges some of the most powerful and dangerous norms and normativity of American thought and culture. The novel's narrative form enables an approach to techno science and transnational capitalism focussing on a more productive representation of postmodernity. Cadigan in the novel deconstructs Judeo-Christian religious tropes to argue for a responsible and knowledgeable approach to technology by going back to times when there were no differences. The figure of the tree of knowledge in the Bible uses species difference to introduce prohibition. The connection between difference and prohibition is the basis of the story of a fall from an idealised time and place where and when no difference existed. Cadigan's deconstruction in *Synners* enables us to move away from the original stories, and to escape the logical trap created by these circular, recuperative notions of prohibition and transgression. The title of the novel comes as a pun, they are not sinners but synners, synthesizers who work with new technology and are changed by it.

2.4 Homosexuality Theorised

By the late 1980'sand early 1990's the call to develop theories of sexuality was being answered by an expanding body of literature that addressed the political and cultural positions of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals, sex workers, sadomasochists and others – a diverse conglomeration of sexual minorities who were increasingly identified as 'queer'

(De Lauretis 1991: 5). Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993), Warner's *Fear of a Queer Planet* (1993), and two special issues of *Differences*(Vol 5, No 2 and Vol 6, No 2 & 3) all signalled the consolidation of an approach to theorising sexuality that crossed gender lines integrating sexual theories related to masculinity and femininity and to heterosexuality and homosexuality. Most importantly the emergence of queer theory within academia marked a radical shift towards positioning abject and stigmatised sexual identities as important entry points to the production of knowledge (Butler 1993). As part of the larger post-modern concern with the debunking of 'metanarratives' queer theory's greatest contribution has been the destabilization of *heteronormativism*. The idea/belief that heterosexuality is the norm from which any/all sexual behaviour deviant is condemned as un-natural, immoral, and 'queer'. Heteronormative ideology asserts that any form of same-sex intimacy, especially sexual, is unacceptable stages of feminist and minority-centered studies, gay studies centered on the undermining of hegemony-this time the hegemony of heterosexuality- and how homosexuality worked within and around heterosexuality. Such landmark works as Foucault's three volume study *The History of Sexuality* and Adrienne Rich's essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (1980) both drew a priori stability of heterosexuality into interminable flux, and centered homosexual existence and the prominence and importance of considerations of homosexuality. However, not until Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* had the 'closet' been interrogated or academically centered as a discourse. In this important study, by using the figure of the 'closet' as a central metaphorical space for all considerations of homosexuality Sedgwick placed 'homosociality' and homophobia as central to not only homosexual existence, but also to the existence of Western society as a whole. With 'Lesbian Panic as Narrative Strategy in British Women's Fictions' Patricia Julian Smith extended Sedgwick's thesis of

'homosexual panic' and erotic triangulation (involving two men and a woman) to explore 'lesbian panic' and a new triad (this time involving two women and a man). The theories of Adrienne Rich have in particular deeply influenced lesbian/gender studies. A move to destabilize sexual and gender categories was and still is an integral part of this process. Thus, queer theory and queer politics represents a critical moment in the history of western sexuality in which sexual minorities and deviants who were previously defined by legal statutes and medical/ psychological diagnosis were instead creating an always contested and re-negotiated group identity based on differences from the norm- in other words, a post-modern version of identity politics (Butler 1993). Queer Theory, as such dealt with aspects that allowed great inter-disciplinary mobility, as they permitted theoretical concepts initially applied to issues of sexual identity and the oppression of sexual minorities to be deployed in studies of other social sub-groups as well as in studies of the written and spoken word, the build environment, material objects and other products of culture. Although many people believe that queer theory is only about homosexual representations in literature, it also explores categories of gender and sexual orientation. One of the main projects of queer theory is to explore the contestations of the categorisation of gender and sexuality. When analysing texts queer theorists expose underlying meanings within the texts challenging notions of 'straight' ideology and has leanings to the tenets of post-structuralists theory and deconstruction in particular. Queer theory looks at, and studies, and has a political critique of, anything that falls into normative and deviant categories, particularly sexual activities and identities. But queer theory and queer activism are two different issues. The later developed as a response mainly to the AIDS crisis in the 1980s. Thus, queer theory expands the scope of its analysis to all kinds of behaviours, including those which are gender-bending as well as those which involve 'queer' non-normative forms of sexuality. Queer theory insists that all sexual behaviour, all concepts linking sexual behaviours to sexual identities and all categories

of normative and deviant sexualities, are social constructs sets of signifiers which create certain types of social meaning. Queer theory follows feminist theory and gay/lesbian studies in rejecting the idea that sexuality is an essentialist category, something determined by biology or judged eternal standards of morality and truth. For queer theorists, sexuality is a complex array of social codes and forces, forms of individual activity and institutional power, which interact to shape the ideas of what is normative and what is deviant at any particular moment, and which then operate under the rubric of what is 'natural', 'essential', 'biological', or 'god-given'.

Much of queer theory developed out of a response to the AIDS crisis, which promoted a renewal of radical activism, and the growing homophobia brought about by public responses to AIDS. Queer theory became occupied in part with what effects put into circulation around the AIDS epidemic-necessitated and nurtured new forms of political organisation, education and theorising in 'queer'. Sadism and masochism, prostitution, inversion, transgender, bisexuality, asexuality, intersexuality and many other things are seen by queer theorists as opportunities for more involved investigations into class, racial, ethnic and regional differences using non-normative analysis as a tool.

'Queer' is one term that has emerged to engender multiplicity in sexuality rather to accept the artificial crevasse between 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual'. In 1990, Judith Butler offered the foundational proposition of queer analysis, arguing that there is 'no gender identity behind the expressions of gender' because "that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results. In other words, there is no 'real' woman or 'normal' man, there is no 'woman' there is no 'man'. There is merely the repeated construction of types and the constrained performance of identity (1990). In this sense, therefore, sex is thus, not simply what one has, or a static description of what one is, it will be one of the norms by which the one becomes viable at all, that which qualifies a body for life

within the domain of cultural intelligibility (Butler 1993). Judith Butler does not try to anticipate exactly how queer will continue to challenge normative structures and discourses. On the contrary, she argues that what makes queer so efficacious is the way in which she understands the effects of its interventions which are not singular and therefore, cannot be anticipated in advance. In stressing the partial, flexible and responsive nature of queer, Butler offers a corrective to those naturalised and seemingly self-evident categories of identification that constitute traditional formations of identity politics. She specifies the ways in which the logic of identity politics- which is to gather together similar subjects so that they can achieve shared aims by mobilising a minority-rights discourse.

Queer, then, is an identity category that has no interest in consolidating or even stabilising itself. It maintains its critique of identity, focused movements by understanding that even the formation of its own coalitional and negotiated constituencies may well result in exclusionary and reifying effects far in excess of those intended. Queer theory in this sense seeks to stand for an identity of political and social interests for gay men and in the words of Judith Butler 'to wield a discourse of truth to delegitimate minority gendered and sexual practices. This doesn't mean that all minority practices are to be condoned or celebrated, but it does mean that we ought to be able to think them before we come to any kinds of conclusions about them' (Butler 2007: viii).

Queer theory articulates a related objection to a homosexual theory and politics organised on the ground of the homosexual subject: this project reproduces the hetero-homosexual binary, a code that perpetuates the heterosexualization of society. Modern Western affirmative homosexual theory may naturalise or normalise the gay subject or even may register it as an agent of social liberation, but it has the effect of consolidating heterosexuality and homosexuality as master categories of sexual and social identity; it reinforces the modern regime of sexuality. Queer theory wishes to challenge the regime of

sexuality itself – that is, the knowledges that construct the self as sexual and that assume heterosexuality and homosexuality as categories marking the truth of sexual selves. Queer theorists shift their focus from an exclusive preoccupation with the oppression and liberation of the homosexual subject to an analysis of the institutional practices and discourses producing sexual knowledges and how they organise social life, with particular attention to the way in which these knowledges and social practices repress differences. In this regard, queer theory is suggesting that the study of homosexuality should not be a study of a minority – 'the making of the lesbian/gay/bisexual/subject – but a study of those knowledges and social practices which organise 'society' as a whole by sexualising – heterosexualising or homosexualising – bodies, desires, acts, identities, social relations, knowledges, culture and social institutions. Queer theory aspires to transform homosexual theory into a general social theory or one standpoint from which to analyse whole societies' (Seidman 1994: 174). It is in this sense thus, that the assertion of the term queer is to affirm the contingency of the term and to expect representation by it, to let it take on meanings that can be understood and anticipated by younger generations and whose political vocabulary will continue to democratize queer politics, and also to expose, affirm and rework the historicity of the term.

Chapter III

Differently 'Funny': Passage to Homosexuality in the Novels of Shyam Selvadurai

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This chapter addresses the issue of being different in a funny way which does not conform to accepted gender and sexual norms. The novels of Selvadurai give a brilliant portrait of the anxieties aroused by gender non-conformity, especially in patriarchal societies. Apart from the issue of being different, the protagonists in Selvadurai's novels experiences the discomforts and the risks associated with being a non-conformist in a country with persistently traditional and conformist norms about sexuality. The chapter elaborately studies the gradual and the ultimate passage that the protagonist takes to come out and to accept their sexual identity with corresponding references to the author's own passage to becoming gay openly and the discomforts he felt of being gay in a country he considered home 'Sri Lanka'. In the author's own words, he explains his decision to be openly gay, 'I remembered how it was for me feeling there was no one out there who was a role model of any sort. When I decided to be out in public, I was really thinking of that version of me in Sri Lanka who would read my book and feel relieved to not be alone. If I decided not to be out, I would be sending a message to that young person that I was still afraid and ashamed' (Hunn 2005: 2). Selvadurai's novels have the background of the struggle of the spirit against oppression – of class, gender and sexual orientation capturing the nuances of the Sri Lankan society steeped in ethnic riots, political tensions and cultural and social rigidity. Characters in his novels are spread in a sprawling narrative where they find love and friendship struggling through conflicts with family members, social mores and their own repressed desires. Selvadurai's works are informed by meticulous research and a haunting evocation of Sri-Lanka, which

remain vital in his imagination despite his having lived in Canada for so many years. He clearly has a deep engagement with his country of birth and its troubled history, but he is also aware of how impossible it would be for him to live there due to the country's anti-homophobic attitude towards homosexual relationships. Homophobia or abhorrence for homosexual or homosexual bonding is not a mere by-product of the ignorance and prejudice of a segment of the population, but an aspect of the way power is organised and deployed throughout society.

All the three novels chafe through the themes of traditional restrictions, rigidity and the disturbing blend of the Tamil – Sinhalese – British conflicts with that of heterosexuality and homosexuality against the strictures of family, marriage and patriarchy. As the Sri Lankan critic Prakrti has noted, Selvadurai's particular gift is to understand how such factors as ethnic tensions and the legacy of British colonial rule are interweaved with the dominant ideologies of sexuality and gender. Selvadurai takes seriously both the effect his books may have on other young gay Sri Lankans and his position as a role model for other gay Asians in North America. His novels are revealing stories of young and middle-aged gays coming to terms with their homosexuality tied with the theme of high-society morality and hypocrisy. In terms of Selvadurai' exploration of the clashes between sexuality, colonialism and class he has in many ways been influenced by the writings of E.M. Forster. Through the details of family life, the intimacies and exchanges, Selvadurai, much like E.M. Forster reveals truths subtly, with poignancy and grace. Like E.M. Forster in *Howards End*, Selvadurai shows how the intimate workings of a family can represent and reflect a larger political context.

Selvadurai's novels are a constant reminder of the price that a non-conformist has to pay rebelling against conformity – emotionally and socially. Most of his protagonists are

surrounded by conservative, wealthy influential family members who fervently dominate their choices and force them to repress all forms of transgressive desires.

3.1 Tendencies: The Unnamed Third Place

The polarisation of sex and gender into what theorists' term a 'binary system' has largely eradicated legitimate third or fourth gender roles. Those who do not behave in ways considered appropriate for their biological sex are regarded as transgendered, for they have crossed over the socially constructed boundaries of gender – appropriate behaviour. In South Asia, influenced by western discourse hijras were viewed as inverts and deviants or gender variants or variant gendered. The concept of a third gender can be identified as a neuter bereft of either a masculine or a feminine nature. Arjie, the protagonist in *Funny Boy* is 'funny'. He likes to wear saris and play with girls – and he hates sports. For Arjie, the sari being wrapped around his body and the veil pinned on his head, the rouge put on his cheeks, lipsticks on his lips, kohl around his eyes was a transfiguration of his self, 'an ascent into another more brilliant, more beautiful self' (Selvadurai1994: 5).When Arjie is caught dressed in a sari, his grandmother decides manual labour will teach him to be more masculine. This is the first time Arjie is embarrassed about his 'funniness', though he does not understand why. This resistance comes not only from the grandmother but also from the father because Arjie's third nature stands out against the notion of societal tolerance. The bride is not even seen as particularly female or even as a woman when Arjie is dressing up as bride, but rather as inhabiting the highly symbolic role of bride as 'icon'. His unwillingness to associate himself with a gender in his 'more beautiful self' shows his recognition that he is 'caught between the boys and the girls worlds, not belonging or wanted in either' (ibid.: 39). As a child and young adult, Arjie displays 'certain tendencies' (ibid.: 162), as his father *calls* them, that defy accepted norms of the ways men and women are expected to behave earning him the

adjective of 'funny' a word whose significance he does not fully understand but that he can sense nonetheless has a shameful connotation. Arjie negotiates his sexuality amidst family and political tensions becoming gradually aware of the repercussions of his 'tendencies' yet, struggling to occupy a space outside of normal gender and sexual categorisations. Arjie's interest in the ideas of romance, love and marriage governs most of his childhood, leading him to discover and understand more serious aspects of his life, such as his homosexuality.

Third gender roles and cross dressing in traditional societies entails a system of multiple genders that can exists only outside dichotomous gender systems, which polarise sex, gender and sexuality into categories of male and female. Thus, in a binary gender system, androgyny becomes the only available alternative. 'Third and fourth genders, on the other hand, help us to perceive all that is left over when the world has been divided into male and female'(Roscoe 1998:210). Gender stereotypes imposed by his family explicitly demarcate the separate worlds of boy and girl, leaving Arjie caught between the boys' and girls' worlds, not belonging and wanted in either. Within these early episodes Arjie's sexuality is negotiated solely within the confines of gender, male and female. His exclusion from both the boys and girls suggests that Arjie himself inhabits some third space in between these two, but that third space is merely described as funny and never named. Just as the space Arjie occupies between male and female is not clearly defined, so too are the words employed to describe this space vague and shifting.As a child and young adult, Arjie displays 'certain tendencies' (Selvadurai 1994: 162), as his father calls them, that defy accepted norms of the ways men and women are expected to behave earning him the adjective of 'funny' a word whose significance he does not fully understand but that he can sense nonetheless has a shameful connotation. Arjie negotiates his sexuality amidst family and political tensions

becoming gradually aware of the repercussions of his 'tendencies' yet, struggling to occupy a space outside of normal gender and sexual categorisations.

Privacy and secrecy are stressed as important factors in certain sexual relations. If sexuality is to be categorised by acts, there exists certain socially accepted institutions that often harbour the hidden third natured sexual behaviour. Marriage is seen as one such institution which acts as a safe transitory alternative that helps to generate a facade of heterosexuality.*Cinnamon Gardens* is a tragedy of manners that centres around the life of a gay-man living in a dead marriage in a repressed, conformist, colonial society *CinnamonGardens* talks about Balendran and his homosexuality both in Sri Lanka and in England, and the importance of his father 'The Mudaliyar' who represents the power that is organised and deployed throughout the choices that Balendran makes in life.In his days as a student in London Bala had carried on a relationship with a man called Richard Howland but had to abandon his lover and return to Colombo to marry his cousin under pressure from his domineering father. Twenty years after the Mudaliyar had 'rescued' Balendran from a homosexual relationship and steered him into a wedded life – and presumably into respectability, Balendran is caught between thought and action, rationalisation and passion. The return of Richard Howland to Ceylon as a member of the Donoughmore Commission sets Balendran at odds with the very social and familial strictures that have confined repressed and sustained him in his place as a normal man. Balendran had actually never been able to forget Richard. In his own words he says, 'As for the type of love Richard and he had had, he accepted that it was part of his nature' (Selvadurai1998: 38). His marriage to Sonia was to break the pressure from his father and society and in the words of Selvadurai; Balendran can be seen as a person with enormous courage to live the life he lives. In conforming to social expectations by entering into a sexually unfulfilling marriage, Balendran

reveals himself as a decent but a weak individual, racked by the guilt he feels for neglecting his wife and for having betrayed his feelings for Richard.

> 'As one by one we give up, we get freer and freer of pain', he said, citing to himself that verse from the *Tirukkural* on renunciation. How often he had repeated it during that first year of his marriage, to comfort himself for the anguish he had felt, the suffocation, lying next to his wife, Sonia, at night, unable to sleep. His suffering had been intensified by knowing that she despaired along with him, felt his alienation, almost hatred towards her, without knowing its cause (Selvadurai 1998: 38-39).

A number of factors and agencies are involved in curbing any tendency that stand outside the male/female category. In highly patriarchal societies with sharp gender differentiation, the development of a gender variant category is totally unacceptable. For Balendran his father's hands on his shoulders were like clasps on the mantle of societal approbation that drew around him and controlled him. He sees himself as the gentle, humane, dutiful, ministering son and the gallant spouse to his wife, yet he feels that he is a failure because at the end of the day he has not been true to himself. Of even graver, consequences, however, is the fact that for the past twenty years Balendran has submerged his own homosexual desires underneath a façade of respectable familial propriety. Selvadurai explores in *Cinnamon Gardens* the attendant clashes between sexuality, colonialism and classicism inherent in the caste system, religious divisions, racial and sexual prejudice of Ceylonese society, when the homosexuality of a man of polite society was considered a regrettably irreversible disposition. The novel exposes the stifling conformity that is the price of acceptance in the wealthy precincts of *Cinnamon Gardens.*

As the narrative unfolds and deepens the liberal sympathetic Balendran's world much repressed by his father reveals secrets that are an outcome of conflict. The novel unveils Balendran's secret sexual escapades with Ranjan, a private in the army even after his

marriage to Sonia confirming the truth that Bala is a repressed homosexual, confined and steered to becoming a heterosexual by his father. The unnamed third place in Balendran case is treated as a deviance or eccentricity or a sexual variance which is anti-social or psychopathological, requiring cure or correction. A deviance which can be sanctified by tradition and formalised by recognised rituals like marriage. The effects of a silence which conceals the personal sexual identity which would otherwise liberate a more public or collective identity is projected through the character of Balendran. The Ceylonese society that rejects a third gender forces Bala to adopt a gender that is normal by repressing all tendencies that is innate and natural to him. The fact that the personal is political and any transgressive act can mess up the identity politics of an individual is a truth to which Bala sticks to maintain the tenet of his sexual identity. The epigraph of the novel, a passage from George Eliot's *Middlemarch* – '…for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest is unvisited tombs' stages the world of Cinnamon Gardens that have stories of unhistoric acts and unvisited tombs.

Selvadurai's third novel *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* has Amrith a gay teenager in the early 1980's who portrays the same tendencies that Arjie experiences in *Funny Boy* but with a more intense, complicated and moving passage to an assertion of that identity.

> But people can't, unhappily, invent their mooring posts, their lovers and their friends, anymore than they can invent their parents. Life gives these and also takes them away and the great difficulty is to say Yes to live.
>
> From *Giovanni's Room* by James Baldwin

The epigraph of the novel from James Baldwin's novel *Giovanni's Room* is an acute representation of the world of Amrith, in and out of family, friends, relatives and loved ones.

The word 'invent' in the epigraph is an assertion of what one is given in a natural state, a transcend to insist that life comes in divisions and that it is an unavoidable fact with which everyone must in some way come to terms (1985: 101-05). Amrith in the novel visibly experiences an identifiable third nature in and out of his social worlds that is structured by his school, family and friends. The third unnamed creation allows Amrith to tie a cohesive thread with his own past and his future. Amrith looks forward for rehearsing and participating in the school play. He desperately wants to be in the school production of *Othello* – and manages to win the part of Desdemona (a part he covets, after winning an award for his acting as Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*). He had won the cup for the Best Female Portrayal from a Boys School.As he gears up and starts practicing for 'Othello', Amrith totally seeps into the character of Desdemona, the wife of Othello, the black moor. Female roles are roles which other boys in the school limit themselves from performing but for Amrith it is role that gives him satisfaction of an unknown inner tendency. The role of Desdemona is a cross -dressing that allows Amrith to comfortably fit into a gender variance in his mind which would have otherwise caused unnecessary stir. It is a role that reveals Amrith's sexuality which in the beginning is hidden. The character of Lucien Lindamulage in the novel is relational to the third gender that is posited against the character of Amrith who still is new to this variance.

'He was a little grey-haired gnome of a man, with large ears and nose and thick glasses. He always applied white powder to his face, and this gave his dark complexion a greyish sheen' (Selvadurai 2005: 59). Lucien was the talk of the town and Amrith had often heard his uncle tell his aunt that he should leave his secretaries at home when they went on business outstation. As he says; 'There was something scandalous about Lucien Lindamulage that Amrith did not understand. It had to do with his constant round of young male secretaries' (ibid.: 59). Despite Lucien's odd manner and scandal surrounding him, Amrith

really liked the old architect. 'Unlike most men, Amrith felt that he could simply be himself around Lucien Lindamulage' (ibid.: 59). This is the first tendency of inversion that we see in the novel as Amrith progresses further to explain 'how he had once heard boys in school mention about Lucien Lindamulage's secretaries and refer to the old man as 'ponnaya' – a word whose precise meaning Amrith did not understand, though he knew it disparaged the masculinity of another man, reducing him to the level of a woman' (ibid.: 60). The character of Lucien Lindamulage as an invert terrifies Amrith because such an inversion is negated by society and culture and at best treated as a subject of gossip. The third nature in this sense is an opposition of the norm as the male takes on the appearance of a female or turns more passive. Amrith later shows such tendencies as his cousin Niresh arrives from Canada. Niresh is handsome, worldly, cool and iconoclastic and the two boys hit it off immediately. Amrith's ordered life undergoes an unexpected turn. Until the arrival of Niresh, Amrith's only concern and care in life was to submerge himself in his past and to act.Amrith begins to see that Niresh was keen to impress him and win his affection and that from the beginning Niresh was trying to build a relationship between them. 'Amrith had never been courted in this way by anybody, and it was especially flattering because Niresh was two years older than him' (Selvadurai 2005: 83).

Selvadurai in the novel chronicles the growth, development, rejection, repression and exploration of a fourteen year old's homosexual tendencies. The unnamed third place that Amrith, Niresh and Lucien belong to and the tendency that alienates them from the rest is treated as transitory and dangerous in nature. *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* is set in 1980 when being gay is at best the subject of gossip and at worst illegal. Having lived a sheltered life, Amrith does not understand what the gossip is about, and becomes ever more confused as his feelings for Niresh strengthen.

A third gender or nature becomes an off limited term as it becomes a distinguishing characteristic of a heterosexual defective. The characters of Selvadurai keeps this place unnamed and unspoken many times as it does not fit into the norm. It is either treated as a defect or a transvestism that needs to be corrected. They are described as beings of an alternative gender, the 'effeminate homosexuals'. A nature which is immediately preceded by vivid appearance of virile sexual behaviour abhorred and shunned. Selvadurai blends Amrith's knowledge of this awareness with a beautiful animal imagery that enhances the affirmation that in being different he is not alone and that there is nothing wrong in it.

> When they were in the aviary, Amrith watched Kuveni busily pecking away at the mango he had brought. She paused occasionally to dart a glance at the budgerigars that hovered nearby, making a few threatening movements towards them if they dared come too close. It struck Amrith that Kuveni had never resorted to feather-plucking or any other signs of anxiety and depression. She seemed perfectly content to be alone. Perfectly content to remain silent. And he realised that he had grown to like her silence. He was not sure, at all, that he wanted another mynah (Selvadurai 2005: 206).

Homosexual behaviour is common in the animal kingdom. Male penguins have been documented to mate for life, build nests together, and to use a stone as a surrogate egg in nesting and brooding. In dolphins, it has the advantage of minimising intraspecies aggression. Bulls and male sheep also engage in homosexual behaviour. Courtship between male Bison is common among the American Bison(Mann 2006). Selvadurai brings in the animal imagery to affirm the homosexual behaviour and to minimise the feeling of discomfort in Amrith. Sexual selection is the key theoretical framework for interpreting sexual behaviour from an evolutionary perspective. Darwin described sexual selection as a process of differential reproduction that occurs because males vary in their ability to acquire female mates (that is, reproductive partners). Darwin identified two

basic mechanisms that influenced mate acquisition. Mate competition occurs intra-sexually among males for females and encompasses physical fights and threats as well as ritualised display of courtship aimed at attracting discriminating females. Mate choice occurs inter-sexually and typically involves females selecting the most attractive male competitor. More recently, sexual coercion has been proposed as an additional mate acquisition mechanism that males can employ if they are unsuccessful at competing for, or attracting, female reproductive partners (Vasey and Sommer 2006). Homosexual behaviour in animals provide evidence that hundreds of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, insects, spiders and other invertebrates engage in same-sex sexual activity. Clearly, what was once thought to be an aberration appears to be a behavioural pattern that is broadly distributed across the animal kingdom, which sometimes within a select number of species even surpasses heterosexual activity. Selvadurai brings this symbolism to project the idea that Amrith need not be anxious or depressed of the fact that he is different or gay and that he can be content of his homosexuality with its sense of uniqueness and challenges and to remain perfectly silent and satisfied.

3.2 Twilight Moments: Embarrassed Funniness

Discourses in the past with regards to sexual identities were less defined and almost absent. Oblique gestures, sexual desires, relationships and practices were half understood and half expressed or veiled in silence as unconventional sexual behaviour since it did not produce any identity. Looking at the period before modern sexual identities, any deviant sexual act or behaviour was uneasily tolerated and though hidden was subject to discipline. 'The term twilight can be used as a metaphor to explore those sexual practices and desires that is prohibited by law or custom but that which people pursue either in secret or as an open secret' (Clark 2005: 140). Twilight can be those silent moments when a boy looks at another

boy and longs for desires that are queer, when a man has secret sexual escapades with another man in secret and when a boy creeps into the bed of another boy and caresses his friend. These people's desires did not create a fixed identity: they indulged in these forbidden moments and then returned to their ordinary lives, just as twilight fades into darkest night and night is succeeded by the dawn. Just as one can see only vague shapes in the dim light of dusk, twilight words, sexual desires and practices were only half –understood and half expressed hidden in the respectable darkness of the night. The metaphor of twilight offers a way of thinking the forms of moral and social discipline that limit deviant and queer acts by punishing, expelling or by obscuring or even subjecting to medical treatment but that which still exists in veiled and hidden forms.

Arjie in *Funny Boy* is bewildered by his incipient sexual awakening when he sees Jegan. Jegan is introduced in the novel as a twenty-five year old qualified accountant who has worked as a relief worker for the Gandhiyam movement, a movement helping displaced Tamils who were affected by the communal riots. Jegan is an honest and straight forward person who has come to Arjie's family looking for a job and begins to work with Appa (Arjie's father) at his hotel. Arjie strikes up a friendship with Jegan and becomes aware of his pull towards him. Arjie's twilight moments take shape with Jegan slowly in the beginning and then more furtively with Shehan another school friend towards the end. His funniness that was always hidden, unspoken or veiled and one that caused embarrassment begins to show first as twilight gestures, nascent and young but becomes persistent and strong later.

> I had got a closer look at him. What had struck me was the strength of his body. The muscles of his arms and neck, which would have been visible on a fairer person, were hidden by the darkness of his skin. It was only when I was close to him that I noticed them. Now I admired how well built he was, the way his thighs pressed against his trousers (Selvadurai 1994: 156-157).

The hidden darkness of Jegan's skin is a metaphor of Arjie's sexual tendencies that are hidden. It begins to show signs as spurts of light as he views it closely. Jegan notices that Arjie is looking at him and as an assurance for this slow yet strong twilight moment Jegan glances back at him and smiles, as if to say that it was alright. His smile makes Arjie feel shy but also happy. Selvadurai slowly highlights the moments of Arjie's life when he had felt and experienced sexual desires much beyond the norm. How he had looked at men; the way they were built, the grace with which they carried themselves, the strength of their gestures and movements. Sometimes Arjie even dreamed about them and longed to become physically attractive and graceful like them. When Arjie's father tells Jegan 'That boy worries me' … From the time he was small he has shown certain tendencies … he used to play with dolls, always reading … Anyway, the main point is that I'm glad you're taking an interest in him. Maybe you'll help him outgrow this phase … I don't think there's anything wrong with him' (Selvadurai 1994: 162). Jegan was the first one to ever defend him and for this Arjie grows even more devoted to him. Eventually, Arjie understands his father and uncle's conception of 'funny' when his friendship with Jegan escalates. He finally realises that his attraction for Jegan filled him with unaccountable joy. 'The twilight metaphor can help to fill a conceptual gap; a gap that makes it difficult to describe sexual relationships, desires and practices that were neither celebrated – like marriage – nor utterly forbidden, deviant, or abject- like incest or sodomy' (Clark 2005: 141). Arjie later strikes up an intense friendship with a fellow renegade student, Shehan who is rumoured to be gay. Arjie states in a state of realisation that

> The difference within me that I sometimes felt I had, that had brought me so much confusion, whatever this difference, it was shared by Shehan. I felt amazed that a normal thing – like my friendship with Shehan – could have such powerful and hidden possibilities (Selvadurai 1994: 250).

In this instance, Arjie defines 'funny' as a deviation from the norm that both he and Shehan experience. The romance between Arjie and Shehan blooms each progressively more violent in their repercussions.Throughout, Arjie's essential naiveté and guilelessness makes him an ideal narrative filter for the explosive transformations he is witness to, both in the streets of Colombo and in his own bodily desires. Arjie admires Shehan's delicately built body and finds him attractive. As their intimacy for each other grows, Arjie begins to explore his sexual self even deeper. He is bewildered when Shehan kisses him on his lips and finds himself thinking that there was a wanting in him to carry something through. He does not know what, but the fact that the kiss was somehow connected to what they had in common which Shehan had known all along. Later, Arjie and Shehan have their first sexual encounter together in his parents' garage during a game of hide and seek. Afterwards, Arjie feels ashamed of himself and believes he has failed his family and their trust. Though Arjie is disgusted at his own desire, Shehan is upset and says 'Atleast I know what I want and I'm not ashamed of it' (ibid.: 258). This awakens Arjie's sense of himself as Shehan points out

> I know your type. You and the head prefect and others like you. Pretend that you're normal or that you're doing it because you can't get a girl. But in the end you're no different from me (Selvadurai 1994: 259).

Arjie goes through a stage of tossing and turning, torn between his desire for Shehan and disgust for that desire. He is confused of which world he belongs to, the twilight world where he is in love with Shehan and where he is Arjie the homosexual or to his father's world where his love is an embarrassed funny feeling and where he has to be Arjie the heterosexual. 'The concept of twilight moments can help us refine the distinction between acts and identities that has been influential in the history of sexuality. Foucault's distinction between acts and identities remain crucial to the history of sexuality because he exposed the modern invention

of the notion that sexual identities, desires, and acts were consistent, he enabled us to unpack sexual acts from sexual identities' (Clark 2005: 142). The transition between twilight moments and fixed identities can sometimes be confused as both are stigmatised identities and forbidden acts for an individual. One way of getting beyond the question of the presence or absence of sexual identities and the twilight moments is to consider sexual behaviour which does not have a pre-given object. It is also true that what is forbidden stimulates desire. Since sexual emotions do not always follow conventional sexual scripts, people do not always desire conventionally appropriate partners. People often experience desire, however socially constructed, as an overpowering emotion even, if this desire is transgressive or deviant. Balendran in *Cinnamon Gardens* lives such twilight moments confused between sexual acts and sexual identities with Richard before marriage and with Ranjan after marriage. His relationship with Richard is an aborted twilight escapade that ended because of the Mudaliyar. Moreover it happened in London as a student and Bala was brought to Ceylon to seal that moment as a past that would never see the dawn.But when Bala meets Richard for the first time after twenty years

> Balendran felt a sudden pang of sadness, for there in Richard's face, like the physical distance between them across the foyer, were the missing years of their lives …Their gaze met and, in that instant, Richard saw that Balendran's eyes were unguarded. His own defensiveness fell away. As they held each other's hands, there passed between them the understanding of their history together, of the life that had been theirs. It settled on them like fine dust (Selvadurai 1998: 106).

The moment returns again and this time it is even stronger and Bala struggles not as a young student, but more so as the son of the Mudaliyar and as a husband and a father. The twilight now comes back more defined, an act that refuses to fade with the setting of the night.This uneasy reunion with Richard throws Balendran into turmoil and re-ignites tension within

himself. The awkward yet intimate meeting between Bala and Richard takes place as Richard invites Bala to have tea with him in his room. Bala ponders about himself and the difficulties he had struggled to navigate in his life as a homosexual and as a husband.

> They don't know me. None of these people have any idea who I really am. Then Balendran was overcome by the loneliness of an outsider who finds himself at a gathering of close friends or family. And, just like a stranger in such a gathering might think with longing of his own home, his wife and children assembled around the dining table, Balendran now thought of Richard's room and of his friend seated in the chair across from him (Selvadurai 1998: 167-168).

The twilight metaphor helps us to get beyond the assumption that sexual desires and behaviours that did not follow prescriptive ideals inevitably destabilised the conventional order. At times the opposite was true; twilight moments could be complicit in maintaining dominant power structures. Sex between master and female servants or the middle class married man who frequented a soldier boy exercised financial and social power. The concept of twilight moments also takes into account the gender dynamics or sexual regulation. While such incidents may be concealed because of the fear of public notice, the incidents usually considered twilight moments did not permanently stigmatise the perpetrators. Bala comes to know about his fathers' own twilight weakness with a servant and feels a deep abhorrence for his father for having seduced a servant. Yet he is unable to actually and totally hate his father for this hypocrisy as this was a fleeting, momentary transient state just like his ones with Richard and Ranjan, which remains a twilight secret As the narrative unfolds and deepens the liberal sympathetic Balendran's world, reveals secrets that are an outcome of conflicted passions and splintered feelings The novel unveils Balendran's secret sexual escapades with Ranjan, a private in the army even after his marriage to Sonia, this dark and deep secret with

Ranjan which was extremely discreet was the biggest twilight engagement that Bala experiences.

> Balendran liked to take his time with Ranjan, to prolong his bliss as long as possible. For, once it was over, he knew he would be visited by a terrible anguish. Then, walking quickly away from the station, he would curse himself for his imprudence, for putting everything at risk, his marriage, his family name (Selvadurai 1998: 82).

Balendran's identity as a gay married man with a wife and son is a secret that is stigmatised not because of the innermost psychological essence but because of the shameful acts he performs hidden from his family and his own better self as a reformed heterosexual. These secret twilight escapades with Ranjan are a constant reminder of the fact that his sexual desires are limited by moral panics designed by his father. As he heads home Bala turns around and looks back to see that no one is following him off the tracks. He is even comforted by the fact that Ranjan does not know his name. 'Gayle Rubin has argued for the existence of "sexual minorities" who create their own rules and discourses and take refuge from the dominant culture. Rubin has also used the metaphor of walls to illustrate how societies distinguish between "sexual order and chaos." This is a helpful metaphor, but it does not account for those who reside in the acceptable category but perform acts in the between zone and those who refuse a sub-cultural identity' (Clark 2005: 148). Balendran, while obviously in love with his wife, also obviously still struggles with his sexual nature. Yet in no way can it be said that he is untrue to himself.The feelings of alienation experienced by Balendran are painful, as he twilights back and forth in and out of his self. Selvadurai unobtrusively points out that one needn't be gay, or extra-ordinarily different in any way to feel this same sense of alienation, and that in fact is a common aspect of the human condition.If *Funny Boy* was about that first thrill of a forbidden stolen kiss, then *Cinnamon Gardens* is about the next phase of life, where one realises that each day is made up of

irrevocable choices, of performing not great and heroic acts, but of choosing the least painful path from the many opportunities offered to each of us.

Swimming in the Monsoon Sea is a novel where twilight moments in Amrith's life comes more as a luminal state between childhood and adulthood. A stage where Amrith initiates transgressive desires by having queer feelings for his cousin and expressing it in his own sexual language. Twilight moments in Amrith's case can be described as a stepping out of his conventional identity to perform an occasional act, such as, seeping into the role of a female character with ease or being comfortable and simply himself with a gay man like Lucien Lindamulage when otherwise he is uncomfortable with men. The metaphor of twilight moments help in understanding those desires and acts that could not be fully articulated even by those who are engaged in them. Like Amrith who does not understand when his uncle wants to know about his school friends. In Amrith's all boys' school, Amrith had never had a male friend. So when his uncle asks Amrith 'isn't there any boy from your drama society you'd like to have come and spend the day?' (Selvadurai 2005: 22). Amrith fells very nervous and comes to realise that though he was respected for his acting talent, none of the boys had ever made overtures of friendship towards him. The seniors in the school always treated him with respect and often asked his opinion on matters relating to art and literature. Amrith also realises that they never made fun of his silence and shyness and instead greeted him warmly. Amrith's confusion is further enhanced as his drama teacher looks at him curiously. She had a way of looking at him, as if she saw right into his soul and understood something about him that he did not understand about himself. Amrith felt that what she saw in him made her kinder and gentler towards him. She never joked or teased him, or even used her wit against him. And yet her gentleness made Amrith all the more uncomfortable. It was as if, they already knew about him, his shyness and silence and even his dramatic skills were

the twilight zones that they could see but was unseen to him. Sometimes sexual acts and sexual tendencies are shaded and camouflaged in the minds so neatly; that it becomes impossibly invisible for the person to even conceptualize what they have done. The twilight metaphor may be used to explain such awkward moments. His growing friendship with Niresh is one such transitory moment that is shaded and camouflaged. Amrith's twilight moments are made fun of by his school friends and his classmates who gossip and use shaming as a form of twilight discipline to make fun of Amrith's queerness. While returning home after the rehearsal, Amrith for the first time feels strangely uncomfortable at the thought of his teacher's and friends' amusement over his growing friendship with Niresh. Amrith's queer self is a self which puzzles Amrith himself. An important instance is when Amrith sees Niresh naked during a change of clothes, Amrith hurries to the bathroom, unable to react with his eyes closed.

> Amrith lowered the lid on the toilet, sat down on it, and leaned his head back against the coolness of the cistern. He closed his eyes and tried one of his remedies – reciting 'If' by Rudyard Kipling. When that failed he tried the prayer 'Hail Holy Queen'. Finally he got up and willed himself to urinate, the one thing he was certain would end this embarrassment (Selvadurai 2005: 129).

He loves being with Niresh and is almost transported to a new self altogether when with him.After a mischievous ride on a trishaw taxi, Niresh and Amrith become even closer. They walk back to the hotel, their arms around each other's shoulders. Amrith had never felt so alive. The cross age homoeroticism and the growing homosexuality of a teenager like Amrith are questions that lead Amrith to experience an embarrassed funny feeling at times and at other times an elated feeling of joy. He goes through unknown periods of twilight moments in and out of his own self and in and out of Niresh's presence. His own understanding of his oddness is a phase he feels will grow out.As Amrith and Niresh explore Sri Lanka, their

relationship grows and matures from mere friendship to that of lovers. This confuses Amrith even more because feelings like this are shunned in all forms and never even spoken within the precincts of any cultured society in Ceylon. They are at best treated as twilight moments, a phase that fades with the dawning of a new morning.

> …He thought of how, in just five days, such a strong bond had formed between him and Niresh. It felt like he had known his cousin for much longer. Nearly losing Niresh like this had made him realise he loved his cousin. And he knew that his cousin loved him, too (Selvadurai 2005: 121).

Amrith's twilight moments and his queer identity are merged with his feelings of jealously for Niresh. Sexual desire which is often an emotional and uncontrollable force is facilitated through the order of society bringing to light the blurs created in the dark. Amrith's desires for Niresh that blurred the borders of gender are moments that were formed in the twilight boundaries of his sexual self. Amrith does not realise the developments of this moments until his sisters point it out. During a quarrel with Selvi Amrith tells her to stay away from Niresh as Niresh is his cousin who has come only for three weeks. Selvi points out 'Don't be so jealous, looking him up and down with disdain. You don't own Niresh' (ibid.: 123). Amrith gradually becomes aware of his own homosexuality and his jealously for Niresh. Suddenly like an unexpected monsoon, his whole life suddenly becomes storm-tossed. Shakespeare's *Othello*, with its powerful theme of disastrous jealousy, plays in the backdrop of the drama in which Amrith finds himself immersed. He feels furious to be in a moment which makes him feel furious and yet desperate at the same time.As Amrith's jealousy and anger gets meted out through a release of physical anti-force in trying to drown Mala, Amrith realises the immensity of his feeling for Niresh. Amrith's world is storm-tossed as he feels a deep horror seep inside him.

> He loved Niresh in the way a boy loves a girl, or a girl loves a boy. He had been jealous of Mala because of this love and not because Niresh was his cousin. Madam and Fernando had understood the nature of this love; and through them, Suraj, too. People who are *'that* way inclined' was how Madam had referred to this unnatural defect in him (Selvadurai 2005: 181).

Othello in his life becomes a play he acts out for real, a representation of his sexual self, an identity he becomes aware of after Niresh's arrival. Every time he looked at Niresh, he writhed inside not knowing whether to feel or not to feel. A great distance comes in between Amrith and Niresh after the incident at Kinross beach and after his own realisation of his self.

> A great distance had come between Amrith and Niresh, between Amrith and everyone, since he had made that realisation about himself, two days ago. He felt as if he were in a pit of darkness and there, above, the world carried on with itself in the sunlight (Selvadurai 2005: 185).

The gossip surrounding the life of Lucien Lindamulage in the novel is one twilight episode that foreshadows Amrith's own awakening of his sexual self. The twilight episode of his life finds definition and meaning when juxtaposed with that of Lucien's life. The grey haired man who frequented Amrith's house on matters related to architecture and construction. Amrith was fond of the architect and in an odd way he felt could simply be himself with him. Lucien was the talk of the town and Amrith had often heard his uncle telling his aunt that he must leave his male secretaries when he went outstation. Amrith does not understand the seriousness of the issue but felt that it was an embarrassing open secret of his friend. Selvadurai paints Lucien's sexual escapades as the twilight truths that are hidden from social light. The term ponnaya is the closest that Amrith can relate to when he sees Lucien's secretary waiting for him in the courtyard – a young man in his mid-twenties with

olive skin, glossy black hair and full lips. But twilight moments are considered as temporary moments, a moment that does not create a permanent identity. 'Martha Hodes argues and posits a distinction between toleration – "a measure of forbearance for that which is not approved" – and "tolerance" – "a liberal spirit toward those of a different mind". But toleration is still too ambiguous and positive a word; "forbearance" does not convey the sense of shame and secrecy that goes with "twilight" or the necessity of veiling and concealing the disapproved behaviour' (cited in Clark 2005: 145). Lucien lives a life sheltered by the fact that his secrets will be treated as bizarre sexual acts one that enjoys tolerance and acceptance as twilight anomalies, yet for Amrith the sense of shame and secrecy behind this anomalies still exists as a form of disapproved behaviour. When Lucien comes to visit Amrith, he suddenly could not bear to be around this man, whom he had known since childhood. At the first opportunity, he excused himself and went to his room.

> The moment he closed the door, he sat on his bed and breathed out, as if he had been holding his breath in all this time. He put his head in his hands and clutched at his hair, a strangled sound escaping from between his gritted teeth. A ponnaya – that was what he was, a ponnaya. He did not know what to do about this thing within him, where to turn, who to appeal to for comfort. He felt the burden of his silence choking him (Selvadurai 2005: 204).

When the light of the morning dawns in the life of Amrith he is confused and embarrassed. His identity as a gay is a fact that does not fade with the passing of the twilight. It is something that will stay. Amrith decides to remain silent for the moment and learn to live with this knowledge of himself. He would have to teach himself to be his own best friend, his own confidant and guide. The hope he held out to himself was that, one day, there would be somebody else he could share this secret with. The concept of twilight moments seems most useful in exposing secret desires, fantasies and practices to the harsh glare of daylight. The

concept of twilight moments can thus help us reconcile rigid prescriptions about sexual morality, gender roles and class and racial boundaries with the frequency with which people engage in sexual relations that transgress these boundaries. The twilight experience was a moment for people who wished to explore unusual desires, veiled by a lack of understanding or words; after all the twilight is a zone where moralities and words and transgressive ruptures are not constant.

3.3 To Thine Own Self Be True: A Liberated Acceptance

'To thine own self be true' is perhaps one of the most frequently-quoted lines from *Hamlet*. Selvadurai's characters consist of gay individuals finding a queer identity or a gay identity in an ever challenging heterosexual world. Characters paving their way through challenges to place themselves in a more positive and liberated state of mind and body. Under Selvadurai's skilful hand, we discover just how clichéd the line can be 'to thine own self betrue' or in other words, to which self be true?' Shyam Selvadurai explores the effects of ethnic naming, which has its roots in de-colonialization. As cultures were becoming freed from colonialism, they established independent nations, and these nations developed discourses that legitimized themselves. Nationalistic, or us, identities are often legitimized by being constructed as normal. But, in order to have a normal - us, there must be an abnormal - them. According to Anne McClintock, the discourse of nationalism is also masculine, and within this discourse, a kind of normalcy is developed in conjunction with and in opposition to discourses of deviance. The national identity is legitimized because it is the normal identity and it opposes degenerate identities (McClintock 1995: 46). According to McClintock, - The social power of the image of degeneration was twofold. First, social classes or groups were described with telling frequency as races, foreign groups, or non-indigenous bodies, and could thus be cordoned off as biological and - contagious, rather than as social groups

(ibid.48). By being labelled as deviant of degenerate, subjects are alienated from those who are labelled as normal. The discourse of contagion increases this alienation. Those named as normal avoid interacting with those named as contagious because they are afraid they will be infected by this deviance. In this sense, a kind of heteronormative masculinity was encoded in the language of colonial authority, which is something that continues with the postcolonial elite. In contrast, Selvadurai's characters do not fit easily within either sexual or ethnic boundaries; in contrast, Selvadurai highlights the possibility of a new - in between space of national identity, which provides hope for the end of constricting boundaries. Weaving together the ethnic and sexual identities of his characters, Selvadurai provides hope that a new politics of reciprocal recognition through touch can liberate those who are oppressed. Exploding the myth of heteronormative colonial power, Selvadurai creates a new kind of identity for his characters, though only from the safe distance of Canada.

Arjie in *Funny Boy* is bewildered by his incipient sexual awakening, mortified by the bloody Tamil-Sinhalese conflicts that threaten to tear apart his homeland, Arjie painfully grows toward manhood and an understanding of his own 'different' identity. Arjie begins exploring his sexual awakening and his 'tendencies' amidst political turmoil and growing violence of the late 1970s and early 1980s Colombo. Arjie's father is a conservative Tamil business man who thinks highly of tradition. He believes that Arjie's 'funniness' is a nurtured trait and a phase that will outgrow. His father decides to change Arjie's school and send him to the Victoria Academy which 'will force [him] to become a man' (Selvadurai 1994: 205). It makes Arjie wonder and he asks his brother 'what for?' and he answers 'He doesn't want you turning out funny or anything like that' (ibid.: 205). Personal and political issues become intertwined as Arjie's father enrols him in this elite colonial style school he hopes will make a man out of his son, instead to his father's disappointment, Arjie rebels against the sadistic

principal and the social and political constraints the school tries to place upon him, and strikes up an intense friendship with a fellow renegade studentThroughout, Arjie's essential naiveté and guilelessness makes him an ideal narrative filter for the explosive transformations he is witness to, both in the streets of Colombo and in his own bodily desires. During his stay in the school and in the days that followed Arjie finds himself coming to terms with being a homosexual and realises that he does not hold the same disgust that his own father has for individuals who are 'funny'. Arjie admires Shehan's delicately built body and finds him attractive. As their intimacy for each other grows, Arjie begins to explore his sexual self even deeper. He is bewildered when Shehan kisses him on his lips and finds himself thinking that there was a wanting in him to carry something through. He does not know what, but the fact that the kiss was somehow connected to what they had in common and that which Shehan had known all along.In the end realising his mistake in turning away from his real self and from the self-forced into him by his father Arjie begins to come to terms with his sexuality and his love for Shehan. From this moment on, Arjie knows that he is forever alienated from his family 'What had happened between Shehan and me over the last few days had changed my relationship with him forever. I was no longer a part of my family in the same way. I now inhabited a world they didn't understand and into which they couldn't follow me' (ibid.: 278).

The culmination of the physical experiences with Shehan allows Arjie to reach a new level of understanding about his place in a world where race and gender are of utmost importance, to the sexual as well as to the ethnic Arjie. The familial love of Arjie's extended family is at times hurtful and confusing, but it nevertheless serves to guide Arjie through the growing up process during his journey into maturation as a Sri Lankan and as a

homosexual.Arjie as a rebel and as a lover comes to assert his true self which liberates him and gives him a sense of pride in being gay.

A saying from the Tirukkural, verse 68 'A wise son gives joy not only to his father, But to all the world' serves to project the relationship between the Mudaliyar and his sons. The Mudaliyar Navaratnam, a patriarch of an old and important family represents the law that Bala and his brother Arulanandan follow. The eldest son Arulanandan had stabbed his father in the arm because of the Mudaliyar's resistance to his affair with a low-caste woman who worked as a servant at Brighton. Arulanandan was forced to leave with the woman to India twenty-eight years ago. Balendran is the obedient son, a gay man who has nonetheless dutifully married the wife chosen by his father and fathered a son. Balendran reveals himself as a decent but a weak individual, racked by the guilt he feels for neglecting his wife and for having betrayed his feelings for Richard. Bala thinks of the moment, his father had come to his flat in London; he shudders even thinking about that wishing not to dwell on that memory. He feels that he is a failure since he had not been true to himself. He thinks of his brother who had the courage to pursue his love for a servant girl, though at the cost of his father's displeasure and disinheritance, a more honest individual. Of even graver, consequences, however, is the fact that for the past twenty years Balendran has submerged his own homosexual desires underneath a façade of respectable familial propriety. Selvadurai explores in *Cinnamon Gardens* the attendant clashes between sexuality, colonialism and classicism inherent in the caste system, religious divisions, racial and sexual prejudice of Ceylonese society. The real question is 'To which self be true'. This is one question that Bala struggles with being in love with his wife and at the same time struggling with his sexual nature. Feelings of alienation limit Bala's sense of liberation and acceptance for a true discovery of his thine own self. Twenty years after the Mudaliyar had 'rescued' Balendran from a

homosexual relationship and steered him into a wedded life – and presumably into respectability, Balendran is caught between thought and action, rationalisation and passion. The return of Richard Howland to Ceylon as a member of the Donoughmore Commission, a high level delegation from London sets Balendran at odds with the very social and familial strictures that have confined repressed and sustained him in his place as a normal man. Balendran plays himself out in the politically heady days before caste-conscious Ceylon became Sri Lanka when the homosexuality of a man of polite society was considered a regrettably irreversible disposition, On one of their visits to Richard and his friend, his wife Sonia refers to the relationship between Richard and his gay lover Alliston as 'They're you know…inverts. "Friends of Oscar" (ibid.: 111). Bala immediately calls her insensitive and asks her to stop as he denies noticing anything. This denial is symbolic of Bala's uncomfortable issues about homosexuality even after so many years. The struggle of the spirit against oppression – gender and sexual orientation is at the heart of a person's liberated acceptance. This uneasy reunion with Richard throws Balendran into turmoil and re-ignites tension within himself. Selvadurai captures his protagonist's difficult passage into his own identity of which his homosexuality is just one component. Liberation of the mind is more important than the liberation of any other kind and Bala realises this slowly at first and more fervently later. As he decides to reignite his relationship with Richard Bala thinks of the risks he has to take to liberate himself and Richard. He takes a bold step to go and meet Richard and surprises him by inviting him to explore Colombo at night. The drive is an affirmation of the feelings he still has for Richard.

> The next morning when Balendran awoke, he lays in bed and thought of the time he had spent with Richard last night, their reminiscences about the past, their shared humane view of the world. He felt a keen gratitude and warmth towards his friend. He had such an

> overwhelming desire to be in Richard's company again that he knew it would be useless to attempt to resist his wish (Selvadurai 1998: 168-169).

Selvadurai sets up the Donoughmore Commission not just to introduce the freedom of adult franchise but also to symbolically introduce freedom in between Balendran and Richard as a price of rebelling against conformity. In his own words he speaks about the invisible bond he shares with Balendran, a married gay man in his 40s battling to live in a repressed, conformist colonial society. The unhistoric yet courageous acts of George Eliot can be seen in the life of Balendran as he continues to battle with what his father wants, his wife wants and with what he wants. *Cinnamon Gardens* is thus, about personal courage and liberation. When Balendran and Richard resume their affair, Bala realises that his courage would go a long way in liberating himself and Richard. After twenty years this realisation makes Bala come to terms with the fact that he is a homosexual who had difficulty finding a passage in a conformist world; and feels liberated as he acknowledges.

> He realised that, with Richard he could truly be himself…I value our friendship too highly to let things pass like this, Richard. Tell me, honestly, what are your feelings…Very well, he said. In this last week, I have fallen in love with you. All over again…(Selvadurai 1998: 187-188).

The question of liberation and a quest for identity within that liberation is what Balendren aspires not just for himself but also for his brother and nephew. Sexual freedom requires an oppositional practice that is, transgressing socially respectable categories of sexuality and refusing to draw a line on what counts as politically or culturally correct sexuality. This refusal to draw a line leaves intact the notion that some sexualities are more liberatory than others. Balendran's commitment to a search for a true identity stands for those transgressive practices and identities that are on the outer limits of institutional and ideological systems in Ceylon that stratify sexuality. His act of liberation starts with a disrupting of naturalised

norms set by his father that has ruined not just his life but also his family. Balendran goes to his father and in one of the most courageous coming out process of his life, Bala treads into the crimes that his father had committed all along to him (his known son), to his mother, to Pakkiam, to Arul and then to his grandson. The Mudaliyar stays firm and says that his love for his sons made him do all what he did. 'The same love that drove you to London to destroy my life?…Why didn't you leave me alone in London? I was content then. I saved you from that…degradation. Look at what you have now. What would you have been in London? Nothing' (ibid.: 367). Balendran was silent for some time and said with gathering strength, '…I might have been truly happy…I love Richard. That would have been enough' (ibid: 367). This angers the Mudaliyar even more and orders Balendran not to speak such filth in his house and asks him to apologise immediately. Bala's answer is an affirmation of what he finally wants in life. 'No, Appa. I cannot, for this is how things are with me. And there isn't a day that goes by that I don't live with the pain of knowing this and not being able to do anything about it' (ibid.: 367). Balendran finally feels relieved and a sense of independence and liberation for the first time in forty years to come out as his own self. The feelings of alienation experienced by Balendran, is painful and his challenge oriented ethic of sexual liberalism ultimately leads him to the next stage in his life. Balendran's sexual freedom becomes an ideology and a form of identity to assert an ever growing need for reshaping sexuality.Selvadurai takes us to the new world of Bala, which now is unchained and free and which in turn has freed and released many other relations. He waits for a moment, lost in thought and then acts, the most courageous act to his passage as a new man, he picks up a sheet of paper and writes to Richard:

> …Perhaps it is enough to have one person to whom nothing is a secret, to whom one can lay open the inner workings of one's heart…To ask for your friendship is, then, for me, an immense gesture of bravery. I make it now (Selvadurai 1998: 385).

Amrith's awakening and his search for a liberated identity is more of an adolescent seeking to express his difference amidst a traditional high class family and a homophobic society.Selvadurai reminds the importance of Amrith's feelings of his past in relation to the physical and emotional changes that he experiences in himself as an adult.Selvadurai explores and projects the feelings of a young adult growing into homosexuality and the constant tension that Amrith experiences in the sea of his life. With passions he is shy about, but passions that completely captivate his heart and soul, Amrith feels he is drowning in the monsoon sea with Niresh. Selvadurai beautifully projects the growth of Amrith, a teenager revolting against the feelings of love, family and his own self. Though the novel is an exploration of a teenage-adult phase of experiencing life, Selvadurai's projection is mature and balanced. Amrith is represented with all the fears, colours, needs and feelings of a teenager. A stage of life which is difficult to experience has been beautifully crafted and honestly presented in the novel. Apart from the description of growing up as an adult, Selvadurai in the novel very delicately wraps the issue of growing as a homosexual. The novel chronicles the growth, development, rejection, repression and exploration of a fourteen year old's homosexual tendencies. Amrith's progress in a world where he is still answering doubts about his parents, family and his background, the entrance of Niresh and the subsequent feelings of love and infatuation gets bundled up with his feelings as a growing adult.

Focussing on the liberation of sexual pleasure, as the organising principle of identity formation, Selvadurai moves towards a more pluralistic sexual ethics – an ethics of sex positivity and sexual diversity through the characters of Amrith and Lucien Lindamulage. He brings in the politics of social liberation and merges it with that of personal liberation by positing disparaged sexual identities and styles. The chapter titled 'Cassio' in the novel is a

total assimilation of Amrith's life as a character in the play 'Othello' and in his own life. As the other boys make fun of the role and the impending homosexual scene in the play between Iago and Cassio, Amrith becomes furious and livid. Yet, the assignment of the role is symbolic in the novel as it serves to project Amrith's tendencies and the sexual self that was hidden without an identity. From this point on, Selvadurai sets the acceptance of secrets, tendencies and family feuds positively. Amrith decides to set the barrier straight. After Niresh apologises to Amrith about all the lies he made up – his life in Canada, his friends and his football team – the plot moves to a higher level of connection between the two of them. Amrith's slow yet emotional opening of his past to Niresh subtly projects the growing bond between them as cousins and as friends. Amrith not only experiences forgiveness but a growing lightness within him which dwelled in him as a heavy burden of silence all these years. The revelation of secrets, bonding and intimacies shared between Amrith and Niresh strengthens and constructs sexual styles that transgress the matrix of cultural and political constructions. Amrith's identity as a deviant sexual being before, outside and beyond power is a cultural impossibility and a politically impracticable task of rethinking subversive possibilities for sexuality and identity within the terms of culture and norms of the society. Yet in the last chapter of the book we see Amrith performing the critical task of coming to finding his thine own self amidst embarrassment and difficulties. A true finding of his real self, the homosexual self that was Amrith.

The last chapter 'Roses and Silence' is a chapter of acceptance. The chapter deals with the departure of Niresh to Canada and Amrith's acknowledgement of his self. He quietly misses the absence of Niresh in the house and in the room. He does not know what to do and how to start his days without Niresh. Selvadurai gradually allows Amrith to come to terms with his sexual self. This realisation is slow, in-depth and emotional. As Amrith grieves the

loss of his cousin, he thinks of his school play and his role as Cassio, a role that would not bring him much praise. Yet as he goes to the auditorium and sees Peries performing the role of Desdemona, he concedes that Peries was better at it that he had ever had been and that his drama teacher was right when she said that this part was not meant for him. Symbolically, the role of Cassio that Amrith plays was a much better role for Amrith as Niresh represents the Iago of his life. The visit of Lucien Lindamulage shutters Amrith totally, as all the pieces of the puzzle of his life fits into place. Amrith's knowledge of his own self and his search for acceptance leads him to his mother's grave. He sits on his haunches and looks at his mother's name on the tombstone for a long time. He then looks around, if anyone is looking and finally speaks out.

> 'I am …,' but he could not continue, for he did not know a decent word to describe himself. And he refused to use 'ponnaya'. Finally, he leaned closer and whispered, 'I am… different.'
>
> Just by saying it out loud, just by admitting that it was so, Amrith felt the burden of his secret ease a little. It was all he could do for now. He would have to learn to live with this knowledge of himself. He would have to teach himself to be his own best friend, his own confidant and guide. The hope he held out to himself was that, one day, there would be somebody else he could share this secret with. But for now he must remain silent (Selvadurai 2005: 205).

Selvadurai blends Amrith's knowledge of awareness with a beautiful animal imagery that enhances the affirmation that in being different he is not alone.Kuveni, the mynah represents a lot of what Amrith has been struggling to come to terms with. Amrith's decision to leave kuvenialone is a symbolic gesture of acceptance, an acceptance of the fact that she is different and that there is nothing wrong in being different. Selvadurai unobtrusively points out that one needn't be gay, or extra-ordinarily different in any way

to feel this same sense of alienation, and that in fact is a common aspect of the human condition. Selvadurai expertly paints characters as whole human beings, with all of the nobility as well as the faults that are inherently human. He reminds us of just how alike we all are, once we get past religion, or skin colour, or sexual preference. Thus, Selvadurai addresses the difficulty of being different in a funny way which does not conform to accepted gender and sexual norms. He brilliantly portrays the anxieties aroused by gender non-conformity especially in the Sri Lankan patriarchal society. Selvadurai elaborately presents the gradual and the ultimate passage that the protagonists in the novels - Arjie, Balendran and Amrith – take to come out and accept their homosexual identity. Thus, under Selvadurai's skilful hand, we discover just how clichéd the line can be 'to thine own self be true.'

Chapter IV

Homosexual History and Contemporary Gay Men's Life in the Novels of Alan Hollinghurst

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This chapter focuses on how the novels of Hollinghurst bring to light a buried history of gay London from the Romans to the 1950's, its writers and musicians, from Shakespeare to Pope, Wilde to James, Forster and Britten to Firbank focussing mainly on the lives of gay men before the gay liberation movement both in London and the colonies of Great Britain. The chapter also analyses contemporary gay life as represented in his novels, *The Line of Beauty* and *The Swimming Pool Library.* The issues about class, family, social politics and sexuality in the 80's era London exploring related themes of hypocrisy, homosexuality, madness, wealth, drugs and the emerging AIDS crisis in novels like *The Spell* and *The Folding Star* which forms a central backdrop of modern gay culture.

4.1 History of London Gays: The Politics of Identity

The novels of Alan Hollinghurst have a kind of dark allure, elegance and erudition, passages of dream-like beauty along the lines of sexual explicitness in depicting gay men's lives: past and present: art and sex as consuming passions in both the realms. His fiction casts a spell with its atmosphere of decadence bearing the influence of Wilde, Proust and Firbank. The novels have a common pursuit of the love object theme, offering orientation and insights into the contemporary gay world set against a wider backdrop of art in all its forms and obsession. The novels talk about the history of gays that has been evolving and defining new social movements in London since the 1950's and the 1960's. Hollinghurst talks about a vision of politics that asserts the interlocking of public and private spheres, the politics of identity that conceptualizes individual and collective identity not only as a basis for political

organisation but also as a site of political activism itself. His novels offer a pro- sex promotion of transgressive sexual practices to a foundational tenet of identity politics wherein the personal is political. With this link between the pro-sexuality movement and identity politics Hollinghurst examines the political and material effects to construct radical sexual politics through his characters and his novels. His characters are a constant reminder of the fact that transgressive sexual identities and practices offer a privileged position from which to construct a truly radical sexual politics. Focusing on the liberation of sexual diversity as an organising principle for political activism Hollinghurst in his novels aims at an ethics of sex positivity and sexual diversity that risks replacing social liberation with personal liberation.

Hollinghurst's rich portrait of past homosexual history – from the romantic 1920s to the promiscuous 1970s – 80s can be seen in *The Swimming Pool Library* as Beckwith the main protagonist in the novel writes the biography of Charles Nantwich, a gay aristocrat in the early twenties. The materials in the diary serve to piece together the 'crazed mosaic' of a life before the gay liberation movement. The intertwining of Will's London and Charles's experience as a young boy in a public school, as a young man at the university, as a soldier abroad, and into middle age, works to showcase a world before and after the liberation in London and the colonies of Great Britain. At the same time, the novel raises many complex issues around class, sexuality and race over the decades and the treatment of sexual minority groups in England. Hollinghurst in the novel vividly illustrates themes central to the experience of being homosexual, privileged and British in the early life of Charles Nantwich.

> I saw one pair of adolescent boys – very tall & elegant – sauntering along with their fingers intertwined, wearing scarves or red cotton tied round their upper arms. One old man, too, had a watch, & encouraged people to ask him the time, which had to be done in a very respectful manner. Then he would listen to its ticking and give a knowing and superior smile.

> It is this, which I hardly dare to call innocence, for fear it might not be, or that I do not understand, which has moved me particularly and has given me a sense of contentment, almost of elation, even when doing the repetitive chores of the D.C. The beauty of the men is so openly displayed that it seems a reproach to lust. I felt anger and something akin to people has, until so recently, been stolen into slavery or mutilated into eunuchry (Hollinghurst 1988: 125-126).

Nick Guest in *The Line of Beauty* is said to like Alexander Pope. Nick is attracted to physical beauty in art and in men. As Nick starts talking about his interest in Henry James, Joseph Conrad and George Meredith, the world of a past gay history is revealed to us at the backdrop of a modern gay culture. References to Shakespeare's play *Pericles* and Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* exquisitely portrays the past in the form of art and literature. The past continually intrudes into the twilight world. Hollinghurst evokes in *The Folding Star*, as Edward Manners, a disaffected Englishman in Belgium develops an idealised infatuation with his seventeen year old private pupil Luc. The novel prepares a past background by laying out a definitive catalogue of paintings by EdgartOrst, a Symbolist artist of the 1890s with a tortured love life, which Manners takes up in pursuit of his increasingly desperate feelings for Luc. 'I was gripped by Orst's obsession with his actress. I loved the superior way he had renounced everything in its favour, and made such a show of retreating from view into the snows of a dream' (Hollinghurst 1994: 70). Through Manner's urgent explorations of local gay bars, the bodies of casual lovers encountered there, revelations proceed apace about all the characters, their motives and their past lives.

When William Beckwith starts reading Charles Nantwich's diaries in *The Swimming Pool Library*, he becomes aware of his privileges and security as a homosexual in the 80s era London compared to the life that Nantwich had to struggle as a gay in the early 1920s. The untold, yet immense contributions of Ronald Firbank a novelist who openly addressed issues

of homosexuality in his works, is related through the diary of Nantwich. The epigraph of the novel is itself from one of his novels.

> 'She reads at such a pace', she complained, 'and when I asked her *where* she had learnt to read so quickly, she replied 'On the screens at Cinemas'.
>
> - *The Flower Beneath the Foot* (cited in Hollinghurst 1988: v).

His other works as *Valmouth*, *Caprice*, *Vainglory* and *Inclinations* find mention through the diary of Nantwich. From the diaries, Will comes to know about his meeting with Ronald Firbank, who is an extraordinary portrait of effete, decrepitude, camp and alcoholic. The novel is pervaded with references to Ronald Firbank up until the very last page. Through Nantwich's diary, the lives of gay men before the gay liberation movement are vividly portrayed before Beckwith. The house of Charles Nantwich is in itself a representation of a gay world in the past. The whole house is filled with memorabilia and books; as they walk up to the library, there are homo-erotic paintings as well as the portrait of a beautiful African boy.

> There was one heavily creased photograph of an exquisitely soulful black youth, cropped at an angle, where presumably another figure in the picture had been scissored off. After the scene in Charles's bedroom this gave me a mild unease, as if it might be a magical act of elimination (Hollinghurst 1988: 111).

After going around the house and the photographs of Charles, Will begins to get a glimpse of Charles's past life.

> It was really the present which reassured me. Charles's life now was so incoherent, such a mixture of fatigue and obsessive, vehement energy, of knowing subtlety and juvenile broadness, of presence and absence, that he gave me the hope which the books withheld (Hollinghurst 1988: 112).

The novel elaborately projects the causal yet dangerous engagements of William Beckwith to address issues of resentment and homophobia that lies behind a thin façade of artifice meted out by the heterosexual society. As Will reads of Nanwitch's days at public school as a boy where he experiences sexuality by turns brutal and tender Will becomes aware of the fact that being queer in the 1920's was a bold step. If it was ignored then, Will's era would never be basking in the privileges that it was enjoying through their sacrifices and their channelled contributions to this cause.

> Though it is usually accompanied by excitement, it is not in essence a sexual thing (that is Ross or Van Orde in Mob Lib, or ChanceyBrough out at Burford or B. Howard in my rooms after the Commem Ball – or any of the others who stock my private case of lust, … I wonder often, having no idea, having dreaded even to find out, what all those boys are doing now, hate to think that I remember them alone … (Hollinghurst 1988: 126).

The domineering, democratic nature of boys bathing in the same room, where the sweet, civilised certainties of home were trampled by the stronger, medieval laws of school. William narrates through the experiences of Nantwich how homosexuality was expressed through male bonding, how it was just limited to rape, molestation and to some extent a senior becoming fond and obliging and calling him for no other reason but physical gratification. When Charles is cruelly raped by one boy it was a torture which was more mental than physical. There was a suppressed fright that Charles had to deal with every night. 'He came over to my bed and put his hand down under the blankets. I shrank away, but he reached for me, and felt me fiercely' (Hollinghurst 1988: 128).

From the moment Will starts reading the journals of Charles Nantwich, new truths are opened to him. The people he thought he knew are thrown into new light, new histories are revealed, and all the while his life goes on, clawing its way towards a new maturity. Like

Firbank's flowers which is often trampled, the courage, and the beauty of the history of Nantwich goes through tramplings, violence and racism, darkening the quest for homosexual expression in many forms and compromising the spoiled ease and the inheritance of its hero; which can be seen in the later life of Nantwich as he enters foreign service and travels to Sudan as a regional administrator. He is enchanted by the land and powerfully drawn to African men but find himself cut off from his race, his rank and his position as a colonial, to express his feelings freely without repression. Charles ruminates as an administrator on the sense of devotion that homosexuality can foster between men and how that devotion aids duty and right action. The opera scene is important in bringing in the subject of eroticism and homoerotic power through music and musicians. Will goes to the opera with James and his grandfather. The opera is a performance by Billy Budd, a past gay. Will is almost struck to tears by the homoerotic and emotional power of the work.

> It was *Billy Budd*, an opera I recalled as a gauche, almost amateur affair, and I had not in the least expected to enjoy it; and yet, when Captain Vere's monologue ended and the scene on board the *Indomitable* opened up, with the men holy-stoning the deck and singing their oppressed, surging chorus, I was covered in goose-flesh. When Billy, press-ganged from his old ship, sang his farewell to his former life and comrades – 'Farewell, old *Rights o' Man*, farewell' – the tears streamed down my face. The young baritone, singing with the greatest beauty and freshness, brought an extraordinary quality of resisted pathos to Billy; in the stammering music his physiognomy, handsome and forthright and yet with a curious fleshy debility about the mouth, made me believe it as his own tragedy (Hollinghurst 1988: 138-39).

Will's conversation with his grandfather about the music and the magical effect it had on him is important in revealing the interest that is aroused in Will for the past. This talk with

his grandfather later emerges as an irony showing 'how mad the hetero world is' (Tillyard 2005: 3).

> We must all have recognised it, though it would have had an importance, even an eloquence, to James and me that would have been quite lost on my grandfather. He had spent all his adult life in circles where good manners, lofty savoir-faire and plain callousness conspired to avoid any recognition that homosexuality even existed (Hollinghurst 1988: 140).

During Will's conversation with his grandfather on the subject of Benjamin Britten's homosexuality, his grandfather mentions about his relationship with E.M. Forster who later co-wrote the *Libretto* with him. There was something distinctly contrary in his grandfather about the issue and he openly criticised the music of Britten calling it 'soggy'. He had wanted it to be more open and sexual.

> But I do clearly recall the first night of *Billy Budd*. Britten himself was in the pit, of course. It made a fairly big impression, though I remember opinion was very divided about it. Many people understandably didn't altogether care for the Britten-Pears thing. James looked blank and I frowned, but my grandfather went on. There was a party afterwards that Laura and I went to and I had quite a long chat with old Forster about the libretto (Hollinghurst 1988: 140).

Their conversation leads to discussions about the contemporaries of Forster, Britten, Pears, Budd, Firbank and later that of Nantwich. Will's grandfather openly shows his dislike for Pears and Britten making fun of their gayness. This dislike reminds Will of the unpleasant truth hinted not just at them but a dislike which he might as well take for himself and all gays through life, wanting either to forget it or to disprove it. Yet, for William it was an opportunity of a lifetime as Pears enters to witness the opera.

> Pears was shuffling very slowly along the aisle towards the front of the stalls, supported by a man on either side. Most of the bland audience showed no recognition of who he was, though occasionally someone would stare, or look away hurriedly from the singer's stroke-slackened but beautiful white-crested head. Then there was the protracted an awkward process of getting him along his already repopulated row. James and I were mesmerised, and seeing him in the flesh I felt the whole occasion subtly transform, and the opera whose ambiguity we had carped at take on a kind of heroic or historic character under the witness of one of its creators. Even though I felt he would be enjoying it, I believed in its poignancy for him, seeing other singers performing it on the same stage in the same sets as he had done decades before, under the direction of the man he loved. It had become an episode in his past, just as the blessing of Billy Budd was in the memory of the elderly Captain Vere. Indeed, gazing at Pears, who was doubtless embarrassed and uncomfortable as he finally regained his seat, I reacted to him as if he were himself an operatic character – just as I had entered with spurious, or purely aesthetic, emotion into Charles Nantwich's war-time adolescence, and the loss of his shell-damaged idol in a Hertfordshire mental hospital. It was an irresistible elegiac need for the tenderness of the England long past (Hollinghurst 1988: 142).

Through these stories of inheritance and tales of the past, the relationship between gay sexual expression and art is gently explored. Hollinghurst intertwines the London of William Beckwith and the experiences of Charles to make explicit a world that had dark under-leanings with the persecution, cruelty of homosexuals in the hands of law makers and politicians. Nantwich towards the end of his dairies writes about how his life was ruined. The African man whom he loved was beaten to death for being a homosexual. Heartbroken and unable to share his grief, Charles wanders the streets of London and desolately solicits a man for sex. The man is a policeman, who arrests Charles for public indecency. Despite his rank, Charles is ruthlessly prosecuted by a conservative politician of the time, who wants to make

an example of him. This incident is similar to the trials of Oscar Wilde, one of the most high profile scandals of London.

Wilde's passionate relationship with the son of the Marquis of Queensberry Alfred Douglas, led Wilde to take a libel suit against the Marquis who publicly accused Wilde of 'posing as a sodomite'. Wilde's libel failed and it was only a matter of time before the authorities prosecuted Wilde under the 'Labouchere Amendment' of the 1885 Criminal Law Act. Wilde heroically, if tragically, did not flee to avoid the expected criminal prosecution. The outcome is well known - Wilde defended his love for Alfred Douglas (Bosie) and was imprisoned for two years at Reading Goal. Although Wilde was born in Dublin and died in Paris, his legacy on London's gay history is of huge importance. Before Wilde's defence of homosexual love, London's lesbian and gay relationships took place behind closed doors and on the fringes of the prostitution trade. London's earliest 'gay haunts' were said to be in the streets around St. James Park. 'Molly Houses' were the name given to brothels where cross dressing and gay sex took place. In 1916 the World newspaper described 'painted and perfumed travesties of men openly leer[ing] at the passer-by' in Piccadilly. 'Certain bars and restaurants are meeting places for these creatures', the newspaper went on, adding that it was 'lamentable to know that their victims or accomplices are largely drawn from the ranks of the British Army.'

A number of queer men were picked up in the circle at the Empire and Prince of Wales theatres. Queer men used to go to the London galleries to cruise, preferring these and the numerous 'tremendous' cottages to the bars, clubs and theatres which they associated with a particular 'style' of man. There was a lively pub culture throughout the period and, like the cottages, different places catered for differing queer punters. The Running Horse in Shepherds Market was popular with a cross-section of men and women. The pub clearly

welcomed queer men and women, and there was indeed some cross-over of male and female queer scenes.

In the 1930s, the Caravan Club and Billies Club in Soho were popular with a similar crowd and there were queer dances and parties. Two were exposed within weeks of each other in 1933 – one in Holland Park Avenue organised by 'Lady Austin' for his 'camp boys' and the other in Baker Street in the city. They were not uncommon in the eighteenth century. 'The chronicles of gay history in London, Rictor Norton, writes that many of London's streets derive from the activities of prostitutes such as 'Maiden Lane' and 'Grub Street'; close to 'Maiden Lane' are 'Cock's Lane' and 'Lad Lane' suggesting that male prostitution may have been prevalent there. Today, London's gay quarter is traditionally Soho, the social centre of London's lesbian and gay community' (http://www.pridelondonhistory. org/html).

Although Soho is the social centre of London's lesbian and gay community, a number of key areas around London are popular with lesbian and gay men. In the South of the City, Vauxhall and Clapham are popular while in the North of London Earl's Court, Hackney and Stoke Newington have strong lesbian and gay communities. Charles mentions about his night-outs in Soho in his diaries.

> Afterwards I wandered through Soho & then in Charing Cross Road saw three black GIs loitering along rather idyllically, smoking cigarettes & looking at girls. They had that touching quality which off-duty soldiers so often do have, as if they knew they ought to be up to something but didn't quite know what it was. There was a fat one, a thin one & an in between one with a lost, ingenuous expression which was decidedly heart-stopping. He was clearly the butt of his two smart friends' humour & had an infinitely tolerant, good-hearted glow about him. I walked beside them to pick up their talk, & then went on & took up an insouciant pose on the other side of Oxford Street, by the Lyon's Corner House (Hollinghurst 1988: 262).

As William reads through the diaries, he learns that the politician who had ruthlessly persecuted and imprisoned Charles was his own grandfather, now Viscount Beckwith. This is a realisation that makes Will experience the painful life that Nantwitch, Forster, Britten, Pears and all the contemporaries of their times had to go through in the hands of politicians and law makers for choosing to be open and gay. Will's wealth, his rank and his leisured day existence are all built on a foundation of homosexual persecution. He also learns that Bill, a man at the Corinthian Club, knows about Charles and his persecution where Bill, then a young man, had been thrown for having a love-affair with a boy three years younger than himself. The diaries reveal several sinister home truths about Beckwith's own, grandfather, a former Director of Public Prosecutions who along with the Home Secretary and the police was the driving force of the Anti- gay movement of the 1920's. These gradual revelations are counter-pointed by Beckwith's own current affairs: platonic with his Oxford friend James, frenetically sexual with Arthur, a young black man, and other working class gays. The theme of natural love and sexuality destroyed by government oppression is very powerful. In the words of Charles Nantwich, Will captures the extent of the damage that his grandfather had done as a tyrant to a cause that Will himself is a part of.

> My life seemed to go into reverse, and for a month, two months, I was a thing of shadows. It was in vain to tell myself that this was not my way: I was impotent with misery and deprivation. Then, as the end came insight – it was the dead of winter – something hardened in me. I saw the imaginary verdure beyond the frosted glass. I began to think of the world I must go back to, with its brutal hurry and indifference. I would have to take on a new man. I would have to move again in the company of my captors and humiliators and be glanced at critically for signs of the scars they had inflicted. I would have to do something for others like myself, and for those more defenceless still. I would have to

> abandon this mortal introspection and instead steel myself. I would even have to hate a little (Hollinghurst 1988: 304).

Will decides he cannot now write Charles's biography, nor was he intended to do so. Charles had been educating him on his own past, the sacrifices and persecutions he and his contemporaries had to experience to promote and pass on the inheritance of privileges and elegance that Will had all along taken for granted in the present.In Charles Nanwitch's own words he writes 'My journal has always, since my childhood, been my close, silent and retentive friend, so close that when I lied to it I suffered inwardly from its mute reproach. Now, though, it seemed to hold out the invitation to something shameful – self-pity, and, worse, the exposure of my narrow, treadmill circuit of memories and longings' (Hollinghurst 1988: 291). The easy possession of the sexual imaginations of Will as a gay was a product of the un-giving world of the past that Charles Nantwich had lived and survived. Desires brutal or tender, silent or evolved were in the shiftless air of the present that Will lived in, that seemed as a farce, which was more entertaining to read and watch than to enact.

4.1.1 Class, Sexuality, Race, Social Politics, Gay Liberation Movement

'Anne Ferguson argues sexual freedom requires oppositional practices, that is, transgressing socially respectable categories of sexuality and refusing to draw the line on what counts as politically correct sexuality' (cited in Glick 2000: 24). Hollinghurst in his novels tries to present this refusal to draw a line by arguing and celebrating the liberatory value of marginalised sexual practices and identities for queers and gays. Hollinghurst contents to argue for the promotion of politics grounded in transgressive sexual styles as a necessary effect for the logic of identity politics and to be finally understood in terms of the central role that identity politics plays in social and political movements through his works and his characters. 'Kauffman also states that identity politics expresses the principle that

identity – be it individual or collective – should be central to both the vision and practice of radical politics. It implies not only organising around shared identity, as for example classic nationalist movements have done. Identity politics also express the belief that identity – its elaboration, expression, or affirmation – is and should be a fundamental focus of political work' (cited in Glick 2000: 31). Hollinghurst through his works lays focus on creating a climate in which self-transformation is equated with social transformation, the new identity politics valorising a politics of lifestyle, a personal politics centred upon who we are – how we dress or get off – that fails to engage with institutionalised systems of domination. The characters in his novels portray this consistent seek to deconstruct and displace the importance of dominant identity categories for a performative production of pro-sexuality movement politicising self-exploration and lifestyle as radical acts. His works also continuously pay attention to cultural ideologies that privatise the sexual eschewing a politics of collective, social change for a highly localised politics of personal transformation and also examining how these practices function within the racists, imperialists and capitalist social transformations that structure contemporary society.

The Line of Beauty focuses on gay life along with the frivolous and deadly aspects of London's gay culture. Set in London, the novel engages the story of a young man new to both his sexuality and the manners of high society. The novel is in the 1980s, when the economy is booming, the Tories have just been swept into power. Margaret Thatcher is Prime Minister, and the country is awash in hope and excitement. Nick Guest fresh out of Oxford, is staying in London with the Fedden family – whose son, Toby, was Nick's dearest friend at Oxford. The father, Gerald, is a newly elected conservative member of parliament and is infatuated with Thatcher, whom he calls, 'the lady'. Nick Guest an innocent in the matter of politics and money moves into the attic room in the Notting Hill home of the

Feddens and settles on the less worldly business of postgraduate study – specifically, a thesis concerned with 'style' in the works of Conrad, Meredith and Henry James. The title of the novel comes from William Hogarth's aesthetic manifest, *The Analysis of Beauty (1753).* Hogarth argued that there are no straight lines in nature, that everything is bent. Nick Guest uses the model of Hogarth's beauty to pursue his own private obsession with beauty-a prize as compelling to him as power and riches are to his friends. The novel explores the tension between Nick's intimate relationship with the Feddens, in whose parties and holidays he participates, and the realities of his sexuality and gay life which the Feddens accept only to the extent of never mentioning it. Nick experiences radical exclusion and incorporation from the Feddens in acknowledging the real him. Hollinghurst tries to show through the relationship between Nick and the Feddens that the heterosexual identity is constituted through a denied dependency on the homosexual identity. In terms of radical exclusion, Nick finds that the erotic, a perverse kind of eroticism is projected into his sexuality to such a degree that this quality is seen as the only salient feature of his queer identity. Thus, when Nick as a queer comes out, the Feddens as heterosexuals frequently conclude they know everything there is to know about him once they know about his sexuality. In terms of incorporation, heterosexuality is taken as the standard dominant gender identity and homosexuality is defined primarily in relation to that standard. Nick's identity as a gay is corporated only when it sounds appropriate and is conclusively disproven when sexual behaviour is equated to procreative purposes. Nick's identity in the novel continues to behave like a slippery, elusive idea arising in a way to acknowledge and assert and at the same time valuing difference to project self-recognition and self-representation as a gay man in a non-gay society. Apart from the themes of identity, class and sexuality the novel explores themes of hypocrisy, homosexuality, madness and wealth with the emerging AIDS crisis.

As in Hollinghurst's previous books, the sex is minutely depicted and there are two kinds of sexual attraction. First there is the obvious rather stereotyped allure of black men and working class hunks – memorably savoured by James and William in *The Swimming Pool Library* and secondly there is a love for beautiful men, the ones who have a dancer's body and a feminine face like that of a goddess in *The Line of Beauty and The Folding Star.* James in the novel purchases his pornography from something called the 'Third World Press' in Chicago. William has an affair with Arthur, a black homosexual. Then there is the veneration of Christ – like objects of desire, like Luc in *The Folding Star*, a male Lolita apparently descended from a sixteenth century printer who claimed he could trace his ancestry back to the Virgin Mary. In *The Line of Beauty* it is Wani who fills the role of 'the beautiful'. The nature of these choices shape varying degrees of intimacy and commitment, dramatising modern gay relationships. He also points out the vastly disingenuous treatment of homosexuality by politicians and by the diplomats who feel that homosexuals are to be blamed for the spread of the virus. In one of Nick's conversations with Sally Tipper, wife of a rich businessman who very strongly claims that the best way to stop the spread of the disease is to abstain from all kinds of sexual relationships till marriage Nick tingling with ironies and astonishment says 'But if we're never going to get married'. *The Swimming Pool Library* and *The Line of Beauty* acutely deal with homophobes and homophobic attitude towards homosexuals in various degrees In *The Swimming Pool Library* it is Dennis Beckwith, the 'saurian' peer who made it his mission to demonize homosexuality. In *The Line of Beauty*, it is the supposedly enlightened Gerald, who, even, after several illuminating conversations with Nick, insists on maintaining the culture of intolerance. Apart from them Sir Maurice Tipper is an open homophobe who openly says that the issue of homosexuality fills him with acute physical revulsion and mental distaste for a culture that has been blown out of proportion. On the issue of AIDS and its widespread dangers he holds the

homosexuals responsible and states that 'They had it coming to them'. Appearing on the BBCs *Question Time*, Gerald laughs off the idea of equal rights. Yet, as Hollinghurst implies, Gerald and his like cause far more damage than any disease: their blithely self-serving policies devastate Swaths of Britain, and their insouciant personal conduct destroys more families than any amount of gay self-expression.

Nick in the novel experiences the world of the British upper-class, their snobberies, their attitude to life and politics, their vile hypocrisies and their cold hearted treatment to issues that have no political or financial importance observing them from his own comparatively middle-class background as he stays with the Feddens wondering whether he would ever be comfortable to be open about his sexuality.

> Drinks were being served on the long terrace, and when he came out through the French windows there were two or three small groups already laughing and glowing. You could tell that everyone had been on holiday, and like the roses and begonias they seemed to take and hold the richly filtered evening light. Gerald was talking to a somehow familiar man and his blonde-helmeted wife; Nick knew from his smiles and guffaws that he was being recklessly agreeable. None of his particular friends was here yet, and Toby was still upstairs with Sophie, inter-minably getting dressed. He took a flute of champagne from a dark-eyed young waiter, and strolled off into the knee-high maze of the parterre. He wondered what the waiter thought of him, and if he was watching him in his solitary meandering over trimmed grass and pea gravel. He had worked as a waiter himself, two Christmases ago, and stood about with a tray in a similar way at two neighbouring hunt balls, it was not impossible that he would do so again. He felt he might look like a person with no friends, and that the waiter might know that he didn't really belong to this looking-glass world. Could he even tell, any more than Lord Kessler could, that he was gay (Hollinghurst 2004: 60).

Nick's acute sense of shyness and un-comfortableness can be seen as he tries to hide the fact that he knows Leo to the Feddens. 'He dreaded seeing Leo, on his bike, and dreaded being seen by Leo' (Hollinghurst 2004: 45).Somewhere deep down he disliked the image of Lord Kessler as a closeted, desperate politicised gay yet, he felt naked to the core to ever mention about being gay in a world that went silent whenever it was mentioned.

As an individual Nick is intelligent, he had just got a first class degree from Oxford University and is currently pursuing higher studies, but people meant such different things by music, politics, sexual orientation/preference that puzzled andcomplexed him in more ways than he could imagine. Nick also never talked to Catherine about his crush on her brother. He was afraid she would find it funny. Nick's awareness of his own homosexuality is muddled up in the new world of the Fedden's dominated by class, family, social politics and their own views about sexuality. In the presence of Catherine, Nick felt a certain nervousness that did not allow him to be comfortable with his gayness, also in his secret innocence; he felt a certain respect for her experience with men; to have so many failures, as she already had a catalogue of failed boyfriends required a high rate of preliminary success. His relationship early on in the novel with Leo is educative enough to teach Nick a few truths that dominate the hetero world against the world of the homosexuals. In his conversations with Leo, Nick fumbles in his own feelings as a gay, unable to orient himself in between the two worlds; one of the Feddens and the other world of his own self.

> Nothing very personal was said. Nick found it hard to interest Leo in his own affairs, and his various modest leads about his family and his background were not picked up. There were things he'd prepared and phrased and turned into jokes that were not to be heard – or not tonight. Once or twice he took Leo with him: into a falsely cheerful dismissal of the idea that Toby, though fairly attractive, was of any real interest to him…(Hollinghurst 2004: 32-33).

Nick's world is constantly questioned by the charming; political world of the Thatcher's and the Fedden's which can be seen in his disguised conversations with Leo, who on the other hand is open and undisguised. When Leo says, 'I'm the sort of guy who needs a lot of sex…I'm like that, I always say what I think' (Hollinghurst 2004: 33). Nick with a quick discountenancing shudder contradicts him and says, 'I don't bear grudges;…I'm not that kind of person. I'm sure you're not …'(ibid.: 2004: 33).

The introduction of Lord Kessler a sixty year old, a left wing Jewish brother of Rachel Feddens serves to illuminate the political hurdles of being gay in the Thatcher Era of conservatism. Nick dislikes the idea of being in the dark yet comes to terms with the fact that in politics, a beautiful heterosexual gains more vote than a beautiful homosexual. 'Kessler had never married, but there was nothing perceptibly homosexual about him. Towards any young people in his social orbit he maintained a strategy of enlightened avoidance' (Hollinghurst 2004: 50). The house of Kessler has books and paintings of some quite different sense which Nick perceives to be an expression of inadequate disappointment. He has a painting by Paul Cezanne and Rembrandt; and books on money and financial management like *The Way we Live Now* by Trollope. When Nick is questioned about the knowledge he has on money and the corresponding relationship it has with the literature of Trollope, Nick feels disqualified by his complete ignorance about money. Lord Kessler can in many ways be compared to Edward Manners in *The Folding Star*, who takes a non-committed longing for things that need commitment and intimacy. Edward Manners, James and Lord Kessler lives among the many gay men who not only longs for a relationship but possesses the sense of nervousness, excitement, sensuality and anxiety that comes with such relationships. As Will describes the house of James, we come to learn how suppressed and repressed James is as a gay.

> The other mags were not left lying about. The fact that even in his own home he kept them neatly hidden away (under some jerseys in the second drawer of his dressing-table) showed I suppose the secret and illicit power they still had for him. I hauled them out to see if there was anything new – though it was actually hard to remember. He dealt largely in material put out from Chicago by the Third World Press – a title which might have been thought to chasten rather than excite the exploitative urge, though James was clearly unabashed.
>
> … And then what the hell had James done? Though he had his mischievous side he was a conscientiously good citizen. He parked on yellow lines, but he always displayed his 'Doctor on Call' sticker (Hollinghurst 1988: 251).

Nick's relationship with Wani reveals a whole new world of the Feddens and the Thatcher's era and its subsequent homophobic attitude towards homosexuals. Nick feels a deep sense of detachment when Toby tells him about Wani's engagement. Wani happens to be Nick's long crush at Oxford and it depresses him to learn about his engagement. 'He could picture a happy alternative future for himself and Wani – who was sweet-natured, very rich, and beautiful as a John the Baptist painted for a boy-loving pope' (Hollinghurst 2004: 64).

In one of his conversation with Paul, an Oxford homosexual contemporary, Nick openly asserts his attraction and feelings for Wani Quradi whose façade of heterosexuality seemed to tear him not just as a fellow homosexual but for the larger issue of Wani being a repressed gay all his life to satisfy his parents, society and the political world.

> Wani, like Toby, remained in the far pure reach of fantasy, which grew all the keener and more inventive to meet the challenge of his unavailability. He felt the loss of him as though he had really stood a chance with him, he'd gone so far with him in his mind, as he lay alone in bed. He saw the great heterosexual express pulling out from the platform precisely on time, and all his friends were on it, in the first-class carriage – in the wagons-lit! He

> clung to what he had, as it gathered speed: that quarter of an hour with Leo by the compost heap, which was his first sharp taste of coupledom. 'Are you and I the only homos here?' (Hollinghurst 2004: 65).

Nick's escapades into a make believe world of the Feddens through their parties and their celebrations dulls certain tendencies in him that he feels are dishonest. He feels lonely and lost within himself. He felt that he did not belong to the world of the heterosexuals or to the world of politics that they belonged to.

> He felt restless and forgotten, peripheral to an event which, he remembered, had once been thought of as his party too. His loneliness bewildered him for a minute, in the bleak perspective of the bachelor's corridor: a sense close to panic that he didn't belong in this house with these people. Some of the guests had gone into the library and as he approached the open door he took in the scant conversational texture, over which one or two voices held forth as if by right. Gerald said words Nick couldn't catch the meaning of, and through the general laughter another voice, which he half-recognised, put in a quick correcting "Not if I know Margaret" Nick stood at the doorway of the lamplit room and felt for a second like a drunken student, which he was, and also, more shadowy and inconsolable, a sleepless child peering in at an adult world of bare shoulders, flushed faces, and cigar smoke (Hollinghurst 2004: 75).

Nick by his proximity to the Feddens, attends Swank parties, packed with MP's, cabinet ministers and nobility, all of whom harbour the expectation that 'the lady' might appear at any minute. But Nick's love of beautiful things and his interest for a new analysis of beauty dedicates him to the quest for searching and living a life embodying a double curve line of beauty which Nick asserts in his acceptance of his sexual self.

> The double curve was Hogarth's 'line of beauty', the snakelike flicker of an instinct, of two compulsions held in one unfolding movement. He ran his hand down Wani's back. He

> didn't think Hogarth had illustrated this best example of it, the dip and swell – he had chosen harps and branches, bones rather than flesh. Really it was time for a new *Analysis of Beauty* (Hollinghurst 2004: 200).

Nick is attracted to physical beauty in art and in men. *The Folding Star* has the same outlook on the theme of beauty. Edward Manners has an affair with a young foreigner named Cherif who falls deeply in love with him, but as Cherif is ordinary looking, Edward can never really return his affection. The novel has often been described as an expanded form of *Death inVenice.* Like his forerunner Von Aschenbach in Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* who obsesses over the beautiful Tadzio, and the artist Orst, Edward is a lover of beauty, not a lover of people and people's beauty is fleeting. Thus, the disappearance of Jane Byron, Orst's beautiful model, and later of Luc, Edward's version of Tadzio, represents how cruel life can be to those who worship at Beauty's altar. Hollinghurst in *The Folding Star* evokes the mysteries of the past through two major characters who are objects of romantic obsession and who mysteriously disappear. The long lost Jane Byron, beloved model for Orst, who swam out to sea at Ostend, Belgium, decades ago and was never seen again, leaving the artist with a life-long obsession for painting her image and the beautiful youth Luc, obsessive love interest of Edward Manners who also disappears. Luc is last seen looking out from one of the many photographs of missing children on a salt-spattered bulletin board at the beach in Ostend. Edward Manners is a man who lives with his beautiful obsessions, and yet never truly finds peace with them. Nick in *The Line of Beauty* is so taken by Wani's beauty at Toby's birthday party that Wani becomes for him an analysis of his own beauty in the lines and curves of his perception of the beautiful one.

> Nick had a moment of selfless but intensely curious immersion in his beauty. The forceful chin with its slight saving roundness, the deep-set eyes with their confounding softness, the cheekbones and the long nose, the little ears and springy curls, the cruel charming curve of

> his lips, made everything else in the house seem stale, over-artful, or beside the point (Hollinghurst 2004: 91).

Hollinghurst focuses in exposing the frivolous and deadly aspects of London's gay culture. He can be in many ways compared to Henry James. Just like Henry James who exposed the late nineteenth century New York and the European society, Hollinghurst with a sly wit confirms the stereotypes about class, family, society, politics and sexuality of the 80's era London. The material and the social excesses of the 1980's are deftly portrayed through his characters Nick, Will, Wani, the Feddens, Alex and Danny. Hollinghurst artfully crafts and weaves a piquant satire of privilege and sexuality in all its forms by juxtaposing the themes of social politics with issues like class, morality and the gay liberation movement.

4.2 Enticing Panorama of Metropolitan Gay Life: Clubbing, Gay Parties, Music, Dance

Apart from the theme of the past history of gay men, Hollinghurst's novels show a clear exposition of contemporary gay life and the lives of gay men leading a metropolitan existence in his novels like *The Spell, The Swimming Pool Library* and *The Line of Beauty*. The enticing panorama of metropolitan gay life is spread out in *The Swimming Pool Library* in the life of its narrator 'William Beckwith'. William Beckwith who is initially conscious only of 'riding high on sex and self-esteem – it was my time, my *belle epoque*' (Hollinghurst 1988: 6) roughly portrays a life of ease and comfort before the pre-Aids era of reckless sex and multi-relationships Beckwith's hedonistic lifestyle revolves around daily exercise and gossiping visits to the Corinthian Club, '… a gloomy and functional underworld full of life, purpose and sexuality' (ibid.: 13). Apart from the club, his pastimes include cruising to the pubs, restaurants, discos and gay cottages. Disease and death are far from the mind of young

connoisseur William Beckwith who's rapid and fast lifestyles never allowed him to ponder about it. Highly privileged, cultivated and a promiscuous young gay man William Beckwith is the grandson and heir of Viscount Beckwith, an elder statesman. 'I was beckoned on having too much money. I belonged to that tiny proportion of the populace that indeed owns almost everything. I'd surrendered to the prospect of doing nothing, though it kept me busy enough' (Hollinghurst 1988: 6).

The Corinthian Club where Will is a member and where he swims, exercises and cruises men is not explicitly described as a gay club but one that has a pervasive homoerotic atmosphere. Boys, from the age of seventeen, could go there to work their bodies in the weights room and older men would drop in to cast an appreciative glance at the showering youngsters. The Corry, as it was popularly known as was among the city's famous brother clubs. More than once, Will had ended up in a bedroom of the hotel above with a man he had met at the showers of the Corry.

> The Corinthian Club in Great Russell Street is the masterpiece of the architect Frank Orme, … Like Orme himself, the edifice is both mean and self-important; a paradox emphasised by the modest resources of the Club in the 1930s and its conflicting aspiration to civic grandeur. As you walk along the pavement you look down through the railings into an area where stream issues from the ventilators and half-open top-lights of changing-rooms and kitchens; you hear the slam of large institutional cooking trays, the hiss of showers, the inane confidence of radio disc-jockeys. The ground floor has a severe manner, the Portland stone punctuated by green-painted metal-framed windows; but at the centre it gathers to a curvaceous, broken-pedimented doorway surmounted by two finely developed figures – one pensively Negroid, the other inspiredly Caucasian – who hold between them a banner with the device 'Men of All Nations' (Hollinghurst 1988: 12).

The Spell presents one of the most enticing pictures of metropolitan gay life among the novels of Alan Hollinghurst. A range of gay hangouts like clubs, restaurants, night-bars and modern gay blocks are introduced to Alex as Danny takes him around. Alex loved being with Danny as he got to see a whole new world alien to him. He wanted passers-by to stop and watch them leaning together in the candle light and speculate enviously about them. He met beautiful men in the cascades and strafing of coloured light. Danny introduces him to house music as the music pounded and dazzled Alex, he felt grand and cavernous and ravishingly happy. With the effect of the drugs and the music Alex feels different kinds of happiness. It seemed that happening and happiness were the same. He gets up and dances rapturously with the other dancers. The music possessed him; he felt that he was living the music with his whole body. The novel represents a modern taste of the gay sub-culture along with undertones of the side effects of a life lived in total liberty and recklessness. Nick in *The Line of Beauty* is benumbed by swanky lovers, smarmy politicians and drug dealers. He brings to light both his sexuality and the manners of high society into focus. The swank party packed with politicians and nobility booming with hope and excitement touches and dazzles Nick and seduces his being. Nick embarks on two love affairs, first with Leo, a young black London clerk, and later with Wani, a Lebanese millionaire and a friend from Oxford. Nights of parties, drugs, sex and scandal dramatizes the dangers and rewards of his own private pursuit of beauty, a pursuit as compelling to Nick as the desire for power and riches among his many friends. The novels of Hollinghurst highlight young gay males like Will, Nick, Alex and Danny going through a period of sexual experimentation before seeking more committed relationships. Erotic sexual adventures are part of the enticing panorama of metropolitan gay life which includes sexual activities performed in public sex environment, sex clubs and a broad range of additional cruising areas. All the characters of Hollinghurst are primarily organised around recreational and anonymous sexual encounters. Many of these

experiences revolve around meeting men at gay bars. Some of these places find mention in *The Spell* like the bathroom breaks, afternoons in the park, party boy sex and club sex. Circuit parties are a common feature in the novel where gay men pay fees to party all night or all weekend, typically large dance floors playing techno music are packed with men with no shirts on. Many use drugs like crystal, ecstasy and marijuana regularly and visibly. Although *The Line of Beauty* has a different outlook on gay culture and its activities, Nick and his friends no doubt have parties in the Feddens home and have joint sessions and gay sex.

> But Wani ignored Shepton and stepped through the group towards the bed and Toby… Nick had a moment of selfless but intensely curious immersion in his beauty…everything in the house seem stale, over-artful, or beside the point… Wani gave no answering sign of special recognition…Wani said nothing about the turban, as if they were almost too familiar with each other time and culture (Hollinghurst 2004: 91).

Hollinghurst explains the joint that Nick takes part in as he walks around in daze and in thrill looking at his friends who lay in the damp still night.

> A joint comes round again, and Nick took a serious pull on it. Then he got up and went to the open window, to look out at the damp still night. The great beeches beyond the lawn showed in grey silhouette against the first vague paling of the sky. It was a beautiful effect, so much bigger than the party (Hollinghurst 2004: 92).

The enticing panorama of metropolitan gay life is spread out for the characters of Hollinghurst, whether they live off inherited wealth like Will, or work in its pubs, clubs and restaurants or as scholars and metropolitan sophisticates. Money and its capacity for instant access to pleasure with ambiguous moral consequences, is a persistent theme in the generally well-to-do world of Hollinghurst's metropolitan gays. Sex and art are even more pervasive within them: they show beautifully how the sexual and aesthetic instincts are inextricably and heartbreakingly entwined.

4.3 Sex, Drugs and Secrets: Shadows of AIDS and Death

By the end of the 1970's, events were conspiring to put lesbian and gay life into crises. A backlash against homosexuality punctured illusions of a coming era of tolerance and sexual pluralism. The AIDS epidemic both energised the anti-gay backlash and put lesbians and gay men on the defensive as religious and medicalised models which discredited homosexuality were rehabilitated in public discourses. Although the AIDS crises also demonstrated the strength of established gay institutions, for many lesbians and gay men it underscored the limits of a politics of minority fights and inclusion. Both the backlash and the AIDS crises prompted a renewal of radical activism, of a politics of confrontation, coalition building, and the need for a critical theory that would link gay empowerment to broad institutional change.Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in the*Epistemology of the Closet* writes,

> I think anyone who was around gay communities in the eighties would agree that, far beyond the changes in legal interpretations, the difference that's hardest for younger people now to fully imagine has to do with the then – enveloping pressure of the AIDS emergency. The first reports of the disease had come out only in 1981, and its sheer newness, its untreatableness, and its ballooning mortality brought a sudden, encompassing devastation into the lives of urban gay men and their friends. It was a common experience then to be in a room of vibrant young people, conscious that within a year or two, all but a few of them would have sicken and died. Furthermore, the excessively potent fusion of homophobic stigma with deadly medical mystery resulted in uncanny fractures within families as well as society at large. If gay communities were experiencing an unremitting horror comparable to that of war time, it seemed to be a war full of disowned losses without a home front, generating grievous news that no one was willing to receive (Sedgwick 1990: 14-15).

Alan Hollinghurst in his novels fashions a culture of drugs, sex and secrets around the lives of gay men in his novels. Homoerotic lifestyles defining the parameters of living and

acceptance defines sex as a property of the individual, whose personal expression was shaped by social norms and attitudes. Sex and society and the secrets that shaped this relation are viewed as antithetical. The idea of a sexual regime, of a field of sexual meanings, discourses and practices are interlaced with social institutions and movements in his novels. These fine layers of inter-related discourses around sex, drugs, secrets and AIDS are the new social models of homosexuality that Hollinghurst elaborates through his characters as a continuum. *The Spell* is a comedy of manners depicting torrid emotions and passions of well-bred British gay men. It is a story revolving around four men and their actions ranging from casual cruelty to anxiety to adoration. Hollinghurst through the lives of these four men explores London's drug-addled discos in the late 90s. The novel is an attempt to make an exploration of modern gay male experiences and relationships at the backdrop of drugs and AIDS. Set in London and the idyllic countryside of Dorset, the narrative tracks the interlocking passions of four men as each character falls successively under the spell of love or drugs, country living or urban glamour. *The Spell* unfurls into a richly witty picture of modern gay life. The first introduction to the modern gay world in the novel is when Danny and Alex meet up in Soho where they walk into Aubrey and Hector. It is clear that Danny knows many attractive gay men and has slept with most of them.

> They got out in Soho, where the cab was immediately taken by someone else and whisked off, leaving Alex with an odd subliminal feeling of no return. He'd forgotten how crowded the streets were, and wondered if in fact they had been quite so busy in the old days. Danny's mobile phone rang, and he turned away to laugh and jabber into it, while Alex stood and was bumped into. There was something festive about the streams of people; but he felt he hadn't yet entered the fun. He thought of his usual Saturday nights in Hammersmith, with only the noise of dinner-parties breaking up, and then the distant rumble of the Great West Road … (Hollinghurst 1998: 73).

Alex is introduced to a new world of gay cruising as he walks with Danny. It was as if Danny knew every beautiful or interesting looking gay. There were bestowed stooping embraces, casual hand-holdings, caresses, mildly hilarious nonsense as he sat on people's laps and walked past the bars and the café in Soho. Words and terms like trade, Miss Pamela and Guest-list were produced and received with gratified modern understanding between Danny and the other gays. As they go to a dancing club after dinner, Alex loved being with Danny.

> Alex loved being with him, it went off like a rocket in his heart, the fierce ascent and all the soft explosions of descending stars. He wanted passers-by to stop and watch them leaning together in the candlelight and speculate enviously about them (Hollinghurst 1998: 77).

Alex is first introduced to Ecstasy by Danny in the dancing club. For the first time, at Danny's instigation, virgin to drugs Alex experiments with hallucinatory, rapturous narcotics.

> Have you ever done E?' he said, and gave him an amiably calculating look.
>
> Alex said, 'No', firmly and quietly, perhaps primly. 'No, I'm a narcotics virgin really… (Hollinghurst 1998: 78).

Alex's desire quickly blurs as he is unsure if it is the drug or his attraction to Danny that allows him to enjoy the evening. He finds himself talking joyously to strangers that previously he would wait for 'ten years for an introduction in writing'. With the introduction of techno-music, the earth tremor bass and penetrating shimmer of high metallic noise, Alex and Danny dance on to the edge of the immense dance floor, swept by brilliant unpredictable stabs of light.

> Crowds of men were moving in blurred inexhaustible unison with it. Others, in tiny shorts and lace-up boots, danced alone on platforms above the heads of the crowd, some strutting like strippers, others sprinting on the spot with a flickering semaphore of the arms. And all

> around the floor, and trailing away into other unguessed spaces, there was an endless jostling parade of half-naked men, faces glowing with happiness and lust. After thirty minutes Alex acknowledged to himself that he felt quite pleasant, but he could easily argue the feeling away as the elation of drink and dancing and the company of a thousand half-naked men. Though the men were beautiful, it was true, in the cascades and strafings of coloured light. Each of the men round him seemed somehow distinct and interesting; in a way he hadn't understood when he wandered in past the long line of cropped heads and top-heavy torsos. But of course people were unique, one tended to forget. He twirled round with a smile and saw Danny getting out of his short-sleeved shirt without stopping dancing. He thought he was lost in a world of his own, chewing and licking his lips … (Hollinghurst 1998: 81-83).

The novel further elaborates the metro-cosmo life of Danny and his gay partners as Danny organises his birthday party. The scene is a contemporary one of clubbing, dance music, recreational drugs, rent boys and affluent gay life-styles. Most of the friends are metropolitan sophisticates in search of the country good life. Drawn out of himself by 'the mood of sexual jostling that went so oddly with the pastoral', Alex is turned on by Danny, who supplies him with Ecstasy, introducing him to 'house' and 'techno-music'. Alex, middle-aged, discreetly gay encountering the youth culture starts on a journey of self-discovery feeling himself 'released' by the drugs, allowing himself to indulge in romantic illusions about Danny. While dancing at the club, he feels 'the yes of sex and something bodiless and ideal beyond it – what it might be like to float over a threshold into total acceptance by another man.' More significantly, Alex begins to observe the inside of life, rather than the outside. The depiction of the night club euphoria, the house music, the tribal dancing and the scintillation of gorgeous dancing bodies lightens the world of Danny and projects the modern pub culture of gay men.

The Line of Beauty touches upon the emergence of HIV/AIDS as well as the relationship between politics and homosexuality, its acceptance within the 1980s Conservative Party and mainstream society. AIDS is a central theme in the novel but it is not an AIDS novel. Yet it is seriously dealt with and it is actually given a shape. Someone is well, then they get ill, then they get more ill, and then they die. Hollinghurst writes about AIDS as a fact of life rather than a fact of death. In *The folding Star* and *The Spell*, AIDS is dealt with very obliquely and marginally but in *The Line of Beauty* AIDS becomes a bigger picture and of that arc from naïve romance at the beginning to more disillusionment and even tragic ending. Even in *The Spell*, Hollinghurst's sunniest book, AIDS is a penumbral presence. In *The Line of Beauty*, there are frequent teasing connections between sex and money and AIDS is linked to the cash-soaked immoralities of the Thatcher age. But AIDS is a killer beyond time, at the book's end, Nick Guest, its hero and scapegoat sees himself already faded away. Hollinghurst projects AIDS as a backlash against homosexuality, spearheaded by the new right but widely supported by non-conservatives and mainstream Republicans. AIDS is shown as a punctured illusion of a coming era of tolerance and sexual pluralism in his novels. The AIDS epidemic both energised the anti-gay backlash and put homosexuals on the defensive as religious and medicalised models which discredited homosexuality were rehabilitated in public discourses. Nick, Wani, Leo and Robin experience the strength and the limitations of a politics of minority rights and inclusion as their homosexual identity and gay life enters into the AIDS crisis. They are like gay men infected with HIV who are no longer seen by the nation as sexual predators but as victims who deserve the deadly disease. They are reduced to objects of national pity by characters like Gerald.

The Folding Star, the most medieval of Hollinghurst's works has the darkening shadows of AIDS and death. *The Folding Star*, a novel about narcissism, and a lover's doomed search for love in the twilight world of symbolist art, ends with its hero looking out into the grey North Sea past a picture of his lover Luc; whose baffling disappearance stands for the sudden extinction of too many lives and hopes. Robin Woodfield, a forty year old architect in *The Spell* is mourning the death of his lover from AIDS. Leo Charles, Nick's black lover in *The Line of Beauty* dies from AIDS, presumably contracted from his ex-boyfriend Pete. Pat Grayson, Catherine's gay godfather in *The Line of Beauty* also dies of AIDS. And lastly Antoine Wani Quradi, a friend of Nick and Tobias from Oxford University, contracts AIDS after having a sexual relationship with Nick.

Apart from being a novel dealing with homosexuality, *The Line of Beauty* is a novel that minutely projects the material and social excesses of the 1980s, with the culture of drugs, sex, snobbery and scandal – in which Nick plays an unwilling part.

> A joint came around again, and Nick took a serious pull on it. Then he got up and went to the open window, to look out at the damp still night. The great beeches beyond the lawn showed in grey silhouette against the first vague paling of the sky. It was a beautiful effect, so much bigger than the party: the world turning, the bright practical phrases of the first birds. Though there were hours still, surely before sunrise … He stiffened, grabbed at his wrist, and held his watch steady in front of him, it was 4.07. He turned and looked at the others in the room, in their stupor and animation, and his main heavy thought was just how little any of them cared – they could never begin to imagine a date with a waiter, or the disaster of missing one. He made the first steps towards the door, and slowed and stopped as the pot took his sense of direction away. Where, after all, was he going? Everything seemed to have petered into a silence, as if by agreement. Nick felt conspicuous standing there, smiling cautiously, like someone not on to a joke; but when he looked at the others

> they seemed equally stilled and bemused. It must be some amazingly strong stuff (Hollinghurst 2004: 92).

As the boom years of the eighties unfold, Nick finds his life altered by the rising fortunes of the Feddens family. His two vividly contrasting love affairs, dramatize the dangers and rewards of his own private pursuit of beauty, a pursuit as compelling to Nick as the desire for power and riches among his friends. Unlike his relationship with Leo, Nick's relationship with Wani is secretive and full of disguises, which brings into question the larger fantasies of a ruthless decade.

> Nick was confident that none of them knew he was sleeping with the boss, and with ten or more years of practice he could head off almost any train of talk that might end in a thought-provoking blush. Part of him longed for the scandalous acclaim, but Wani exacted total secrecy, and Nick enjoyed keeping secrets (Hollinghurst 2004: 207).

In his relationship with Wani, a beautiful millionaire, Nick finds himself immersed in sex, drugs and secrets. This relationship teaches him about the lives of the rich and the famous, the way of the world and the experiences of doing and buying dope.

> They stooped in turn and zipped up the powder, and then stood for a minute, sniffing and nodding, reading each other's faces for compassion and confirmation of the effect. Wani's features seemed to soften, there was a subtle but involuntary smile that Nick loved to see at the moment of achievement and surrender (Hollinghurst 2004: 217).

Always discreet and secretive of their relationship, Wani always felt insecure to be open about his status as a homosexual.

> For a second he imagined telling Bertrand the truth, in all its mischievous beauty, imagined describing, like some praiseworthy business initiative, the skinhead rent boy they'd had in last week for a threesome. Just then he felt a kind of sadness – well, the shine went off

> things, as he'd known it would, his mood was petering into greyness, a grey restlessness. He felt condemned to this with Bertrand. It was just what had happened at Lowndes Square: the secret certainty faded after half an hour and gave way to a somehow enhanced state of doubt. The manageable joke of Bertrand became a penance. Nick was powerless, fidgety, sulkily appeasing, in the grip of a man who seemed to him in every way the opposite of himself, a tight little bundle of ego in a shiny suit (Hollinghurst 2004: 149-50).

The ironic conversation between Nick and Wani categorically presents a clear homophobic picture that Nick feels from Wani's World. 'Darling, no one even knows I've got anything to hide". He passed Wani the packet and smiled reproachfully. "It's just like our wonderful secret love affair' (Hollinghurst 2004: 252). Nick longs to make a declaration of their affair and he feels violently angry about Wani's secrecy. He squeezes Wani's neck and tells him.

> 'I wish we didn't have to carry on like this, I feel I've got to tell someone, I wish we could tell people.'
>
> 'If you tell one person you've told everybody,' Wani said. 'You might as well take a full-page ad in the *Telegraph'* (Hollinghurst 2004: 254).

The book is a wide exploration on the gay identity and its fight for recognition amidst the snobbery and the scandal of a conservative party. Gerald Fedden's world is a direct representation of the secrets that makes Nick contempt the hetero world of its viles and hypocrisy. He thinks of Gerald's regular visits to Barwick with Penny, his secretary, almost always without Rachel. It was a system, a secret so routine which almost seemed secure. This affair makes Nick loathe Gerald. At the Fedden's home, Nick navigates through his thoughts and wonders about all the secrets and despair behind the quite walls.

> A little later he woke and the house was silent again, and the shock of what was happening came over him, his grown-up scorn of its utter banality and his child's ache of despair. He saw it had already become a secret of his own, a thing to carry unwillingly, a sour

> confusion of duties. He lay awake listening to the silence, which was illusory, a cover to a register of other sounds … the sigh of a grey poplar, the late half-conscious toppings-up of the cistern overhead, and within his ears remote soft percussions, like doors closing in non-existent wings of the house (Hollinghurst 2004: 290).

The book has a neat explanation on the theme of money, madness and wealth – clearly worked out when Gerald points out and says, 'My daughter tends to think we should give everything we've worked for away' (ibid.: 330). Catherine neatly presents her arguments and says, 'I just don't see why. When you've got say, forty million you absolutely have to turn it into eighty million' … 'I mean who needs so much money? It's just like power, isn't it. Why do people want it? I mean what's the point of having power?' (ibid.: 331). And finally justifies herself by saying that if she had power, 'I think I should stop people having a hundred and fifty million pounds' (ibid.: 331).

Margaret Thatcher's appearance in the novel has been compared to that of Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. As Nick asks her to dance, he begins to realise that the big picture that Gerald had painted about her was not all true. He noticed that she moved in her own accelerated element, she noticed nothing and yet she remembered everything. The song they dance to 'Get off of the cloud' is symbolic of the clash between the two worlds of varied sexuality. The rampant nature of HIV infuses the characters' lusts with a deadly significance. Hollinghurst is not a polemical writer but he casts a revealing light on the implications of the virus for homosexual men. This social criticism is important to Hollinghurst's art. He delights in sounding the lubricious fathoms of male sexuality, yet combines this with both an unsentimental moral intelligence and an ear for the glorious fatuities of fine living that recalls Thackeray as well as Firbank. During one of his conversations with Rachel, Nick feels an instant pang of awareness as Catherine tells her mum,

> 'Mum, for Christ's sake!' said Catherine. 'He had AIDS!' – with a phlegmy catch in her voice, which her anger fought with. 'He was gay … he liked anonymous sex … he liked … (Hollinghurst 2004: 335).

The news of Leo's death and the consequent illness of Wani of AIDS introduce an altogether new world that terrifies Nick of his status as an HIV positive and as a gay in the emerging AIDS crises. As he looks at the last photo of Leo brought by his sister, Nick is speechless.

> The last photo she had shown him was terrible: a Leo with his life behind him. Nick remembered making jokes, early on, in the first unguarded liberty of a first affair, about their shared old age, Leo being sixty when Nick was fifty. And there he was already; or he'd been sixty for a week before he died. He was in bed, in a sky-blue hospital gown; his face was hard to read, since AIDS had taken it and written its message of terror and exhaustion on it; against which Leo seemed frailly to assert his own character in a doubtful half smile. His vanity had become a kind of fear, that he would frighten the people he smiled at. It was the loneliest thing Nick had ever seen (Hollinghurst 2004: 410).

Apart from exploring the theme of money, power, AIDS and death, there is the theme of scandal and hypocrisy which can be seen as another important theme in the lives of the Feddens and the Quradis. When Wani tells Nick that Martine was never his girlfriend and that his mother had made a charming arrangement of giving her a hefty allowance to keep her as his girlfriend Nick's amazement knows no bounds. More scandals are exposed in the novel as the Fedden's world is stripped of its vile hypocrisy. The affair of Gerald Feddens with Penny and the accusations against Nick for misleading Rachel, the scandalous life of Gerald Feddens steeped in sex, money and power. Nick is finally made to leave the house paying a heavy price for the choices he made in life. When Gerald accuses Nick of not being

loyal, Nick, for the first time experiences the ruthlessness of an era he never actually thought existed.

> It's the sort of thing you read about, it's an old homo trick. You can't have a real family, so you attach yourself to someone else's. and I suppose after a while you just couldn't bear it, you must have been very envious I think of everything we have, and coming from your background too perhaps … and you've wreaked some pretty awful revenge on us as a result. And actually, you know …' he raised his hands, 'all we asked for was loyalty (Hollinghurst 2004: 481).

The hypocrisy of Gerald is further made clear to Nick as he continues to accuse Nick of being the vile one, the one who is responsible for living like a parasite out of the Feddens and the Quaradis and exploiting them using the 'typical homo trick'.

> Do you honestly imagine that your affairs can be talked about in the same terms as mine? I mean – I ask you again, who are you? What the fuck are you doing here? The slight rephrasing, the sharpening of his position, loosed a flood of anger, which moving visibly through his face seemed almost to bewilder him, like a physical seizure (Hollinghurst 2004: 482).

The publication of his magazine 'OGEE, ISSUE I', was an event for Nick. It was his magazine. As he held the magazine in his hand he felt like the winner of a price, happy and unable to hide sharing it courteously with the boy, who brought for him. It felt like all the scandals had faded out, and what he saw was a wonderland of luxury, 'for the first three glossy spreads, Bulgari, Dior, BMW, astounding godparents to Nick and Wani's whimsical coke-child' Elated and emotionally relieved Nick finally feels that his parents would see his name in print as a distinction, and not a shameful worry. It fortifies him to go through the magazine with his name as the consulting editor. He finally is able to connect to that 'line of beauty' illustrated with sumptuous photos of brooches, mirrors, lakes, the legs of rococo

saints and sofas in the magazine with that of his own life and his analysis of beauty. Nick feels extremely high of himself, his initial timidity of being verbally degraded by Gerald as a homosexual was flooded out by its opposite with a conviction that he had produced a masterpiece. As Nick leaves the Fedden's home, his life ahead fills him with a muted dryness and also with a beautiful moment of realisation of a larger life.

> It came over him that the test result would be positive. The words that were said every day to others would be said to him, in that quiet consulting room whose desk and carpet and square modern armchair would share indissolubly in the moment. There was a large tranquil photograph in a frame, and a view of the hospital chimney from the window. He was young, without much training in stoicism. What would he do once he left the room? He dawdled on, rather breathless, seeing visions in the middle of the day. He tried to rationalise the fear, but its pull was too strong and original. It was inside himself, but the world around him, the parked cars, the cruising taxi, the church spire among the trees, had also been changed. They had been revealed. It was a drug sensation, but without the awareness of play (Hollinghurst 2004: 500).

Hollinghurst brings to light through his works a set of emotions ranging from an awareness of the history of being a homosexual to the contemporary lifestyles of being gay, from politics to sexuality and from madness to wealth, an exploration of a life alongside art and sex. At a time when the British writing establishment is coming to terms with overt gayness, Hollinghurst can be seen as a representative of the new wave, a serious writer addressing a wide audience, for whom the sexual orientation of the personae is of little import for plot or character development. His works has been acclaimed for its sensational treatment of what the British press seem to regard as scandalous and salacious topics – life in a gay subculture, the workings of homosexual friendship networks and the physical activities of past and contemporary gay males. The novels of Hollinghurst have profound themes of

memory, wit, mystery and the passing sense of time with the linked sense that comedy and tragedy are always intertwined; that nothing makes life either more terrible or more ridiculous than the promise of the oblivion. His novels are a cause of celebration for various themes involving the skilful redolence of life lived forwards, of the rich and the evolving consciousness of wealth, of understanding social history, part social comedy and the ordinary business of living and of the fearless erotic tales of transgressions meditating on the changing social, sexual and cultural attitudes towards issues that are aesthetically transgressive and private.

Chapter V

Repressive Forces to Transgressive Desires:

Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai

The chapter focuses on the cultural and traditional repressive forces that act like an institution curtailing homosexual tendencies. It also highlights the importance of the prejudices that the characters of Hollinghurst and Selvadurai are made to face and the great difficulties that they have to endure while simply yet persistently trying to shrug off the demands of their culture. The chapter also looks into how sex and sexual acts were subject to a whole range of repressions and prohibitions and the evidences that highlights the extent to which sexuality has always been on social, cultural and political agendas in one form or the other. It also looks into how homosexuality has been unusually investigated and understood in lesbian, gay and queer studies largely governed and constructed within hetero-normative frames of reference. The chapter also examines and indicates the discursive explosion in the field of sex and sexualities and how church and state institutions incited a proliferation of discourses concerned with sex and sexuality and its interoperation with power and knowledge. The same discourses ensured that almost every aspect of daily life was sexualised. Both Hollinghurst and Selvadurai in their works distinctly understand this operation in terms of knowledge, power and discourse and an analysis of a certain form of knowledge regarding sex, not in terms of repression or law, but in terms of power. Their novels portray how this power is exercised from innumerable points and how deeply these relations are concerned with prohibition. Characters like Balendran and Nick are forced by these power relations to remain repressed, silenced and prohibited. In *The History of Sexuality,* psychoanalysis is viewed as a normalising discourse, and if sex is repressed,

silenced and prohibited, then the simple fact that one is speaking about sex has the appearance of a deliberate transgression. Hollinghurst and Selvadurai through their characters continue to establish the grounding terms upon which subjects understand, operate and represent the truth of self, an aspect of identity, a principle truth something which has to be brought into cultural visibility. Their works continuously propose that sexuality is not simply the natural expression of some inner drive or desire but a genuine production of a personal identity.

5.1 Why Transgressive Desires? Sexual Desires and Identity

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the belief that homosexuals were identifiably different coexisted with the belief that these same people were invisible. Indeed, central to the debates about the textual representation and recognition of homosexuality has been a concern over how homosexual identities and same-sex practices might be visualised or spoken of in cultures which either make such identities invisible or silence its speakers. How subjects think and write sex and sexuality, and how subjects relate to the cultural and material dimensions of sex, have changed and are changing. If the sexed subject of early twentieth-century sexology and medicine was figured as either heterosexual or homosexual, as normal or as aberrant, as healthy or as pathological, in the last twenty years such as 'queer' deviations and perversions have been deployed to contest sex-gender norms, celebrate sexual difference, and dislodge a hetero-normative framework which assumed that perversion and inversion were illnesses which only non-heterosexual subjects experienced. Yet at the same time as medical and quasi-scientific texts were seeking neat definitions of the new sexual subject, literary fictions were less able to capture any sex or gender coherence. Oscar Wilde's plays, for instance, promote and venerate sexual transgressions; Radclyffe Hall's and Virginia Woolf's ambivalent sexual subjects occupy central place in their respective fictions; and E.M. Forster's novels, which undoubtedly foreground sexuality in relation to Englishness

and empire, are also subject to self-censorship (the 'homosexual novel' *Maurice* remained unpublished until the later part of the twentieth century (1971)). In the United States, Walt Whitman's poetry figured the nation and sexuality in terms which connected desire with materiality and the body; and despite the myths of silence, invisibility, and isolation attached to the homosexual closet, black lesbians and gay men were crucial in the literary revival associated with the Harlem Renaissance at the beginning of the twentieth century. More generally, the fiction of J.R. Ackerley, Willa Cather, Colette, Noel Coward, T.E. Lawrence, Thomas Mann, Marcel Proust, and Christa Winsloe imagines eroticism and desire in ways which complicate the binary model of sexuality which was being adopted in legal, medical, and psychiatric journals (Waugh 2006: 429). On a deeper level, the issue of speaking frankly about sexuality particularly one's own sexuality is a means towards one's freedom. Yet speaking of sex is not the same as speaking of sexuality or transgressive desires. According to Jonathan Weinberg 'The transgressive, like the closet itself, is not a universal state, but a matter of multiple positionings. There are as many kinds of closets as there are lesbian and gay lives' (1996: 14). Amidst this swing of human inquiry and explanations resides the deep human desire to define and articulate the sociological assumptions and perspectives in generating a collective obsession with identity. The basic questions as to who am I? Who are you? How are we different? How are we same? There are often social labels attached to certain human characteristics that have received attention to such an extent that they inherently became known by socially imbued labels such as unnatural, immoral, inferior, contemptible and savage. In contemporary academic parlance transgressive desires and its meaning are like socio-culturally inscribed markers and boundaries of who 'I' am. It can be as simple as one's eye colour or hair colour but depending on the cultural context such expressions or desires may have attendant cultural mores, taboos and prejudices established as a means to police and regulate them. Sexual desires and identity require some form of

definable outward expression. Since witnessing explicit displays of homosexual intimacy is not possible in all cultures and times it is often confused or intermingled with other culturally inscribed activities like the effeminate male, who is often labelled gay, irrespective of his sexual activities. No matter how sexuality and gender are expressed in any given cultural setting they are rendered meaningful only through social and cultural practices.

The nature of transgressive desires and the issue of identity can be better understood by looking into Foucault work. Foucault's work is important because it proposes that sexuality is not simply the natural expression of some inner drive or desire The discourses of sexuality concern the operation of power in human relationships as much as they govern the production of a personal identity. By stressing the ways in which sexuality is written in or on the body and in showing how the homosexual is forced into cultural (in)visibility. Foucault begins to dismantle the notion that sexuality is a transparent fact of life. Criticism dealing with the representations of sexualities in literary and cultural texts highlights two overlapping areas of concern and investigation. 'First, there has been wide-ranging debate about the causes of sexuality, centred particularly on the controversies broadly grouped as essentialism and social construction. Sigmund Freud's insistence on drive over instinct, and on the operation of the psyche rather than biology, did not prevent the deployment of psycho-analysis in broadly essentialist accounts of human sexuality. Indeed, sexual essentialism in one form or another is alive and well, and forms part of a continuing debate concerning the causes or nature of sex and sexuality. Secondly, critical output has re-conceptualised sexuality in relation to on-going debates concerning subjectivity and identity' (Waugh 2006: 436). While Foucault's work sought to critique identity, theories of sexual identity in lesbian and gay studies, alongside the sexualisation of identity politics, have been key features in shaping and giving structure to queer cultures for the past thirty years.

Essentialists usually maintain that a person's sexual identity is biologically determined and objective, something which is free of the determinations of culture and texts. Constructionists argue that identity is culturally and historically specific, grounded in contingencies that make such an identity relational and non-objective. The essentialist-constructionist divide set the scene for much of the work in sexuality studies. Two of the most significant contributors to the essentialist-constructionist divide are John Boswell and Jeffrey Weeks. Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (1980) came to represent the realist-essentialist problematic. His work argued one key premise: that a 'gay identity' and 'gay people' can be found throughout history. On the other hand, Weeks's output, including his early *Coming Out* (1977) as well as his more recent *Invented Moralities* (1995) proposes that all sexual identities are socially and culturally specific. According to Carole Vance, social construction theory grants sexual acts, identities and even desire by cultural and historical factors. Judith Butler equates identity with sex, gender and parenthood. According to her, identity is assured through the stabilising concepts of sex, gender and sexuality confirming to the cultural emergence of gendered beings that conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined. Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) has dealt with the notions of subjectivity, developing and drawing on post-structuralist theorisations of the subject. For literary theorist Lee Edelman, sexual identity is constituted through rhetorical and psychological operations, determined by the figures and tropes in which sexuality and its discourses are culturally constructed. Similarly Eve Kosofsky's*The Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) offers a reading of homosexual identity in literary texts which is indebted to Foucault's and Derrida's trajectories. Rather than a history of changing attitudes towards an unchanging homosexuality, Sedgwick contends that much of twentieth century discourse has been informed by a straight forward homo/heterosexual binary definition in which there is a powerful anti-homosexual bias. This straight forward

binary division of sexualities is part of an oppressive sexual system which is fraught with repeated decentrings and exposures. Finally, the work of New Historicists and Cultural Materialists views sexual subjectivity in terms of the contexts, language and texts in which sexuality takes shape. For Alan Sinfield, a 'gay identity' has for a long time always been in the process of being put together or constituted. In its advocacy of a 'post-gay' identity, Sinfield's*Gay and After* (1998) argues that there is a need to recognise that, for all 'our anti-essentialist theory', lesbians and gay men in the recent past may have imagined sexuality to be 'less-diverse' and 'less-mobile' than it actually is. Theories of sexual identity in lesbian and gay studies, alongside the sexualisation of identity politics have been key features of queer cultures. Epstein (1987) and Seidman (1993) argues that a good deal of social constructionist studies through the early 1980's sought to explain the origin, social meaning, and changing forms of the modern homosexual. Instead of asserting the homosexual as a natural fact made into a political minority by social prejudice, constructionist traced the social factors that produced a homosexual subject or identity, which functioned as the foundation for the building of a minority, ethnic-like community and politics (cited in Seidman 1994: 171). Both Hollinghurst and Selvadurai in their works have tried to capture and maintain the identities of their characters as socially and culturally specific. Apart from the repressive forces their characters have pulled together different issues about their own self in relation to social integration, sexual relations and their gayness. According to Crimp, identities are constituted in relation to each other, but they are also constituted through political identifications which constantly reconfigure those identities (cited in Bower 1994: 1030).

Characters like Balendran, Bill and James are assertive, dominant and self-confident yet needing emotional nurturing and comfort with their sexual behaviour since they suffer from internalised homophobia expressing discomfort being associated with the social label of being gay. Nick, Will and Arjie can be considered as emotionally detached, supporting

friendship and sexually comfortable in being gay. Yet, though they are an easy going group, they are mostly androgynous – having both male and female characteristics with weak traditional and emotional relatives resulting in general sense of loneliness to address the issue of homosexuality for general welfare. Justin, Robin, Alex and Danny reflect a gay culture of festivals, night club, resorts, drugs and gay social and therapeutic activities. Their lifestyle is an advertisement package to gay identified cultural events and gay affirming activities – an outlet seeking to carve out an identity through such activities. Identity politics is a positive terrain of sexuality in the works of Hollinghurst and Selvadurai. Identities in their works offer a sense of agency at the same time they show their arbitrariness. They are about becoming rather than being. They are a means of realising human diversity and of achieving progressive individualism. It can also be seen as Ken Plummer has suggested the proliferation of new sexual stories (Foucault 1976: 192). As such, sexual identity in their works act as relay points for a dense network of interconnected differences that involve gender, race, nationality and age. Through their works perverse sexual identities, in particular, breach boundaries, subvert good order, reveal the worm of transgression at the heart of the normal, and thereby warn us that even the strongest identities are figments of our imagination – which can make them more, not less, potent.

5.2 Social and Cultural Restrictions

Sexuality has always been an arena for moral and cultural conflict, but increasingly in contemporary societies it is a central issue in mainstream debates on civic values and citizenship. Questions about who we are; what we need and desire, and how we should live are, to a striking degree, also debates about sexuality. The usefulness of seeing sexuality as shaped in culture is that it allows us to recognise the contingency and the arbitrariness of our own social arrangements. Culture in Foucault's writings, is understood in terms of the inter-operation of knowledge, power and discourse. One of the principal objectives in Foucault's

work, and one which makes it distinctly anti-psychoanalytic in tone and method, is the analysis of a certain form of knowledge regarding sex, not in terms of repression or law, but in terms of power. Power is not a group of institutions or mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state. Power is exercised 'from innumerable points', power relations are concerned with prohibition, but 'have a directly productive role'; and there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between the rulers and ruled at the root of power relations. Sexuality, tied by Foucault to the joint operation of knowledge and power in discourse, is not a drive or oceanic force which, subject to the dictates of either the id or the unconscious, overwhelms the subject nor are society's institutions quite the repressing top-down force implied in 'civilization and its discontents'. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's claim in the *Epistemology of the Closet* of thought and knowledge in the twentieth-century Western culture as structured by crisis of homo/heterosexual definitionreveals the signs of what Adrienne Rich called 'compulsory heterosexuality'. The presence of homosexuality in society/culture and the hope for the visible absence of oppression, prejudice and inhospitality with regards to sexual orientation is a mystery that can be taken as a closet which needs to be opened not just in terms of what it hides and reveals but as an acknowledgement of its presence unmasking institutional power, its past and present, its humour and mystery helping us tounderstand the world in all its queerness.

5.2.1 Family, Marriage and Tradition

In a world where traditional sources of authority, such as religion, family, marriage and tradition are intensely powerful and where heightened individualism is increasingly the norm, it is difficult to see whether there will ever be a fixed set of values to which everyone would adhere to. The usefulness of seeing sexuality as shaped in culture requires a shift in our thinking about morality – a shift from a morality of acts, which locates truth and rightness

or wrongdoing in particular practices and in the expression of certain desires, towards an ethics of relationships.

Balendran in *Cinnamon Gardens* by Selvadurai is a character who struggles with his identity and his homosexuality against the strictures of family, marriage and tradition, while conforming to social and cultural expectations he enters into a sexually unfulfilling marriage, and reveals himself as a decent but weak individual, racked by the guilt he feels for neglecting his wife and for having betrayed his feelings for Richard. But by the end of the novel, however, Balendran is able to see through the hypocrisies and deceits of his society and, though remaining bound by his marriage and family, acknowledges his love for Richard. Selvadurai through the character of Balendran tries to decide the practices of freedom through which we could determine what sexual pleasure is and what are our loving, passionate relationship with others. According to Foucault, 'The practices of freedom are what people try to make of themselves when they experience the existence of freedom in the history that has formed them' (Selvadurai 1998: 201).

Selvadurai's remarkable gift for analysing and describing people is very neatly portrayed in all his works. As a gay, he is himself in many ways reflected in his characters and this merger leads to more natural representations of their passage towards their own self as a homosexuals. There is an invisible bond between himself and Balendran, a married gay man in his forties battling to live in a repressed, conformist, colonial society. In his own words, Selvadurai states that 'As a gay man you can imagine that that phantom figure always walks, step by step, with me. Perhaps I would have married and perhaps I would have been like Balendran while I didn't intend this as I was writing the novel, in retrospect I think that he is that phantom person, that other me' (Waters 1998: 1). Selvadurai's novels portray rigidities at different levels, chafing through the themes of traditional restrictions, political tensions, class oppression and gender orientation. Repressed desires of characters struggling

through the conflicts with family members and social mores in the society they live in. His novels are a constant reminder of the price that a non-conformist has to pay rebelling against conformity – emotionally and socially. Arjie in *Funny Boy* is unaware of gender construction in the beginning as he loves to play with saris and kohl till family and friends one by one make him understand the fact that being 'funny' is unaccepted and wrong. As a child and a young adult Arjie displays 'certain tendencies' (Selvadurai 1994: 162) which makes his father unsettled calling Arjie 'funny' in defying accepted norms of the ways men and women are expected to behave. With fourteen cousins, Arjie in *Funny Boy* learns about territoriality and leadership. Through these he also learns about gender. During spent-the-days at their grandparents' house the boy cousins dominate the front garden, the road, and the field for playing cricket. The girls belong to the back garden and kitchen porch. Arjie gravitates naturally towards the back garden where the girls play games of imagination. He does not comprehend why no one thinks it strange that his female cousin Meena can play cricket with the boys, but he is restricted to play bride-bride. when 'the pleasure the boys had standing for hours on a cricket field under the swelling sun, watching the batsmen run from crease to crease was incomprehensible to him (Selvadurai 1994:3-4). Arjie is often times called a 'pansy', a 'faggot' and a 'sissy' by her female cousin Tanuja. The other cousins know that these words are insults, but they do not understand their meanings or their significance. The adults in *Funny Boy* mostly belong to an older, more conservative generation that attempts to fit Arjie into society's norms. Daryl uncle an old friend of Arjie's aunt is the first adult that Arjie comes across, who is open on the matters of gender. Arjie instantly takes a liking for this uncle and feels comfortable and natural around him. Daryl Uncle does not consider *Little Women* a girl's book, and he even buys Arjie the rest of the series. Arjie in the novel is surprised to learn that *Little Women* used to be one of Daryl uncle's favourite books because his father always frowned on reading as a feminine pastime. As Arjie grows older, his eyes

open to things that would have previously gone over his head, such as civil strife and culturally appropriate gender roles. His love for romance only serves to make these things more clear, as they disrupt the idealisations that he holds dear. Selvadurai in the novel lets Arjie the character grapple with family conflict, political realities, racial hatred and his own sexual identity. In a family where men, including his father, are distant and business-like, a capacity for intimacy and an appreciation of beauty are looked down as feminine attributes. And though he hates sports and enjoys wearing his aunt's jewellery, it is not long before members' of his own family try to force him to take up more masculine pursuits. Exiled from the 'free play of fantasy' he was allowed in the girls' world, and unable to reconcile himself to the rough-and-tumble world of the boys, Arjie becomes aware of the unstated constrictions that are a way of life in his family and his culture. These broken ideals usher out the era of his childhood and prepare him for the tumultuous events of his later life and an identity that has developed based on acts that were natural to him. Selvadurai tries to weave in certain processes of political transformation and cultural identification enabling culturally transgressive moves by facilitating the formation of communities dedicated to new styles of politics through the character of Arjie. The privilege to supress and protect the body and to work for a queer identity is one central feature in Arjie that unsettles societal and familial assumptions that sexual identities, including heterosexuality are stable.

Another character of Selvadurai who has to constantly discover and find himself is Amrith in *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea*. The difficulties he had to endure from his own friends like SurajWanigasekera who continuously embarrass him over his growing friendship with Niresh. Selvadurai explores and projects the feelings of a young adult growing into homosexuality and the constant tension that Amrith experiences in the sea of his life. As he passed into his teenage years, Amrith felt that his mind was separating more and more from his body, causing him to grow more detached within himself. Selvadurai aims to portray the

deception and hypocrisy of social restrictions that limit and curtail many tendencies that are outside the confines of culture and tradition. As Amrith becomes aware of his tendencies,

> He did not know what to do about this thing within him, where to turn, who to appeal to for comfort. He felt the burden of his silence choking him (Selvadurai 2005: 204).

Amrith knew that the rumours about Lucien Lindamulage were true but having lived a sheltered life, Amrith does not understand what the gossip is about and becomes more confused as his feelings for Niresh strengthen. He wondered about himself and the feelings he was beginning to have for his cousin Niresh and the immensity of the problem he had in hand in relation to having it exposed to his family. The dangers of being a gay in a culture that traditionally considered it illegal and sinful. Amrith battles with this personal and intensely acute emotion all alone. Submerged in pain and isolation Amrith, realises that despite the odd manner and scandal surrounding Lucien Lindamulage, he 'felt that he could simply be himself around Lucien Lindamulage' (Selvadurai 2005:59). Amrith's journey to being gay and its acceptance is a personal journey. Amrith's parents had died when he was six. He was adopted by his mother's friend and Amrith has not yet come to terms with his parents' death and the possibility of his adoptive parents' involvement. The novel explores both the good and bad aspects of family: love and trust, inherited traits and feuds. Amrith's parent's marriage was not approved by either of their families, so when his parents died in a motorcycle accident, Amrith's remaining blood relatives refuse to have anything with him. Amrithis terribly torn in this struggle as he is the unwanted, different product of his parents. He struggles in reconciling his feelings about his dead parents and the trouble in their families, and also with his adoptive parents and sisters, who he both loves and hates. The novel exposes the effects a feud can have on life and in Amrith's case even more because of the fact that he is gay in a culture and a family that would exclude him again for this reason. Amrith's past is complicated and he does not even understand his present, He is torn apart as

he swims and struggles in the monsoon sea of his life with his friendship and feelings for Niresh and his relationship with his family, his adoptive parents and sisters. When Niresh reveals that the rosy picture he has painted of life in Canada has been a lie, plot secrets begin to surface, family feuds form the background to current tensions, largely to do with the jealousy over the attentions of Niresh. Amrith becomes aware of his own homosexuality even more clearly as this tension comes to climax in a swim in the monsoon sea, in which Amrith nearly drowns Mala and himself as he quarrels with Mala over her growing friendship with Niresh. The world that Amrith finds himself in is emotionally driven as he is torn apart, through his love for Niresh, mourning for his parents and his love of acting and how he must find a way to put himself back together. Amidst the conflicts of tradition, family and cultural restrictions Amrith finds liberation within his own self and through the liberating love of his mother which acts beyond the restrictions and limitations of time, culture and social boundaries.

Rigidity is everywhere around Annalukshmi, another character that rejects stifling social pressures in *Cinnamon Gardens*. Annalukshmi, an educated, independent, new woman, prefers teaching in a mission school and resents her father's plans to arrange her marriage. She defies family pressure to accept an arranged marriage and is a freethinking woman. As Selvadurai asserts 'Annalukshmi was not going to let herself be stopped by the ridiculous conventions of society. She convinced herself that it was only fear of societal censure that made her mother forbid her … After all, when they were girls in Malaya, her mother had not protested when her father had taught her to ride her cousin's bicycle' (Selvadurai 1998: 9). Selvadurai's remarkable gift of analysing and describing people through the conflicts of time and culture can be seen in the character of Annalukshmi. Her sisters Kumudini and Manohari do not share her odd ideas and there is the lingering presence of the high-strung, critical Phelomena aunty who constantly adds fuel to the fire. Her mother Louisa, herself was a

victim of a tumultuous marriage who tries to protect the interests of her daughters even as she has to constantly worry about getting them the 'right' husbands. She knows that in all these reputation plays a major role and even mild gossip can harm their matrimonial prospects. Annalukshmi'slonging for independence as well as her conflict at the thought of giving up the chance for marriage and children, is a strong and courageous act for her time. The time of 1920's in Ceylon, against the backdrop of the ending of British rule, when slight traces of female emancipation was beginning, where she decides to go against her family and tradition to discover her own love and sympathy for the working people of Ceylon.

Hollinghurst in *The Line of Beauty*, depicts the irony of a gay marriage set up that brings into question the larger fantasies of a ruthless tradition. Wani's mother, Monique Quradi, hires a fiancée for Wani to put up a show that his son is straight and normal. When Wani tells Nick that Martine, his fiancée has always been paid by his mother, or rather kept by his mother for him, Nick wonders how little he knows about Lebanese customs and glances at the house to notice the black front door, the veiled windows, the absolute discretion and exclaims, 'What a charming arrangement, to keep your son's girlfriend … For god's sake, murmured Wani, looking away. 'She was never my girlfriend' … Of course you must never tell papa. It's his last illusion' (Hollinghurst 2004: 441). Wani Quradi remains closeted till the end of the novel. Nick is not aware of running risks with Wani but is a keen observer of the privileged social groupings that handicaps their relationship. Witty observations about politics, society and family open like revelations for Nick who is highly conscious of his gayness. These observations curtail and navigate Nick's personal and sexual politics as a gay living with non-gays and as a homosexual living in a world that does not engage with his homosexuality. Will in *The Swimming Pool Library* as he goes to the opera with James and his grandfather becomes aware of the hatred and the contempt his grandfather has for homosexuals and how he makes fun of their gayness. His grandfather belonged to a

culture that disliked, tortured and harassed homosexuals and this dislike reminds Will that he would have to take it for himself and all the gays through life, wanting either to forget it or to disprove it. Both Hollinghurst and Selvadurai reflect on the attendant clashes that family, culture and tradition posits on their characters and their choices in their writings. They also genuinely suggest how the themes of high-society morality in novels like *Funny Boy, Cinnamon Gardens, The Line of Beauty and The Swimming Pool Library*reflect the hypocrisy of the parodies of interclass interactions and the prejudices of politically progressive families.

5.2.2 Cultural Norms, Gender Orientations and Society

'The world is queer, because it is known only through representations that are fragmentary and in themselves queer. Their meanings are always relative, a matter of relationships and constructions. In contradiction, to its title the series seems to say that things themselves are not queer, rather what is queer is the certainty by which we label things normal and abnormal, decent and obscene, gay and straight'(Weinberg 1996: 11). The novels of Hollinghurst and Selvadurai tries to investigate the mechanism by which a society claims to know gender and sexuality. The struggle of the spirit against oppression – of class, gender and sexual orientation is at the heart of both Hollinghurst's and Selvadurai's novels. Their characters are manifested in depicting the nostalgic regret and the repressed desire of this oppression and conflict.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* begins with the claim that 'the major nodes of thought and knowledge in the twentieth-century Western culture as a whole are structured…by a chronic, new endemic crisis of homo/heterosexual definition' (Sedgwick 1990: 1). The fact which potentially shifts the emphasis that specific acts and identities can be looked at through myriad ways in which gender organises and disorganises society. One of the most obvious differences that Hollinghurst and Selvadurai in terms of position tries to bring out through their works is the presence and absence of gay men in visual culture and its

impact on societal concerns with regards to gender issues. The ironies of certain characters that are suppressed of the gay content within the discipline of cultural and societal norms are symbolically often times taken as a closet that needs to be opened. They are also treated as mysteries that needs to be solved or as a kind of a mask, behind which is the essential identity of gender orientation. Both Hollinghurst and Selvadurai attempts at interpreting these mysteries in the form of interpreting codes and exploring the ways in which these codes can define culture, society and gender orientation.

The character of Lucien in *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* is exemplified to highlight the societal and cultural attitude towards people with different sexual orientations. Amrith had once overheard Uncle Lucky warning his aunt that Lucien Lindamulage should leave his secretaries at home when they went on business. Amrith heard his aunt getting furious with her husband for believing such rumours. Yet, from the heat of her anger, Amrith felt that his aunt knew that the rumours were true and that she was deeply saddened and troubled by whatever her friend did. Selvadurai engages the character of Lucien Lindamulage in *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* to highlight social scandal and hypocrisy that results from being a homosexual in a society that did not even dare to talk about it openly. The term 'Ponnaya' which was used to describe Lucien's odd character by the boys in Amrith's school because of his secretaries and his odd relation with them sent chills down the spine of Amrith as he realised that it disparaged him as a man.

> There was something scandalous about Lucien Lindamulage that Amrith did not understand. It had to do with his constant round of young male secretaries. Amrith had once overheard Uncle Lucky warning his wife that Lucien Lindamulage should leave his secretaries at home when they went on business outstation; that what the old man did was illegal and he could end up getting arrested. Aunty Bundle had been furious at her husband for believing such rumours. Yet, from the heat of her anger, Amrith felt she knew the

> rumours were true and was deeply saddened and troubled by whatever it was her friend did (Selvadurai 2005: 59).

Amrith realises that Lucien is different and becomes aware that it is unaccepted in their culture as he looks at him when they come down to the courtyard,

> Lucien Lindamulage's secretary was waiting for him – a young man in his mid-twenties with an olive skin, glossy black hair, and full lips. As Amrith looked at him, he remembered how he had once heard boys in his school mention Lucien Lindamulage's secretaries and refer to the old man as a 'ponnaya' – a word whose precise meaning Amrith did not understand, though he knew it disparaged the masculinity of another man, reducing him to the level of a woman (Selvadurai 2005: 60).

The best exploration of repression of homosexual tendencies can be seen in *Funny Boy* during the game of bride-bride when Her Fatness says, 'A Bride is a girl, not a boy' (Selvadurai 1994: 11) and openly calls Arjie 'A Faggot' and 'A Sissy'. As Arjie is caught as bride in the bride-bride game he is taken to the drawing room by his aunt and exposed shamelessly for crossing over.

> The other aunts and uncles looked up from their papers or bestirred themselves from their sleep. They gazed at me in amazement as if I had suddenly made myself visible, like a spirit. I glanced at them and then at Amma's face. Seeing her expression, I felt my dread deepen. I lowered my eyes. The sari suddenly felt suffocating around my body, and the hair pins that held the veil in place pricked at my scalp (Selvadurai 1994: 13).

Amrith in *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* experiences the same unease and un-comfortableness with his drama teacher.

> Amrith felt curiously uneasy around madam. She had a way of looking at him as if she saw right into his soul and understood something about him that he did not understand about himself. And what he saw made her more kind to him, more gentle. She never joked or

> teased him, or used her wit against him. And yet, her gentleness made him all the more uncomfortable (Selvadurai 2005: 45).

To be gay in Asia in the early 1980's was no joke, Selvadurai through his characters reveal the prejudices and the difficulties every character has to go through to find his true self in a land where choices are submerged under the pressure of family, tradition, society and culture. Selvadurai through his novels has not only evoked a trend of addressing weighty issues, but has created a forum in which the discussion of homosexuality finds a way into social discourse. Selvadurai manages to critique through his novels the foolishness behind the prejudices of his characters while acknowledging the great difficulties facing anyone who attempts simply to shrug off the demands of their culture. His characters are constantly being confronted with choices, and none of them is simple. He acknowledges the difficulties and does not shrink from the fact that sometimes cultural repression is, in the immediate vision, insurmountable. Selvadurai almost invisibly links the small unknown individual with faceless society, and portrays a nation on the verge of a great change.

Alan Hollinghurst combines his thematic concerns to the socio-cultural context within which his novels and characters are merged. Hollinghurst presents richly developed portraits of the ways in which sexuality, culture, race and history enter into complex relationships. He sums up deep psychological and social satire by mixing gay men at different social levels and positions. Nick is typical of the young men who populate Hollinghurst's novels. Nick, the protagonist in *The Line of Beauty* is uncomfortable with the Feddens about his relationship with Leo, a black office worker. The relationship is a sexual education that teaches Nick the risks and rituals of homosexuality and the ordeals of passion. Yet, the truth was he did not have the courage to tell them as he thought that they would consider it vulgar and unsafe. Nick also never

talked to Catherine about his crush on her brother Toby. He was afraid she would find it funny. Nick delights in keeping certain geometries of his emotions secretive as allusive cultural discretions. This social criticism is important to Hollinghurst's art as he tries to portray the fathoms of male sexuality by combining it with an unsentimental moral intelligence highlighting the social, cultural fatuities of living. The novel also highlights a shivering yet morally exacting satire on the incident of Hector Maltby, a junior minister in the foreign office, who had been caught with a rent boy in his Jaguar at Jack Straw Castle, one of the highest pubs in London. Hollinghurst mentions the allergic reaction it brings amidst the people gathered for a party at the Feddens as the news of his resignation and the end of his marriage gets discussed. Nick immediately feels self-conscious and starts blushing as if he had been caught in the Jaguar himself.

> It was often like this when the homosexual subject came up, and even in the Feddens' tolerant kitchen he stiffened in apprehension about what might carelessly be said – some indirect insult to swallow, a joke to be weakly smiled at. (Hollinghurst 2004:24).

The Folding star has issues with the homosexual subject as the protagonist Edward Manners keeps shifting his passions between himself and his lovers. Edward Manners a sentimentally detached man is a private language tutor who experiences hypnotic fantasy with one of his pupils Luc. The fantasy quickly becomes a morbid infatuation that manifests into adoration. Edward seems to be at emotional crossroads as he often smiles at his own sense of anticipation, of being poised for change. He feels empty and aches for his pupil at times. The boy Luc affects him so much that he suffers without feeling afflicted. The novel has been described as a 'homosexual *Lolita*' by the New York Review of Books, as Hollinghurst combines lust, obsession, desires with poetry and sensitivity. Yet Edward Manners lives among many gay men not only in the regard of the longing for a relationship but also in the sense of the nervousness, excitement, sensuality

and anxiety that affects gay men with issues of having a committed relationship with one person, the minimal trust of two people pleasuring themselves together without much grasp of understanding cultural vulnerabilities. His character exquisitely depicts the nuances of affection, the anticipation for intimacy, and the desire of fulfilment of unconditional needs. The novel's stream of consciousness illusions are manifested and merged with Edwards despair over unfulfilled love that is often consciously mirrored as dirty or illegal. The novel redefines love triangles and its social positions and the problems that Edward deals with as a homosexual teacher. He felt 'half master and half victim' (Hollinghurst 1994: 28). The mixed feelings of anxious longing and fear of commitment constitute the social and cultural restrictions that forces Edward to keep his affection at bay secretly longing for the intimate companionship of a man. Edward Manners always finds himself marvelling at how his sudden burst of feeling has wrong-footed him. He leaves his home and family, Belgium 'a kingdom of ruins and vanished pleasures' (Hollinghurst 1994: 392) to escape the constraints of transgressive anxieties and desires only to find himself trapped by his emotions. Edward lives in a vessel of loneliness and independence as a lover and a teacher pinned and stifled with rules in a social sphere that redefines what it means to be gay.

William Beckwith in *The Swimming Pool Library* is highly privileged, cultivated and a promiscuous young gay man. The grandson and heir of Viscount Beckwith, Will in his own words says, 'I belonged to that tiny proportion of the populace that indeed owns almost everything' (Hollinghurst 1989: 6). Yet Will in the novel encounters and experiences gay bashing from a group of skinheads who take his watch and the Firbank novel as he returns home after visiting Arthur who lives in a working class area of London. Sedgwick terms homosexual panic and gay bashing as bias-related and hate-related crimes against homosexuals, 'The forensic use of the 'homosexual panic' defense

for gay-bashers depends on the medically mediated ability of the phrase to obscure an overlap between individual pathology and systemic functions' (Sedgwick 1990:21). All these directly and indirectly suggest the homophobic attitude of society and people towards gays both in the past and in the present that repress and negate any sexual energy outside the social norms. Hollinghurst also writes about an unpleasant encounter that Will has with a working class boy, who offers him sex for money. Will refuses but there are undertones of fear and violence. Through Staines, a gay photographer Will learns that Nantwich's brother was beaten to death for being a homosexual. Nantwich's diaries reveal stories about different gender orientations that alienate gays from the hetero world. Charles describes a North African man trying to covertly sell gay pornography as he is fearful and scared to be cast out from his community. The novel also mentions about Will's best friend James who lives the life of a repressed gay. James is a hard-working doctor who is insecure and sexually frustrated as a gay man.

> He was so lovable, shy, manly, I couldn't see why he wasn't adored more, or more often. Yet if I couldn't do it there might be a reason others couldn't: he didn't project sex enough, he was too subtle a taste for the instant world of clubs and bars' (Hollinghurst 1998: 25).

The Swimming Pool Library as a novel talks extensively about repression and homophobia that culture and society in the past and in the present have continued to affect the lives of gay men. Will, Charles, James, Bill, Staines, Phil and Gabriel are all affected in turns, some brutally and others less. Hollinghurst through his characters raises many complex issues around class, sexuality and indulgence. He blends in issues and tales of modern transgressions with the treatment of minority groups in England. The details of how other are the gays in the social, cultural sense and how fascinating is the conception of this other in the light of privileges and security is graphically and historically captured by Hollinghurst.He vacillates between the social and the moral with

an almost animalistic sense of depravity intertwining the dark erotic world of gay fantasies and the solid intellectual stimulation of art and history. Culture and society have certain phenotypic expressions with attendant cultural mores, taboos and prejudices established as a means to police and regulate sexualities that have ambiguous characteristics. Yet the science of life and the scientific studies on queer genes and brains are attempting to justify one's sexual identity. The increasing necessity to analyse and assess exactly how bodies are defined as different and queer, whether they are related to sexuality, and how sexuality is defined has become an important site of contest. Both Hollinghurst and Selvadurai in order to express the needs and desires of homosexuals and to retain humanity and dignity within their cultural contexts, raise issues related to biological and cultural reproductions of processes in arenas that highlight sameness and difference, so that a reductionist understanding of the queer body does not produce the demise of queer bodies and their attendant biological and cultural heritage.

5.3 Political and State Institutional Forces

The understanding of who is a heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual or some other hybrid is a complex sociocultural discourse inscribed by markers and boundaries since sexuality is often policed by institutions such as government, insurance companies, courts and churches and even work places. Thus, the truth of the body is seen as an invaluable means to justify one's existence and right to equality, a test to determine a person's real self and imbue cultural and social meaning which sanctions homosexuality or any other alternative sexuality. Hollinghurst's novels also bring out a number of repressive forces that serve to curtail homosexual tendencies and also to limit and expose actions and acts that are beyond the framework of gendered norms. His novels highlight different agencies ranging from policy makers, politicians, law makers, police and the social elites who demean

homosexuals and homosexuality as deviant and an aberrant category of beings who need medical help or legal punishments to repress desires that are unaccepted and sinful.

5.3.1 State and State Institutions – Politicians, Policy Makers, Law Makers, Police Authorities and Social Elites

Attitudes towards same-sex relationships, reflected in the general population, the state and the church have varied over the centuries and from place to place. From acceptance to rejection and from expecting queers to engage in relationships, to casual integration, to seeing the practice as a minor sin, to repressing it through law enforcement and judicial mechanisms, to prescribing it under the penalty of death. Modern laws in most developed countries accept same-sex relationships and are accorded legal protection. Many government organisations have established formal structures for confirming legal relationships between people of the same-sex. Yet in many cultures it is still considered unnatural, a perversion outlawed and in Muslim nations it remains a capital crime. During the early 14th century, accusations of homosexual behaviour were instrumental in disbanding the Knights Templar under Philip IV of France. Nazi Germany's treatment of homosexuality was based on the understanding that homosexuality was a threat to masculinity and was seen as contaminating the Aryan race. In the 1950s, politicians in the United States tried to discredit Senator Joseph McCarthy by accusing one of his aides of being a homosexual. In January 2001, 6000 books on homoerotic poetry of the 8th century Persian Arab poet Abu Nuwas was burnt by the Egyptian ministry of culture to placate Islamic fundamentalists.

In Ancient societies in Greece and Japan, strong bonds between men were fostered who served in the military. These societies believed that a man who loved another man that stood beside him would fight harder and with greater morale. A classic example of such a military force is built in the formation of the Sacred Band of Thebes. A classic work of

Middle Eastern literature called *The Book of One Thousand and One Nights* or *Arabian Nights* is believed to have documented several accounts of intimate relationships between men in the military. A lot of art work that has survived from this period document relationships between men and boys in both cultures.

But during the middle Ages, the adoption of Christianity by the Roman Emperor Constantine in the 4th century and the eventual fall of the Roman Empire led to a decline in the prevalence of homosexual behaviour in military forces. By the time of the Crusades, the militaries of Europe had largely switched gears believing that homosexuality was sinful and therefore, had no place in an army that served their perception of God's will. The Knights Templar under Phillip IV of France, a prominent military order, was destroyed by accusations of sodomy. In modern times, modern laws have brought about a fundamental shift in the acceptance and tolerance of homosexual behaviour. Europe and North America have seen a growing acceptance of homosexuality as a result of modern liberalism and the Gay Liberation movement. Yet by contrast many Middle Eastern and Central Asian countries have gone from tolerance to outright hostility. Attitudes in countries like the United Kingdom and the Netherlands openly accept homosexual individuals into the armed forces and others but the United States and many nations in South America and the Caribbean are either discharging or quieting homosexuals from military services. This strict interpretation is also known as Sharia an Islamic law to remove individuals believed to be homosexuals from their armed forces. They are many times subjected to torture, humiliation, marginalisation and even death penalty. The novels of Hollinghurst and Selvadurai bring to attention the nature of political and state institutional forces that directly and indirectly affect the lives of their characters. From the lives of gay men in the 1920's in London to the romantic disillusions' of contemporary gay men in the novels of Hollinghurst and in the novels of Selvadurai the

experiences of being gay and different in a patriarchal society stifled by tradition and customs.

Lord Charles Nantwich, an 83 year old aristocrat is jailed for being a homosexual in *The Swimming Pool Library* by Hollinghurst. The novel is pervaded with homophobia which is addressed in many forms. Through Nantwich's diary in the novel which is given to William Beckwith, the life of gay men before the Gay Liberation Movement is brought to light. From the moment Will starts reading his journals, new truths and new perspectives are opened up to him. The novel is an honest exposure of gay world before the Second World War when homosexuality was still considered a crime and a sin. The diaries reveal how homosexuals were bashed, tortured, discriminated and even killed by high officials and politicians ruthlessly, trampling a culture that existed outside heterosexuality and the accepted norms of gender.

In Nantwich's own words he expresses the disillusionment he feels in a world where he is negated as a social taboo, a sick sexual being who has to give up his transgressive desires to be considered normal. During his stay in the prison he explains the months in the Scrubs as a kind of desert in time, featureless, blurred, silent and atrocious

> My early days there called on my resilience. It was like being pitched again into the Gothic and arcane world of school, learning again to absorb or deflect the vengeful energies which governed it. But a difference soon emerged, for a while the schoolboys were bound to struggle for supremacy, and in doing so to align themselves with authority, thus becoming educated and socially orthodox at once, we in the prison were joined by our unorthodoxy: we were all social outcasts. The effects of this were often ambiguous. Many of the distinctions of the outside world survived: respect for class, disgust at certain violent or inhuman crimes, and the ostracising of those who had been convicted of them. But at the same time, since we were all criminals, a layer of social pretence had been removed. There

> could be no question of pretending one was not a lover of men; and since many of the inmates of my wing were sex criminals – or 'nonces' in the nonce-word of the place – there was between us a curiously sustaining mood of sympathy and understanding (Hollinghurst 1988: 295-96).

The character of Bill in *The Swimming Pool Library* clearly evokes the fear of policemen and authority. Bill is a weightlifter, a large muscular man who coaches teenage boxers. Trapped inside his body, Bill seems a fearful man. He is devoted to Nantwich, his patron, and to the boys he coaches.

> Bill and I became great friends, and he, who was regarded as a kind of mascot by many of his fellows, and entrusted with secrets in the way that one might pour out one's feelings to one's dog or cat, knew a great deal about almost everybody, and seemed to feel keenly their various trials and tragedies. He pointed out to me a number of relationships between the men, confirmed my suspicious interpretations of odd gestures and habits, and revealed what was fairly a structure of submerged bonds and loyalties (Hollinghurst 1988: 298).

We meet another character, Charles's brother, a homosexual who exploited his servants and was subsequently beaten to death for being a homosexual. The novel from one angle explores modern gay culture, with its pubs, clubs and swimming pools exposing new independence and identity assertion but at the same time there are repressive forces of the past which Hollinghurst presents through the diaries of Nantwich in *The Swimming Pool Library* that highlight the dangers and the risks associated with being a homosexual before the Stonewall Era. Yet, even after decades of fighting for sexual freedom and homosexual persecution there are characters like Nick and James who still feel alienated and discriminated in the passage to assert an identity of their own. In Will's own words he says 'And then what the hell had James done? Though he had his mischievous side he was a conscientiously good citizen. He parked on yellow lines, but he always displaced his 'Doctor

on Call' sticker' (Hollinghurst 1988: 251). James's house was a neat comfortable flat with a mood of transience and fine living Will remarks that even in his own house James would nicely tuck away certain magazines of the Third World Press on black homosexuals which might have an exploitive urge. Will gets a telephone call from James; he tells Will that he has been arrested while seeking sex, this is ironic since James's sex-life is non-eventful compared to Will's. It appears to be a case of police-entrapment, with an undercover officer soliciting sex from homosexual men. Another instance that Charles talks about in the novel is the sense of devotion that homosexuality can foster between men and how that devotion aids duty and right action when in a circle like a military operation opens a new outlook to view homosexuality from ahomosocial angle. Nick the protagonist in *The Line of Beauty* represents the tension and the realities of gay life against the backdrop of Thatcher – Era England. Nick, who is new to both his sexuality and manners of high society, experiences the dangers and rewards of his own private pursuit of a beautiful identity.

> Nick was confident that none of them knew he was sleeping with the boss, and with ten or more years of practice he could head off almost any train of talk that might end in a thought – provoking blush. Part of him longed for the scandalous acclaim, but Wani exacted total secrecy, and Nick enjoyed keeping secrets (Hollinghurst 2004: 207).

As the boom years of the eighties unfold, Nick, an innocent in the world of politics and money, finds his life altered by the rising fortunes of this glamorous family, the Feddens. His two vividly contrasting love affairs, one with a young black clerk and one with a Lebanese millionaire, harbingers the dangers and rewards of his own private pursuit of identity, a pursuit as compelling to Nick as the desire for power and riches among his friends. The novel navigates the problems of being gay in an era of drugs, AIDS and growing sexual politics. Nick, Wani and Leo - all go through personal and private ups and downs as gays in a straight world where they are snubbed, insulted and ignored.

> Still, they had all the rest, sex, money, power: it was everything they wanted, and it was everything Gerald wanted too. There was a strange concurrence about that. Nick felt his life horribly and needlessly broken open, but with a tiny hard part of himself he observed what was happening with detachment as well as contempt (Hollinghurst 2004: 472).

Hollinghurst points out the vastly disingenuous treatment of homosexuality by politicians, and their demonising attitude towards homosexualities in their talks, policies and political agendas. This social criticism is primary in Hollinghurst's art and he delightfully projects the lubricious fathoms of male sexuality combining it with an unsentimental moral intelligence and the fatuities of fine living as defined by the tenets of politicians and law makers. Gerald, in the novel even after several illuminating conversations with Nick, insists on maintaining the culture of intolerance, and laughs at the idea of equal rights when talking about sexual rights completely destroying any amount of gay self-expression by his self-serving policies.

> Gerald pondered this and then flicked up his eyebrows in sour resignation. The facts of gay life had always been taboo with him: he and Nick had never shared a frank word or knowing joke about them, and this was an odd place to start (Hollinghurst 2004: 479).

When Nick is made to leave the house after the scandalous exposure of their private lives Gerald very neatly projects the difference in the scandals committed by both of them, demeaning one because it is homosexual in nature and justifying the other because it is heterosexual in nature though immoral.

> No, actually, you haven't the faintest … idea what you're talking about!' He stood up convulsively, and then sat down again, with a sort of sneer. 'Do you honestly imagine that your affairs can be talked about in the same terms as mine? – I ask you again, who are you? What … are you doing here? (Hollinghurst 2004: 482).

In *The Folding Star* Hollinghurst exposes us fearlessly to the consequences of unfulfillable, annihilating desire which is objectified in Edward Manners' pursuit of a male Lolita symbolically represented by Luc. The novel does not have much repressive elements, yet, it has repression which is psychologically projected through the unfulfilling attempts of Manners' broken love affair. It delivers the message that the course of true love never runs straight and that it has invisible social laws and forces that annihilate the course of homosexual desires. In his own country Belguim, Edward feels uncomfortable and rejected as he ruminates:

> I felt the poetry of the thing tonight, perched above the breakers and the dim phosphorescence of the returning foam. I knew nothing about this country, to me it was a dream-Belgium, it was Allemonde, a kingdom of ruins and vanished pleasures, miracles and martyrdoms, corners where the light never shone. Not many would recognise it, but some would. I seemed to have lost Luc in it. It was his wildness that had brought me to him and now it had taken him away. I studied my situation with a certain aesthetic amazement (Hollinghurst 1994: 392).

Selvadurai's character Balendran in *Cinnamon Gardens* is the obedient son who hides his homosexuality under a façade of comfort and lies. He belongs to an upper class family of Colombo's wealthy suburbs. As a member of the social elites, Balendran negotiates his homosexuality to the dictates of his father's patriarchal and traditional ways. Balendran is a character that is sympathetically structured and portrayed by Selvadurai as his own phantom self. Balendran in the course of the novel gets tested by a lot of events that question and provoke his sensibility as a gay. The clasps of social and elitist chain that binds and tortures and frequently prick his conscious seasons Balendran to discover his true self. Balendran struggles not because he does not love his wife or father but because he rejects his own self and his sexual nature.

> Love. He rolled the word around in his mind. He knew that his love for Richard was long dead. The passing of twenty years, a wife whom he loved in his own way, and a son, whom the very thought of filled him with happiness, insured that. As for the type of love Richard and he had had, he accepted that it was part of his nature. His disposition, like a harsh word spoken, a cruel act done, was regrettably irreversible. Just something he had learnt to live with, a daily impediment, like a pair of spectacles or a badly set fracture (Selvadurai 1998: 38).

Balendran's character manifests the politics of social and class repressions that authorises his homosexuality and its consequences in a society that practically looks down at it as a disease and as a degrading social behaviour. Arjie in *Funny Boy* is sent to a Victoria Academy to force him to become a man, an institution that caters to elites in the Sri Lankan society. The Queen Victoria Academy serves as a symbol for colonial, aristocratic and middle class privilege – male privilege. This is the tradition Arjie is expected to be part of. Arjie's father institutionalises Arjie thinking that rules and regulations can correct the funny homosexual trait in his son. Indeed Arjie's father tells him that the academy 'will force you to become a man'. Arjie's older brother tells him that their father suspects and fears his homosexuality; his move to the academy is clearly to cure him of the affliction. But Arjie rebels against the institution and the sadistic principal and strikes up an intense friendship with a fellow student who is also rumoured to be gay. As gay men and as gay teenagers the characters of Hollinghurst and Selvadurai continuously live and fight the system that demean, contempt and harass homosexuality and homosexuals. The characters attendant clashes within their own self and with the forces of the social and the political are the main ingredients that fill the lines of their novels. The issue of being liberated in the mind and the areas of life that are manifested in the roots of culture, system and tradition are the questions that Hollinghurst and Selvadurai fight for through their writings.

5.4 Homosexuality, Religious and Sexual Negotiations

Many people who feel attracted to members of their own sex have a so called coming out phase at some point of their lives. It is generally described in two phases. The first phase is the phase of 'knowing oneself', and the realisation or knowledge emerges from the understanding that one is open to same-sex love. This is often described as an internal coming out. The second phase involves one's decision to come out to others, which involves coming out to family, friends and colleagues. Coming out can sometimes lead to a life crises, as gender behaviour is predominantly oriented with culture and legal ideologies. The Supreme Court of Canada, citing the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, has established the legality of same-sex relationship on the basis of human rights, but it is still difficult to change their moral stance on homosexuality. Many people in religious groups recognize homosexuals to choose a same-sex relationship, but also believe that same-sex relationships are incompatible with their chosen religious practices. In psychology it is considered an 'understudied relationship'. Social psychologists J.T. Wood and S.W. Duck (1996) in their book *Understudied Relationships* found that most mainstream research is predisposed towards studying only heterosexuality, implying that same-sex relationships are neglected and ignored by majority of psychologists. Religion and its influence have major implications on the issue of homosexual negotiations. The Roman Catholic Church requires homosexuals to practice chastity in the understanding that homosexual acts are 'intrinsically disordered' and insists on the fact that all are expected to only have heterosexual relations and only in the context of a marriage, describing homosexual tendencies as a trial by stressing that people with such tendencies must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. The church distinguishes between deep-seated homosexual tendencies and those that are only the expression of a transitory problem. The Vatican requires and states that any homosexual tendency or tendencies must be overcome at least three years before ordination to the

diaconate. In the wake of colonialism and imperialism, countries undertaken by the Abrahamic faith and Non-abrahamic religious groups have shown new adopted attitudes which are antagonistic towards homosexuality. Taking an example, when India became part of the British Empire, sodomy laws were introduced; while there was no basis for them in the Hindu faith which led to persecution in society and in religion. This experience was repeated by other Abrahamic religious nations upon their acquisitions by the British Empire. Although Hinduism at present has taken various positions ranging from positive to neutral to antagonistic with regards to homosexuality, these laws have brought it repression in myriad forms with regards to the understanding of a third gender in the legal and institutional sense. Sikhism, another religious sect of India has no written view on the matter, but the Sikh society is generally understood as an ultra-masculine and a conservative society, tolerance of any homosexual behaviour or orientation is bound to meet outrage or strong disapproval. However, many Sikhs do believe that Guru Nanak's emphasis on universal equality and brotherhood is fundamentally in support of homosexual human rights. Confucianism has allowed homosexual sex with the precondition of procreation. Abrahamic religions have held varied views of homosexuality, depending on place, time and form of same-sex desire. Islam regards love and desire for beautiful youths as a natural temptation for all men, but sexual relations as a transgression nugatory of the natural role and aim of sexual activity. Buddhism traditionally does not concern itself with the gender of the beloved. Contemporary Western Buddhists and many Japanese and Chinese schools hold very accepting views, something that is traditionally allowed when the relationship does not impede the birth of a child, while other Eastern Buddhists since colonial times have adopted attitudes that scorn the practice. Christianity has traditionally condemned deliberately non-procreative sex, and while attitudes have in some sectors been liberalised, the majority of denominations still view homosexual relationships as sinful. Judaism, depending on the movement, is either liberal, conservative,

or neutral on the subject. The Orthodox tradition generally views homosexual sex as sinful and views homosexual attraction as out of the norm, while religious sects such as Reform Judaism and Reconstructionism are fully accepting of gay attraction and sex. Conservative Judaism doesn't view attraction as sinful. Homosexual acts are just thought of as being equal to breaking any other of the mitzvot (Jewish commandants). This movement, however, does not admit openly gay Jews as rabbis, nor does it perform commitment ceremonies. It is very open to it, and because of the movement's belief in an evolving Torah (law of God in Judaism), the issue is very big in the movement today. Native American religions generally grant gender-variant individuals honoured status for their perceived spiritual powers. Shintoism, Discordianism and Taoism regard homosexuality positively. Religions collectively termed as 'Pagan' including Druidism and Wicca are also beginning to accept.

Apart from the repressive forces, the characters of Hollinghurst and Selvadurai have pulled together different issues about their own self in relation to social integration, sexual relations and their gayness.

> They were moving at once in the element of music, the earth-tremor bass and penetrating shimmer of high metallic noise. Alex checked his jacket, and he stepped down with Danny on to the edge of the immense dance-floor, swept by brilliant unpredictable stabs of light, a shiver of recognition ran up him from his heels to his scalp, where it lingered and then gently dropped downwards again through his shoulders and spine. On the wall behind him was a sign saying 'Dangerously Loud Music'. Alex was shocked and laughing at the sound (Hollinghurst 1998: 81).

It is also important to note that in the works of Hollinghurst and Selvadurai, there is a continuous negotiation of homosexuality and class not just as a matter of life's current situation but as the results of intricate background factors. Family comforts in relation to homosexuality play a major role in impacting the lives of most gay men. Some of the

characters try to talk to their family about being gay; some never talk about since they are considered 'different' or 'funny' or 'ponnaya' and some are rejected by their family and society for being gay. Many such factors as problems in marriage, politics, social class and gender stresses have been pointed out as the resulting repressive forces of coming out open in the novels of Hollinghurst and Selvadurai. Leo's mother in *The Line of Beauty* is an orthodox, devout Christian who does not accept her son's homosexuality till the end. When Nick and Leo wanted to get together and Nick suggest Leo's place Leo looks away with areluctant smile and says 'My old lady's at home' (Hollinghurst 2004: 35). Nick notices that he was embarrassed and sees this as the first hint of shyness and shame in Leo. Leo further adds and says that 'She is dead religious' (ibid.: 35). When Leo's sister comes to meet Nick after Leo's death the conversation reveals the intensity of her mother's fault in not accepting the truth about her son. 'She doesn't accept the death … She doesn't accept he was gay. It's a *mortal sin* …' (Hollinghurst 2004: 408).In *The Swimming Pool Library*, Will in the opera with his friend James feels a certain sense of unease with his grandfather Viscount Beckwith as he says,

> He had spent all his adult life in circles where good manners, lofty savoir-faire and plain callousness conspired to avoid any recognition that homosexuality even existed. The three of us in our hot little box were trapped with this intensely British problem: the opera that was, but wasn't, gay, the two young gay friends on good behaviour, the mandarin patriarch giving nothing of his feelings away (Hollinghurst 1988: 140).

James and Bill in *The Swimming Poll Library* are characters that functions as shaded gays and negotiates their homosexuality purely at the stack of their convenience and terms. James keeps all his gay pornography hidden, avoids sex with strangers who are gays and maintains a platonic relationship with Will.Bill after having served his term in prison where he was with Charles Nantwitch, for having a love affair with a boy three years younger than himself is

now more careful and refuses to cross the line. Apart from the soliciting of sex and sexual negotiations the novel is pervaded with other themes like the soft-core homoeroticaof pornographic films and the exhibition of photographs by Staines a photographer. Will learns that the theme of natural love and sexual negotiations of the gays have been destroyed by government oppression which was very powerful during Charles' time. He desolately shutters when he realises that it still has a lot of lingering repressions. He even decides to stop writing Charles' biography as he realises that Charles' was trying to educate him on his past through the diaries.

Arjie in *Funny Boy* is sent by his father to Victoria Academy to force him to become a man. When Arjie who does not understand the necessity of this need asks his brother why he is being transferred to a new school, his brother replies, 'He doesn't want you turning out funny or anything like that …. You're not, are you?' (Selvadurai 1994: 205).Balendran in *Cinnamon Gardens* had abandoned Richard, an advocate of Edward Carpenter, under pressure from his domineering father, the Mudaliyar, in conforming to social and sexual expectations. The return of Richard to Ceylon awakens in Balendran the sense of what he has given up to be in marriage, to raise a son and the thought of the man he could have been had his father not intervened. 'He was lonely, not for friendship exactly but for the desire to be able to truly share himself with someone' (Selvadurai 1998: 384). Balendran decides to negotiate the loss by extending his love and friendship for Richard in the end. He moves forward and comes out open with his father, whose power and domineering presence had stopped him all his life to express his sexuality. His gayness which was sacrificed for the cause of his fathers' position and reputation is finally rejected by Balendran as he goes to meet Richard. The final chapter has a saying quoted from *The Tirukkural*, verse 505 'A man's conduct is the touchstone of his greatness and littleness' (Selvadurai 1998: 378). As Bala goes to meet Richard this line is justified when he says:

> Richard, might I ask for your friendship? This may be very difficult for you, but ask I must. I am trying, by this request, to learn to content myself with what cannot be changed, to draw sustenance from the small comforts. But perhaps that is not such a smallcomfort after all (Selvadurai 1998: 385).

On the other hand, Amrith in *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* goes to his mother's grave to reveal that he is 'different' and feels a sudden sense of ease and comfort within himself in coming out as he finally negotiates his sexuality within himself and with his mother who is his family in the most courageous manner.

> He whispered, 'I am …', but he could not continue, for he did not know a decent word to describe himself. And he refused to use 'ponnaya'. Finally, he leaned closer and whispered, 'I am … different'.
>
> Just by saying it out loud, just by admitting that it was so, Amrith felt the burden of his secret ease a little. It was all he could do for now. He would have to learn to live with this knowledge of himself (Selvadurai 2005: 205).

Both writers address the discomforts mentioned above as suggestive of possible non-acceptance leading to internalised homophobia curtailing homosexual tendencies. The distancing from the socially accepted images of gay men can reflect a homophobic discomfort with being labelled gay by others; the distancing can also reflect a desire to open up the social images of being gay to a more diverse view. The relation between social integration, sexual integration and self-acceptance to gayness and being gay is what the characters in the novels of Hollinghurst and Selvadurai have to identify to shrug off the difficulties and the risks associated with being gay in any culture. Hollinghurst and Selvadurai through their works project the insight into how particular life situations translate into relatively different ways of expressing and negotiating class, homosexuality and sexuality asserting the acceptance of oneself as gay. This acceptance is manifested in multiple

different components like being comfortable with one's sexuality, apparent comfort in interactions with other gays, comfort with describing oneself as gay, comfort with the common social images of gay men and comfort in being open about gayness to non-gays. In addition to the difficulty in accepting one's homosexuality, the emotional detachment and traditional sex-role beliefs and experiences act as popular problems, since gay males frequently develop alternative family structures for emotional and instrumental support. If emotional detachment and traditional sex-role beliefs are part of homosexual expression, then gay men should negotiate the intimacy needed to develop the necessary non-traditional family structures. If these cultural norms are held by men who are homosexuals, these interactions would balance to fit their emotional and sexual needs with the pressures of moral and cultural set-ups leading to a broad acceptance of their homosexuality.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

This chapter contains the summing up of the aspects that have been discussed in the previous chapters, making a comparative analysis of the two writers and covering the far reaching changes in the various stages of the evolving homosexual consciousness. It also makes a comparative analysis on the novels of Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai bringing out the influence of Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai's contribution as writers creating a forum in which the discussion of homosexuality finds a way into social and literary discourse and finally justifying their place as significant figures in post-colonial and gay writing.

Queer talk and the politics of transgression in the novels of Hollinghurst and Selvadurai project the close relation between identity, liberation, politics of pro-sex and the essentialization of what kind of sex counts as progressive and transgressive. According to Foucault, the ancient Greeks imagined a sphere of pleasures which included eating, athletics, man/boy love and marriage not a realm of sexuality, as such the very idea of sexuality as a unity composed of discrete desires, acts, developmental patterns, sexual and psychological types. This new theorising, figures sex as thoroughly social: bodies, sensations, pleasures, acts and interactions are made into sex by means of discourses and institutional practices. Sex is thus made legitimate or illegitimate, moral or immoral by moral boundaries and by political groups which prompts a reading of the history of modern societies and social knowledges. Sexuality as such has become a site of public organisation, conflict and knowledges. In the 18th and 19th centuries, there were public struggles focused on the body, desire, pleasure, intimate acts and their public expression – struggles in the family, the church, the law and the realm of the state. 'In Europe and the United States, the body and

sexuality were sites of moral and political struggle through such issues as divorce, free love, abortion, masturbation, homosexuality, prostitution, obscenity and sex education. This period experienced the rise of sexology, psychoanalysis and psychiatry. Magnus Hirschfeld created the Scientific Humanitarian Committee and Institute for Sex Research in Germany. Homosexuality became an object of knowledge. Karl Heinrich Ulrichs published 12 volumes on homosexuality between 1864 and 1879. One historian remarks that more than 1,000 publications on homosexuality appeared in Europe between 1898 and 1908' (Weeks 1985: 67). Both the writers in their works claim and present specific readings of sexual styles that transgress the matrix of power and libertarianism. Their works are based on the claim that sexual freedom requires oppositional practices that is, transgressing socially respectable categories of sexuality and refusing to draw the line on what counts as politically correct sexuality. There is a close relation between the political and the personal in both the writers in terms of the affirmation or reclamation of one's collective identity. As Kauffman puts it:

> Identity politics express the principle that identity – be it individual or collective – should be central to both the vision and practice of radical politics. It implies not only organising around shared identity, as for example classic nationalist movements have done. Identity politics also express the belief that identity itself – its elaboration, expression, or affirmation – is and should be a fundamental focus of political work (Kauffman 1990:67).

In short, what was once the personal is political and the political need has become the personal. By creating a climate in which self-transformation is equated with social transformation both Selvadurai and Hollinghurst has created a new identity politics that has valorised a politics of lifestyle, a personal politics that is centered upon who we are – how we dress or get off that fails to engage with the institutionalized systems of domination. This thematics of transgression and transgressive practices/identities which are on the outer limits of institutional and ideological systems are valorised and subtly promoted in their

works.Foucault's genealogical studies of sexuality aimed at exposing a whole sexual regime as a social and political event. He questioned the political strategy and the context of a politics affirming identity. Both Hollinghurst and Selvadurai adhere to a de-repressive view of sexuality and tend to associate resistance with the disruptive forces of transgression through their novels. Focussing on the liberation of sexual pleasure both writers organise a principle for political activism and an ethics for sex positivity and erotic diversity that risks replacing social liberation. A growing number of authors have observed the proliferation of gay, lesbian, bisexual transgender/transsexual identities as an increasingly global phenomenon. The global proliferation of gender and sexual diversity with the apparent similarities of new categories and non-western societies turning to western-styled gay and lesbian forms have been put forward as explanatory models by many writers and also by Selvadurai and Hollinghurst as post-colonial, gay writers addressing a cross-cultural global gay category. Both writers relate the corresponding and continuing relations between politics and sexuality. If sexuality is made political in the most unsecret statement of queer identity, politics is also made sexual.

Though there are a lot of similarities in the thematic approach of the two writers, a comparative analysis of the novels of Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai bring out a number of important differences in their novels. The novels of Selvadurai give a brilliant portrait of the anxieties aroused by gender non-conformity, especially in patriarchal societies. It deals with the discomforts and the risks associated with being a non-conformist in a country with persistently traditional and conformist norms about sexuality. All the three novels of Selvadurai chafe through the themes of traditional restrictions and societal pressures. The influence of family, friends and society play an important role in the novels of Selvadurai. Most of the protagonists are surrounded by conservative, wealthy influential family members and friends who fervently dominate their choices and force them to repress all forms of transgressive desires. Apart from Balendran, who is a mature character, a man in his forties, the

other characters of Selvadurai are young adolescents coming out gay in a traditional society. The character of Arjie and Amrith are creatively presented as young gay teenagers who are awakening biologically not just as adolescent individuals but as homosexuals. A striking feature of late Victorian culture was its emotional focus on the boy. The continued marginalization of this symbolic figure in the literary history points to a homophobia of contemporary distaste. The adolescent boy was as troubling for the turns of the century artist as the better known predatory woman. The boy's image has been used by Selvadurai in his novels to demarcate and visualize a sexual category that has tremendous capacities to map fantasies outside any form of limitation.

> Of indeterminate character, this handsome liminal creature could absorb and reflect a variety of sexual desires and emotional needs. The boy personified a fleeting moment of liberty and of dangerously attractive innocence, making possible fantasies of total contingency and total annihilation. For men, the boy suggested freedom without committing them to actions, for women, he represented their frustrated desire for action. But most of all, his presence in fin-de-siecle literature signified the coming of age of the modern gay and lesbian sensibility: his protean nature displayed a double desire – to love a boy and to be a boy (Vicinus 1994: 90).

In Selvadurai's novels the boy became the vessel into which an author – and a reader – could pour his or her anxieties, fantasies and sexual desires. For Selvadurai, the boy figure was either a fragile, ethereal naïf or as its opposite, an arrogant, untamed rule-breaker, inevitably the other worldly boy discovered to be more knowing than the man, and the boy adventures more innocent than as he first appeared. An obsession with unrequited love, violence and the transvestite disguise represented either by action or by desires can be seen in the writings of the self-conscious gay writer Oscar Wilde also. These same writers, as well as many others, are fascinated with artificiality, youthfulness and moral self-doubt as they portray the boy as the free defining agent representing an action without responsibility. The

characters of Arjie and Amrith as adolescent homosexuals have been moulded by Selvadurai into the artistic and traditional framework of their persona. They are both literary and cultural models of socially sanctioned homosociality demonstrating male bonding through single-sex institutions like the boy's school in the case of Arjie and the adventurous idealizations of cross-age male bonding in the case of Amrith. Selvadurai's novels are usually romantic in character and output. Homoerotic desires and homosexuality is addressed mostly as an issue and a need to be recognised and understood outside the repressive limits and conventions of society and tradition. Male bonding and relationships are confined to desires and longings that are measured and respected. Open and stark treatment of homosexuality is absent in his works. All three characters have strong homosexual tendencies which they acknowledge in different ways and at different stages of their coming out physically and also by awkward yet persistent projections socially and emotionally. Apart from the sexual theme, the theme of the political and its related conflicts surround the novels of Selvadurai. Arjie and Balendran are socially and sexually constructed amidst the growing political tensions, one the Tamil – Sinhala conflict and the other that of the discords of a post–colonial society. The novels of Selvadurai elaborately study the gradual and ultimate passage that the protagonist takes to come out and to accept their sexual identity with corresponding references to the author's own passage to becoming gay openly and the discomforts he felt of being gay in a country he considered home.

The novels of Hollinghurst on the other hand widely bring to light a buried gay history of London from its writers and its musicians to the lives of gay men before the gay liberation movement both in London and the colonies of Great Britain. A wide exposition of past homosexuals from Shakespeare to Pope, Wilde to James Forster and Brittan to Firbank are mentioned in his novels. The novels of Hollinghurst openly deal with gay contemporary life in all its manifestations. The issues of class, social and sexual politics, drugs, disco and

AIDS are vividly portrayed through his characters. The promiscuous sexual lives of gays and drug related hypnotic behaviour of modern gay males are explicitly presented through characters like Justin, Alex and Nick. The novels of Hollinghurst present the life of a homosexualin all its modern transgressions, the reckless lifestyles of gay men, the tortured and persecuted lives of past homosexuals, gay sexual lives, discos, clubbing, drugs, AIDS and the metropolitan lifestyles of gay men, a life of sex in the city and the politics of sexual liberalism and revolution after the liberation movement.

Hollinghurst covers a wide array of characters belonging to different age groups and different working categories. The character of Charles Nantwitch and Edward Manners who represent the old gay world and characters like Will, Nick, and Justin representing the new gay world. The character of Leo and Arthur representing the working class homosexuals and that of Wani, Will, and Manners the elite, rich and elegant gay group. Most of the characters in his novels are wealthy but Hollinghurst aligns them with working class people who represent common and general existence of homosexuality in the social context. Popular thinking suggests that the norms of masculinity for working class males are highly incompatible with being gay and the characters of Hollinghurst are also conceived in the same line. Leo and Arthur have to face a number of social hurdles and are emotionally insecure many times due to their working class background. Through the portrayal of the working class characters Hollinghurst is able to address the risks and the pain that a gay has to face amidst the growing homophobic attitude. Working class men are mechanics, factory workers, truck drivers, construction workers and maintenance people, represented as men in blue-collar uniforms performing relatively arduous physical labour, an image typically associated with the term gay. Most importantly, working class masculinity brings out images of working in physical proximity; talking about sports and physical activities, women and sexual prowess. Along with these images, working–class men are popularly thought to have

low tolerance for emotional issues, to hold strong beliefs of traditional gender-based differences, and to be strongly homophobic. Hollinghurst reveals this homophobic attitude not just existing within them but also coming from their family. Leo's mother remains homophobic till the end and refuses to acknowledge the fact that her son is gay. Arthur and Will are bashed in a working class area for being queer. Arthur returns home bleeding and seriously injured after killing his brother's male lover, a serious case of low tolerance for emotional issues and Edward's choice of low, working class black lovers reveals the relation between homosexuality, desire and class relation. Nick has to constantly work towards his status as a working class gay juxtaposed in the world of the Feddens, who represent wealth, power, status and disgust for any form of sexuality outside heterosexuality. His relationship with Wani is a sincere exposure of homophobia that an elite homosexual experience and also the ultimate choice of Nick by Wani as a lover who belongs to the working class world since he is uncomfortable to choose a lover from his own circle or class.

The close relation between homosexuality and the working class world is stressed and brought out by Hollinghurst to highlight the general view of the status of a homosexual as a social being and the importance of being considered normal in a social/ sexual sense. Unlike the working class background characters Will, Wani and Edward are less homophobic and more positive with regards their sexual status and their choices. They are less assertive, easygoing, withdrawn from issues that does not concern them and pleasure seeking in their outlook towards life and relationships. Hollinghurst exposes the themes of hypocrisy, madness, wealth, drugs and AIDS through this set of characters which forms a central backdrop to the modern gay culture. Unlike Selvadurai the novels of Hollinghurst does not have any adolescent characters. Most of his characters are matured, characters who are already aware of their sexuality and who either are openly homosexual or have tremendously suffered in the past as gays working and contributing towards the elevation of their collective

status as members of a deviant category. One major difference between the two writers is the treatment of the homosexual theme. Selvadurai portrays the romantic side of coming out gay and the illusory transgressive behaviour of his characters contrary to the stereotype gay male promiscuity of Hollinghurst. Selvadurai's novels relate the stories of young men around the theme of finding romantic love, exploring sexual experiences shaped predominantly on the notion of two people in love. The characters of Selvadurai are mostly waiting for Mr. Right and exemplifying romantic love at different moments in their sexual careers in the context of experiencing various masculine tensions brought about by their creative ways of finding love. Hollinghurst on the other hand openly deals with the issue of being gay and brings out the modern lifestyle of living a gay life. Will, Nick, Alex and Justin all indulge in activities associated with unlimited opportunities to have sex with other men they meet at public sex environments like gay bars, swimming pools, gay centred places and subways. His characters are basically motivated towards thrills, frills and emotional hangovers. But at the same time, many of them feel threatened and unsafe in these spaces. Although many of his characters crave for attention from men to bolster their self-esteem, they often mistake sexual conquest for emotional affection.

Half of the men in the novels of Hollinghurst are engaged in unprotected sex at some point in their sexual lives pointing out the risks of such behaviour in the social contexts of unsafe sex and the dangers of being exposed to the AIDS virus. Almost all the novels of Hollinghurst covers the theme of AIDS marginally or obliquely and its relations to the sexual behaviour of gays in the time of AIDS. The emerging AIDS pandemic propelled male same-sex sexual practices and commercial sex into explicit public discussions through medical, public health and activist movements, bringing coverage of condom distribution, prostitution, anal and oral sex and public sex into mainstream and the television media, making the most intimate moments of an individual's life into a public issue. Nick experiences a sense of fear

and loss as he sees the photograph of Leo who dies of AIDS in the novel. It awakens and frightens him of his reckless lifestyle, which included, erotic adventures, sexual coercions and unsafe sex, all which are heavy and tragic for him. The AIDS epidemic sparked a wealth of accounts and interventions, many brilliant or moving by activists, victims, experts and scholars – categories whose lines have transformed and altered modern gay culture. This is evident in the dealings of the characters of Hollinghurst who are HIV positive and who are persistently shunned, despised and labelled as diseased. The era of Aids saw the transformation of a disorganised collection of despised individuals into a self – affirming community and a full-fledged civil rights movement, bringing the gay community as a community out of the closet yet at the same time sent many a gay men to experience internalised homophobia among others. The characters of Hollinghurst all in turns experience the deadly virulence of the disease among gay men and the stress of being labelled as a gay HIV positive individual.

In the past two decades, the epidemic itself has complicated gay men's attempt to their define masculinity in a society that views masculinity and homosexuality as two non-overlapping realities. This reality is advocated by Hollinghurst through a strategy to remove the stress and the tag among gay men who are blamed for the disease, he tries to achieve through his characters a strategy to evacuate AIDS and gay politics and to dismantle the simple misconceptions related to the disease and the activities of gay men. The emphasis on being alive, on surviving AIDS, is one that has rested in the mind of gay men since the onset of the AIDS epidemic In this existence, it is an incredibly enormous task to be able to hold on to the feelings of sexuality and ,masculinity in the midst of the Aids madness. Hollinghurst understands the biological constraints and the social pressures to re-identify a way that bows to the sexual restrictions that AIDS demands and the challenges to balance sexual, safe, masculine gay life. His works are a movement towards the construction of a gay masculinity

in the complicated age of AIDS and its continuing relationship with politics and society. Apart from the thematic treatment of AIDS, Hollinghurst touches on the relationship between politics and homosexuality, exposing heterosexual hypocrisy towards homosexual promiscuity. 'Alan's novels have a dark allure, elegance and erudition, with passages of dream like beauty. Alongside all this, lies sexual explicitness in depicting gay men's lives: art and sex are the consuming passions in a realm 'where happiness can depend upon the glance of a stranger, caught and returned.' His fiction casts a spell with its atmosphere of decadence and always alludes knowingly to its forbears Wilde, Proust and Ronald Firbank. The novels have a common pursuit-of-the-love-object theme. His novels offer readers; insights into the contemporary gay world, but these are set against a wider backdrop of art in all its forms, and obsession – in all its manifestations' (Smith 2002: 1).

At a time when the British writing establishment is coming to terms with overt gayness. Hollinghurst can be seen as a representative of the new wave, a serious writer addressing a wide audience, for whom the sexual orientation of the personae is of little import for plot or character development. His work has been acclaimed for its unsensational treatment of what the British press seem to regard as scandalous and salacious topics - life in a gay subculture, the workings of homosexual friendship networks and the physical activities of gay males.

The works of Hollinghurst and Selvadurai though different in its approach and treatment of homosexuality covers the far-reaching changes in the various stages of evolving homosexual consciousness. Their writings have influenced and promoted in creating a forum in which the discussion of homosexuality has found a way into the social and literary discourse. 'By the late 1980's and early 1990's the call to develop theories of sexuality was being answered by an expanding body of literature that addressed the political and cultural positions of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals and others – a diverse conglomeration of

sexual minorities who were increasingly identified as queer' (De Lauretis 1991:5). Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the closet (*1990) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Warner's *Fear of a Queer Planet* (1993) and the two special issues of *differences* (Vol. 5 No. 2 and Vol. 6 Nos. 2 +3) all signalled the consolidation of an approach to theorizing sexuality that crossed gender lines, integrating sexual theories related to masculinity and femininity and to heterosexuality and homosexuality. Most importantly, the emergence of queer theory within academia marked a radical shift towards positioning abject and stigmatised sexual identities as important entry points to the production of knowledge. A move to stabilize sexual and gender categories was and still is an integral part of this process. The adoption of the queer reflected the rejection of taxonomic sexual categories that initially had been established through sexological discourse in the late 1800's and early 1900's for a discussion of sexology and sexual taxonomies. Instead the term queer reflects an inclusive standpoint based on difference from opposition to the ideology of heteronormativity. Thus queer theory and queer politics represent a critical moment in the history of western sexuality in which sexual minorities and deviants who were previously defined by legal statutes and medical/psychological diagnoses are instead creating – in other words, a post-modern version of identity politics.

The contribution of writers like Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai has further added understanding to the social dimension of understanding sex as a literary discourse. Their writings have generated a pro-sex political, sexual program that essentially and continuously project personal sexual liberation at all levels and at different points. Essential to this post-structuralist deployment of opposition is the tenet that what is normative is actually constructed through reference to deviance. Thus it is deviance that is foundational and the normative which is unstable. Hollinghurst and Selvadurai consider this deviance as influential in destabilising sexual practices which at times causes instability not just in the

sexual sector but also in the political and economic sector. This emphasis on the opposition of the normative and on the simultaneous destabilisation of the normative are aspects of queer theory that allow great interdisciplinary mobility, as they permit theoretical concepts initially applied to issues of sexual identity and the oppression of sexual minorities to be deployed in studies of other social subgroups as well as its studies of the written and spoken word, the built environment, material objects and other products of culture. If sexuality is thus made political in this most unsecret statement of queer identity, politics is also made sexual. The past masculine narrative which is violent, colonial, sado-masochistic and deathly in the works of Hollinghurst and Selvadurai can be read as a story of the west's colonial past which polarises the twin constructs of territorial tension and identity categories. In all their works, any simplistic notion of identity politics is destabilised to produce a concept of identity as a process, neither self-determined nor a given, but invested with a degree of agency.

All colonial societies, in their struggle for independence and forming of a new nation, reshape and redefine their identity. This drive for a cultural identity involves the establishment of a collective, essential self that is shared by people with a common ancestry and common history. This essential identity is seen to be unchanging, eternal; it provides a common frame of reference to a newly emerged nation. The goal of these new nations, released from colonialism, is to bring to light this identity that has been suppressed and distorted and disfigured by the colonial masters; to express this identity through a retelling of the past. At the core of this restored identity lies the idea that, beyond the mess and the contradiction of today, is a resplendent past whose existence, when it is discovered, will restore a people as a culture, as a society (Selvadurai 2004:3).

Hollinghurst and Selvadurai as postcolonial, gay writers have brought the identity of liberation of the homosexual amidst the anti-gay, anti-colonial, anti-racist social moments of our time. This collective identity can be very effective as a tool of resistance and

empowerment and freedom, a sense of identity that is transforming in itself, making itself new over and over again, a continuous work in progress. This sense of a homosexual cultural identity, while taking into account that a group or a culture might have many important points of similarity, also acknowledges that there are many points of difference between its people, and that these differences, such as sexuality and gender and class, also define who we are. This sense of identity stresses not just who one was in the past, but who one might be in the process of becoming. This is the idea that Hollinghurst and Selvadurai, through their works as post-colonial, gay writers contribute to the evolving homosexual consciousness and to the notion of beginning to come to terms with being gay, beginning to live out another very important part of their identity.

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ABSTRACT

Queer Talk: The Politics of Transgression in the Novels of Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai

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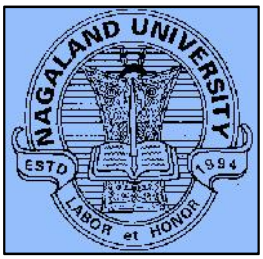
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH

NAROLA DANGTI

Under the Supervision of

Prof. N.D.R. Chandra
Department of English
Nagaland University
Kohima Campus: Meriema



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
NAGALAND UNIVERSITY
KOHIMA CAMPUS, MERIEMA – 797 001
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ABSTRACT

Queer theory is the academic discourse that has largely replaced what used to be called gay/lesbian studies. The term was first coined by Teresa De Lauretis for a working conference on theorising gay and lesbian sexualities that was held at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in February 1990. The theory as such encompasses a whole range of understanding issues relating to sexual orientation and gender identity. Queer theory is largely based on the works of Michel Foucault, the French Philosopher. Besides Foucault, the works of Derrida, Lacan and Freud have contributed as important theoretical references. Beginning in the nineteenth century, sexuality gradually assumed a new status as an object of scientific and popular knowledge. The last two hundred years or so have seen what the critic and historian Michel Foucault once described as a 'discursive explosion' (Foucault 1998: 38) around the question of sex, by which he did not simply mean that it came to be talked about more widely or more often or more explicitly, relaxing the grip of repressive conventions or taboos.

'Sexuality is much more than a facet of human nature, the seat of pleasure and desire. It has become a principle of explanation, whose effects can be discerned, in different ways, in virtually any stage and predicament of human life, shaping our capacity to act and setting the limits to what we can think and do'(Clover & Kaplan 2007: 12). Thus, the growing willingness to put sex into question, even to search for the truth about sexual behaviour, gradually opened up new ways in which the entire field of sexual possibilities and sexual identities could be imagined, permanently transforming people's most intimate sense of their sexual selves. This study attempted at studying anomalies of sexual instincts with special emphasis on queering homosexuality in the works of the two novelists - Alan Hollinghurst and ShyamSelvadurai.

Hollinghurst was one of *Granta* magazine's 'Best of Young British Novelist' in 1993. His acclaimed first novel *The Swimming Pool Library* (1988) won the Somerset Maugham Award (1989) and was also hailed as 'The Best Book about Gay Life yet written by an English Author' (White 1988: 2). The novel gives a vivid account of London gay life in the early 1980's through the story of a young aristocrat, William Beckwith, and his involvement with the elderly Lord Nantwich, whose life he saves. It was followed by *The Folding Star* (1994) which was short-listed for the Booker Prize for Fiction and won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize (for Fiction). The narrator, Edward Manners, develops an obsessive passion for his pupil, a 17-year-old Flemish boy. It has been compared by many critics to Thomas Mann's novella *Death in Venice*. His next novel *The Spell* (1998) is a gay comedy of manners which interweaves the complex relationships between architect Robin Woodfield, his alcoholic lover Justin and Justin's ex-timid civil servant Alex, who falls in love with Robin's son Danny. The novel is much shorter and funnier revolving around a central theme of romantic sexual disillusionment. *The Line of Beauty* (2004) traces a decade of change and tragedy and won the 2004 Men Booker Prize for Fiction. It was also short-listed for the Whitbread Novel Award, the British Book Award, Author of the Year and the Commonwealth Writers Prize. The book touches upon the emergence of HIV/AIDS, as well as the relationship between politics and homosexuality.

Apart from novel writing, Hollinghurst has also written poems, translated plays and edited poems and novels. His poems include *Isherwood is at Santa Monica* and *ConfidentialChats with Boys*. He has translated *Bazajet* by Racine (1991) and has edited *New Writing 4* with A.S. Byatt (1995); *Three Novels* by Ronald Firbank (2000); and *A.E. Housman: Poems Selected by Alan Hollinghurst* (2001).At a time when the British writing establishment is coming to terms with overt gayness, Hollinghurst can be seen as a representative of the new wave, a serious writer addressing a wide audience, for whom the

sexual orientation of the personae is of little import for plot or character development. His novels offer readers; 'insights into the contemporary gay world, but these are set against a wider backdrop of art in all its forms, and obsession – in all its manifestations' (Smith 2002: 1).His work has been acclaimed for its un-sensational treatment of what the British press seem to regard as scandalous and salacious topics - life in a gay subculture, the workings of homosexual friendship networks and the physical activities of gay males.'Hollinghurst is openly gay' (Stephen 2004: 1) and lives in London.

Shyam Selvadurai is a Sri Lankan Canadian novelist, essayist and a writer for television, born in 1965 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and is of mixed Tamil and Sinhala background, (mother – Sinhalese, father – Tamil), members of conflicting ethnic groups whose troubles form a major theme in his work. Ethnic riots in 1983 drove the family to immigrate to Canada. Selvadurai was nineteen.

As a Sri Lankan-Canadian gay writer, Shyam Selvadurai's literary output has been relatively modest thus far. *Funny Boy*, his first novel, was published to acclaim in 1994. It won the W.H. Smith/Books in Canada First Novel Award and, in the U.S; the Lambda Literary Award for Best Gay Men's Fiction and was named a Notable Book by the American Library Association. His second novel, *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998), was short-listed for the Trillium Award in Canada, the Aloa Literary Award in Denmark and the Premio Internazionale Riccardo Bacchelli in Italy. Selvadurai's third novel, *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* published in 2005 was a finalist for Canada's most prestigious literary award, the Governor's General Awards, in the category of Children's Literature. It was honoured with a Lambda Literary Award in the Children's & Youth Literature category in 2006, the Canadian Library Association Book of the Year Award and the Silver Winner in the Young Adult Category of Foreword Magazine Book of the Year Award. He has also edited a collection of short stories, *Story Wallah: Short Fiction from South Asian Writers* (2004),

which includes works by Salman Rushdie, Monica Ali and Hanif Kureishi, among others. He is represented in the anthology by “Pigs Can’t Fly,” the first of the six stories that comprise *Funny Boy*.

All of Selvadurai’s novels have a subtle and deeply humane style, wit and perspicacity that establish him not only as an important chronicler of the complexities of social and cultural difference but also ensures his place as a significant figure in post-colonial and gay writing. ‘As the Sri Lankan critic Prakrti has noted, Selvadurai’s particular gift is to understand how such factors as ethnic tensions and the legacy of British colonial rule are interweaved with dominant ideologies of sexuality and gender’ (Hunn 2005: 1).

His first novel *Funny Boy* announced Selvadurai as a major new voice in Canadian, post-colonial and gay literature. The novel is a moving and honest coming out story of, Arjie Chelvaratnam as he grows from a ridiculed ‘funny boy’ more content to dress up as ‘bride-bride’ with his female cousins than play cricket with the males, to an intelligent, reflective teenager dangerously awakened by his first love, rebellious schoolmate Shehan. The novel gives a brilliant portrait of the anxieties aroused by gender non-conformity, especially in patriarchal societies. His second novel *Cinnamon Gardens* (1998) is set in the Ceylon of the 1920’s. It too features the homosexual desire of a young man, as well as the search for autonomy by a young woman in the same repressive circle. To help prepare ground for the novel, Selvadurai lived in Sri Lanka with his partner Andrew Chapman experiencing first-hand the discomforts and risks associated with being a non-conformist in a country with persistently traditional and conformist norms about sexuality. He mentions about the discomforts in his essay ‘Coming Out’ in *Time Asia’s* special issue on the Asian Diaspora, Selvadurai notes that ‘in this country that I still considered my home, I could never be at home’ (2003: 1).Selvadurai’s third novel *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* was published in 2005 and targeted to young adult readers. Set in 1980, Sri Lanka, the novel chronicles a

fourteen year old Sri Lankan boy falling in love with his visiting Canadian cousin, Niresh which finally makes him aware of his sexual identity. Amrith in the novel experiences both the challenges of being gay in a culture that considered it a sin and also the tensions of being in love with his cousin, Niresh. Selvadurai's *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* is his first young adult novel.

Selvadurai's novels always present at some level of consciousness the interaction between the personal and the political. How the intimate workings of a family represent or reflect a larger political context. This awareness in which the personal and the political are intertwined not only intrigued Shyam but has enabled him to reveal the capacities of racism, homophobia, sexism and other injustices and hatreds which are present at all levels within a society. He clearly has a deep engagement with his country of birth and its troubled history. In his own words he says, 'I think *Cinnamon Gardens* is about personal courage and liberation' (Smith 1998: 4). He knew about racial conflict, be it Tamil/Sinhalese or Ceylonese/English and the issues of being a gay or a homosexual in a society like that.In explaining his decision to be openly gay, he remarks, 'I remembered how it was for me feeling there was no one out there who was a role model of any sort. When I decided to be out in public, I was really thinking of that version of me in Sri Lanka who would read my book and feel relieved to not be alone. If I decided not to be out, I would be sending a message to that young person that I was still afraid and ashamed' (Hunn 2005: 2).

This research work undertook a modest study of some major perspectives on the issues of gender and post-modern sexual identities, the conflicting accounts of sexual orientation and the contemporary emphasis on sexual diversity in the novels of Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai. The main objectives of the study were:

1. To assess how the creation of queer identities has impacted upon the study of literature.

2. To study how the politics of transgression contribute to cultural and social repressions in the works of Hollinghurst and Selvadurai.
3. To critically look at how Hollinghurst and Selvadurai establishes their homosexual identity and ties those stories to larger themes of family and country.
4. To study how Hollinghurst and Selvadurai offer insights into the contemporary gay world set against a wider backdrop of art in all forms and obsession, in the generally well-to-do-world and,
5. To analyse how Hollinghurst and Selvadurai interweaves various sub-plots and characters around a central theme of romantic sexual disillusionment.

The first chapter introduces Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai as creative writers in English and their position as important post-colonial gay writers. Further, it explores the works of Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai and the recurrent themes of the personal and the political which exists in almost all their novels. The chapter surveys related literatures and journals. The objectives and significance of the study, research methodology is elaborated in this chapter.

Chapter two brings out how homosexuality has either been strategically suppressed or categorically demonised in all straightgeist cultural representations and how it has been read as a crime, sin, a disease and an abnormality in western societies in the later 19th century. The chapter looks into the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in some Western countries in the 20th century and how it has gained credibility as gay communities in literature, religious institutions and civil rights organisations. The chapter looks into recent understandings of queer studies (which include gay and lesbian theories; cultural studies and a portion of gender/feminist debates) that have contributed to complex and nuanced studies of homosexuality. It explains the term queer - long used pejoratively to refer to homosexuals,

especially male homosexuals – and how it has been reclaimed and embraced by queer theorists. The work of queer theorists such as Eve K. Sedgwick, Judith Butlerand Michel Foucault is extensively discussed and how their contributions have made to look at homosexuality in a new perspective. The enriching ways that queer theorists have suggested to understand the on-going debates on gender and desire is developed throughout the chapter.

The third chapter addresses the issue of being 'different' in a funny way which does not conform to accepted gender and sexual norms. The novels of Selvadurai give a brilliant portrait of the anxieties aroused by gender non-conformity, especially in patriarchal societies. This chapter focuses on the gradual and ultimate passage of the protagonist to accept their sexual identity. The chapter talks about the concept of a third gender as tendencies of the unnamed third place and the metaphor of twilight moments that stigmatises identities and forbidden acts. It brings to light the risks and the rewards of understanding and experiencing sexual liberty and independence.

Chapter four focuses on how the novels of Hollinghurst bring to light a buried history of gay London from the Romans to the 1950's, its writers and musicians, from Shakespeare to Pope, Wilde to James, Forster and Brittan to Firbank focussing mainly on the lives of gay men before the gay liberation movement both in London and the colonies of Great Britain. The chapter analyses contemporary gay life as represented in his novels, *The Line of Beauty* and *The Swimming Pool Library*. The issues about class, family, social politics and sexuality in the 80's era London exploring related themes of hypocrisy, homosexuality, madness, wealth, drugs and the emerging AIDS crisis in novels like *The Spell* and *The Line of Beauty*which forms a central backdrop of modern gay culture. This chapter also brings to light the enticing yet painful panorama of metropolitan gay life highlighting gay parties, gay clubbing and gay cruising.

The fifth chapter focuses on the cultural and traditional repressive forces that act like an institution curtailing homosexual tendencies. It also highlights the importance of the prejudices that the characters of Hollinghurst and Selvadurai are made to face and the great difficulties that they have to endure while simply yet persistently trying to shrug off the demands of their culture. The chapter opens the discussion to look into the forces of repression and its social and cultural implications. It also mentions the nuances of gender orientation and the policing of homosexuality and homosexuals by political and state institutional forces like law makers, police authorities and social elites.

The concluding chapter contains a summing up of the aspects that have been discussed in the previous chapters. This chapter makes an analysis of the novels of Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai. It covers the far-reaching changes in the various stages of evolving homosexual consciousness. It also brings out the influence of Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai's contribution as writers creating a forum in which the discussion of homosexuality finds a way into social and literary discourse.

Queer talk and the politics of transgression in the novels of Hollinghurst and Selvadurai project the close relation between identity, liberation, politics of pro-sex and the essentialization of what kind of sex counts as progressive and transgressive. Both the writers in their works claim and present specific readings of sexual styles that transgress the matrix of power and libertarianism. Their works are based on the claim that sexual freedom requires oppositional practices that is, transgressing socially respectable categories of sexuality and refusing to draw the line on what counts as politically correct sexuality. There is a close relation between the political and the personal in both the writers in terms of the affirmation or reclamation of one's collective identity. As Kauffman puts it

> Identity politics express the principle that identity – be it individual or collective – should be central to both the vision and practice of radical politics. It implies not only organising

> around shared identity, as for example classic nationalist movements have done. Identity politics also express the belief that identity itself – its elaboration, expression, or affirmation – is and should be a fundamental focus of political work (Kauffman 1990: 67).

In short, what was once the personal is political and the political need has become the personal. By creating a climate in which self-transformation is equated with social transformation both Selvadurai and Hollinghurst has created a new identity politics that has valorised a politics of lifestyle, a personal politics that is centered upon who we are – how we dress or get off that fails to engage with the institutionalized systems of domination. This thematics of transgression and transgressive practices/identities which are on the outer limits of institutional and ideological systems are valorised and subtly promoted in their works. Both Hollinghurst and Selvadurai adhere to a de-repressive view of sexuality and tend to associate resistance with the disruptive forces of transgression through their novels. Focussing on the liberation of sexual pleasure both writers organise a principle for political activism and an ethics for sex positivity and erotic diversity that risks replacing social liberation.

A growing number of authors have observed the proliferation of gay, lesbian, bisexual transgender/transsexual identities as an increasingly global phenomenon. The global proliferation of gender and sexual diversity with the apparent similarities of new categories and non-western societies turning to western-styled gay and lesbian forms have been put forward as explanatory models by many writers and also by Selvadurai and Hollinghurst as post-colonial, gay writers addressing a cross-cultural global gay category. Both writers relate the corresponding and continuing relations between politics and sexuality. If sexuality is made political in the most unsecret statement of queer identity, politics is also made sexual.

Though there are a lot of similarities in the thematic approach of the two writers, a comparative analysis of the novels of Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai bring out a number of important differences in their novels. The novels of Selvadurai give a brilliant

portrait of the anxieties aroused by gender non-conformity, especially in patriarchal societies. It deals with the discomforts and the risks associated with being a non-conformist in a country with persistently traditional and conformist norms about sexuality. All the three novels of Selvadurai chafe through the themes of traditional restrictions and societal pressures. The influence of family, friends and society play an important role in the novels of Selvadurai. Most of the protagonists are surrounded by conservative, wealthy influential family members and friends who fervently dominate their choices and force them to repress all forms of transgressive desires. Apart from Balendran, who is a mature character, a man in his forties, the other characters of Selvadurai are young adolescents coming out gay in a traditional society. The character of Arjie and Amrith are creatively presented as young gay teenagers who are awakening biologically not just as adolescent individuals but as homosexuals.

The adolescent boy was as troubling for the turns of the century artist as the better known predatory woman. The continued marginalization of this symbolic figure in the literary history points to a homophobia of contemporary distaste. The boy's image has been used by Selvadurai in his novels to demarcate and visualize a sexual category that has tremendous capacities to map fantasies outside any form of limitation.

> Of indeterminate character, this handsome liminal creature could absorb and reflect a variety of sexual desires and emotional needs. The boy personified a fleeting moment of liberty and of dangerously attractive innocence, making possible fantasies of total contingency and total annihilation. For men, the boy suggested freedom without committing them to actions, for women, he represented their frustrated desire for action. But most of all, his presence in fin-de-siecle literature signified the coming of age of the modern gay and lesbian sensibility: his protean nature displayed a double desire – to love a boy and to be a boy (Vicinus 1994: 90).

In Selvadurai's novels the boy became the vessel into which an author – and a reader – could pour his or her anxieties, fantasies and sexual desires. The characters of Arjie and Amrith as adolescent homosexuals have been moulded by Selvadurai into the artistic and traditional framework of their persona. They are both literary and cultural models of socially sanctioned homosociality demonstrating male bonding through single-sex institutions like the boy's school in the case of Arjie and the adventurous idealizations of cross-age male bonding in the case of Amrith. Selvadurai's novels are usually romantic in character and output. Homoerotic desires and homosexuality is addressed mostly as an issue and a need to be recognised and understood outside the repressive limits and conventions of society and tradition. Male bonding and relationships are confined to desires and longings that are measured and respected. Open and stark treatment of homosexuality is absent in his works. All three characters have strong homosexual tendencies which they acknowledge in different ways and at different stages of their coming out physically and also by awkward yet persistent projections socially and emotionally. Apart from the sexual theme, the theme of the political and its related conflicts surround the novels of Selvadurai. Arjie and Balendran are socially and sexually constructed amidst the growing political tensions, one the Tamil – Sinhala conflict and the other that of the discords of a post–colonial society. The novels of Selvadurai elaborately studies the gradual and ultimate passage that the protagonist takes to come out and to accept their sexual identity with corresponding references to the author's own passage to becoming gay openly and the discomforts he felt of being gay in a country he considered home.

The novels of Hollinghurst on the other hand widely bring to light a buried gay history of London from its writers and its musicians to the lives of gay men before the gay liberation movement both in London and the colonies of Great Britain. A wide exposition of past homosexuals from Shakespeare to Pope, Wilde to James Forster and Brittan to Firbank

are mentioned in his novels. The novels of Hollinghurst openly deal with gay contemporary life in all its manifestations. The issues of class, social and sexual politics, drugs, disco and Aids are vividly portrayed through his characters. The promiscuous sexual lives of gays and drug related hypnotic behaviour of modern gay males are explicitly presented through characters like Justin, Alex and Nick. The novels of Hollinghurst present the life of a gay in all its modern manifestations, the reckless lifestyles of gay men, the tortured and persecuted lives of past homosexuals, gay sexual lives, discos, clubbing, drugs, AIDS and the metropolitan lifestyles of gay men, a life of sex in the city and the politics of sexual liberalism and revolution after the liberation movement.

Hollinghurst covers a wide array of characters belonging to different age groups and different working categories. The character of Edward Manners represents the old gay world and characters like Will, Nick, and Justin represents the new gay world. The character of Leo and Arthur represents the working class homosexuals and that of Wani, Will, and Manners the elite, rich and elegant gay group. Most of the characters in his novels are wealthy but Hollinghurst aligns them with working class people who represent common and general existence of homosexuality in society. Leo and Arthur have to face a number of social hurdles and are emotionally insecure many times due to their working class background.

Most importantly, working class masculinity brings out images of working in physical proximity; talking about sports and physical activities, women and sexual prowess. Along with these images, working–class men are popularly thought to have low tolerance for emotional issues, to hold strong beliefs of traditional gender-based differences, and to be strongly homophobic. Hollinghurst reveals this homophobic attitude not just existing within them but also coming from their family. Leo’s mother remains homophobic till the end and refuses to acknowledge the fact that her son is gay. Arthur and Will are bashed in a working class area for being queer. Arthur returns home bleeding and seriously injured after killing

his brother's male lover, a serious case of low tolerance for emotional issues and Edward's choice of low, working class black lovers reveals the relation between homosexuality, desire and class relation. Nick has to constantly work towards his status as a working class gay juxtaposed in the world of the Feddens, who represent wealth, power, status and disgust for any form of sexuality outside heterosexuality. His relationship with Wani is a sincere exposure of homophobia that elite homosexuals experience. The ultimate choice of Nick by Wani as a lover who belongs to the working class world is another instance of internalised homophobia as he is uncomfortable to choose a lover from his own circle or class.

Unlike the working class background characters Will, Wani and Edward are less homophobic and more positive with regards their sexual status and their choices. They are less assertive, easy-going, withdrawn from issues that does not concern them and pleasure seeking in their outlook towards life and relationships. Hollinghurst exposes the themes of hypocrisy, madness, wealth, drugs and AIDS through this set of characters which forms a central backdrop to the modern gay culture.

Unlike Selvadurai the novels of Hollinghurst does not have any adolescent characters. Most of his characters are mature individuals, characters who are already aware of their sexuality and who either are openly homosexual or have tremendously suffered in the past as gays working and contributing towards the elevation of their collective status as members of a deviant category. One major difference between the two writers is the treatment of the homosexual theme. Selvadurai portrays the romantic side of coming out gay and the illusory transgressive behaviour of his characters contrary to the stereotype gay male promiscuity of Hollinghurst. Selvadurai's novels relate the stories of young men around the theme of finding romantic love, exploring sexual experiences shaped predominantly on the notion of two people in love. The characters of Selvadurai are mostly waiting for Mr Right and exemplifying romantic love at different moments in their sexual careers in the context of

experiencing various masculine tensions brought about by their creative ways of finding love.

Hollinghurst on the other hand openly deals with the issue of being gay and brings out the modern lifestyle of living a gay life. Will, Nick, Alex and Justin all indulge in activities associated with unlimited opportunities to have sex with other men they meet at public sex environments like gay bars, swimming pools, gay centred places and subways. His characters are basically motivated towards thrills, frills and emotional hangovers. But at the same time, many of them feel threatened and unsafe in these spaces.

Although many of his characters crave for attention from men to bolster their self-esteem, they often mistake sexual conquest for emotional affection. Half of the men in the novels of Hollinghurst are engaged in unprotected sex at some point in their sexual lives pointing out the risks of such behaviour in the social contexts of unsafe sex and the dangers of being exposed to the AIDS virus. Almost all the novels of Hollinghurst covers the theme of AIDS marginally or obliquely and its relations to the sexual behaviour of gays in the time of AIDS. Nick experiences a sense of fear and loss as he sees the photograph of Leo who dies of AIDS in the novel. It awakens and frightens him of his reckless lifestyle, which included, erotic adventures, sexual coercions and unsafe sex, all which are heavy and tragic for him. This is evident in the dealings of the characters of Hollinghurst who are HIV positive and who are persistently shunned, despised and labelled as diseased. The characters of Hollinghurst all in turns experience the deadly virulence of the disease among gay men and the stress of being labelled as a gay HIV positive individual. His works are a movement towards the construction of a gay masculinity in the complicated age of AIDS and its continuing relationship with politics and society. Apart from the thematic treatment of AIDS, Hollinghurst touches on the relationship between politics and homosexuality, exposing heterosexual hypocrisy towards homosexual promiscuity.

The works of Hollinghurst and Selvadurai though different in its approach and treatment of homosexuality covers the far-reaching changes in the various stages of evolving homosexual consciousness. Their writings have influenced and promoted in creating a forum in which the discussion of homosexuality has found a way into the social and literary discourse. 'By the late 1980's and early 1990's the call to develop theories of sexuality was being answered by an expanding body of literature that addressed the political and cultural positions of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals and others – a diverse conglomeration of sexual minorities who were increasingly identified as queer' (De Lauretis 1991: 5). Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the closet (*1990) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993) and Warner's *Fear of a Queer Planet* (1993) signalled the consolidation of an approach to theorizing sexuality that crossed gender lines, integrating sexual theories related to masculinity and femininity and to heterosexuality and homosexuality. Most importantly, the emergence of queer theory within academia marked a radical shift towards positioning abject and stigmatised sexual identities as important entry points to the production of knowledge. A move to stabilize sexual and gender categories was and still is an integral part of this process. The adoption of the queer reflected the rejection of taxonomic sexual categories that initially had been established through sexological discourse in the late 1800's and early 1900's for a discussion of sexology and sexual taxonomies. Instead the term queer reflects an inclusive standpoint based on difference from opposition to the ideology of heteronormativity.

Thus, queer theory and queer politics represent a critical moment in the history of western sexuality in which sexual minorities and deviants who were previously defined by legal statutes and medical/psychological diagnoses are instead creating – in other words, a post-modern version of identity politics.

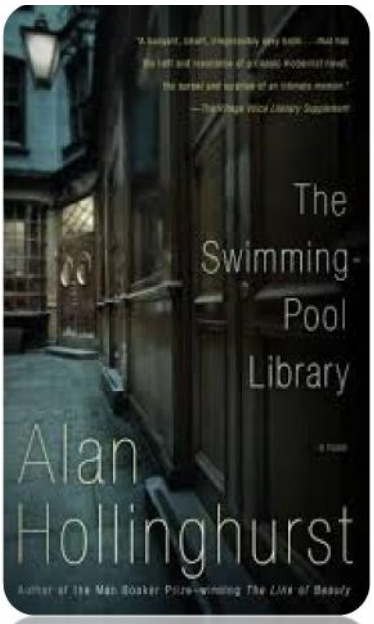
The contribution of writers like Alan Hollinghurst and Shyam Selvadurai has further added understanding to the social dimension of understanding sex as a literary discourse.

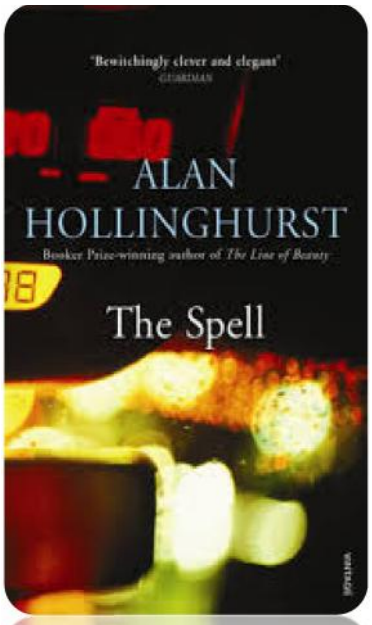
Their writings have generated a pro-sex political, sexual program that essentially and continuously project personal sexual liberation at all levels and at different points. Essential to this post-structuralist deployment of opposition is the tenet that what is normative is actually constructed through reference to deviance. Thus, it is deviance that is foundational and the normative which is unstable. Hollinghurst and Selvadurai consider this deviance as influential in destabilising sexual practices which at times causes instability not just in the sexual sector but also in the political and economic sector. This emphasis on the opposition of the normative and on the simultaneous destabilisation of the normative are aspects of queer theory that allow great interdisciplinary mobility, as they permit theoretical concepts initially applied to issues of sexual identity and the oppression of sexual minorities to be deployed in studies of other social subgroups as well as its studies of the written and spoken word, the built environment, material objects and other products of culture.

All colonial societies, in their struggle for independence and forming of a new nation, reshape and redefine their identity. This drive for a cultural identity involves the establishment of a collective, essential self that is shared by people with a common ancestry and common history. This essential identity is seen to be unchanging, eternal; it provides a common frame of reference to a newly emerged nation. The goal of these new nations, released from colonialism, is to bring to light this identity that has been suppressed and distorted and disfigured by the colonial masters; to express this identity through a retelling of the past. At the core of this restored identity lies the idea that, beyond the mess and the contradiction of today, is a resplendent past whose existence, when it is discovered, will restore a people as a culture, as a society (Selvadurai 2004: 3).

Hollinghurst and Selvadurai as postcolonial, gay writers have brought the identity of liberation of the homosexual amidst the anti-gay, anti-colonial, anti-racist social moments of our time. This collective identity can be very effective as a tool of resistance and

empowerment and freedom, a sense of identity that is transforming in itself, making itself new over and over again, a continuous work in progress. This sense of a homosexual cultural identity, while taking into account that a group or a culture might have many important points of similarity, also acknowledges that there are many points of difference between its people, and that these differences, such as sexuality and gender and class, also define who we are. This sense of identity stresses not just who one was in the past, but who one might be in the process of becoming. This is the idea that Hollinghurst and Selvadurai, through their works as post-colonial, gay writers contribute to the evolving homosexual consciousness and to the notion of beginning to come to terms with being gay, beginning to live out another very important part of their identity.


The Swimming-Pool Library
Alan Hollinghurst


'Bewitchingly clever and elegant'
GUARDIAN
ALAN HOLLINGHURST
Booker Prize-winning author of The Line of Beauty
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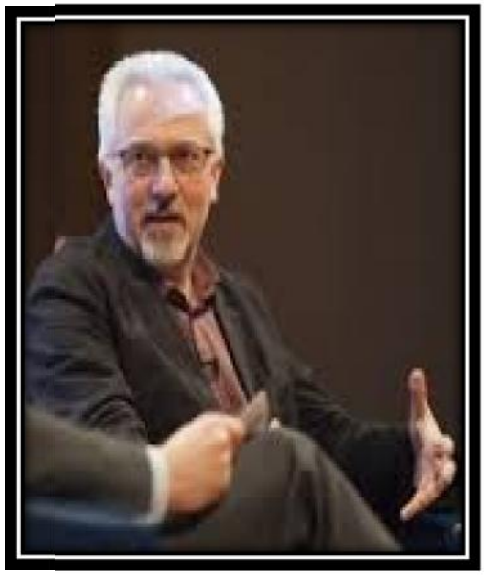

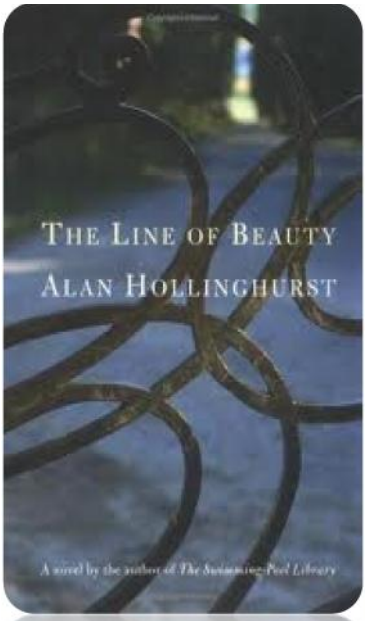
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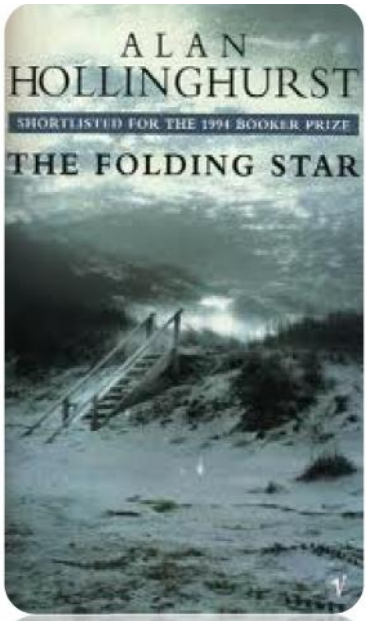
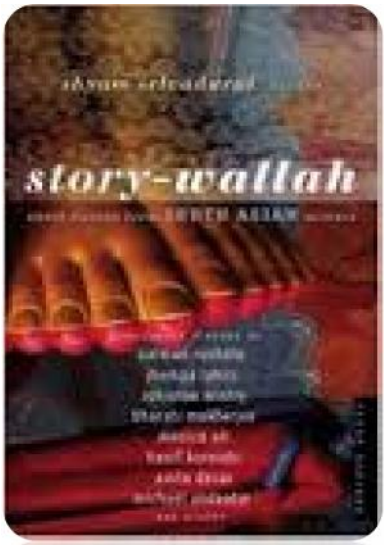
ALAN HOLLINGHURST


ALAN HOLLINGHURST
SHORTLISTED FOR THE 1994 BOOKER PRIZE
THE FOLDING STAR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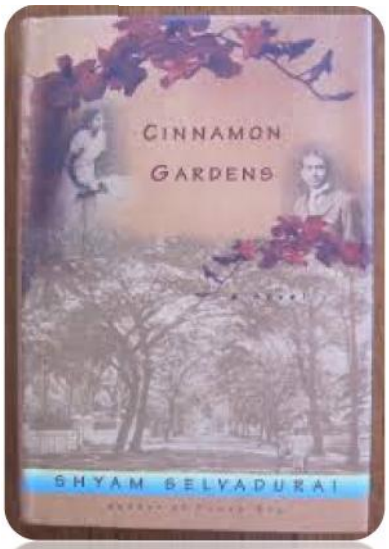
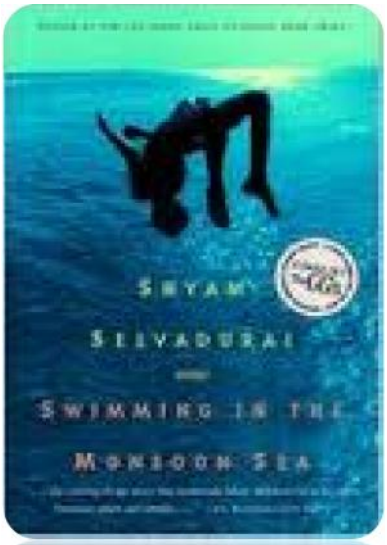

CINNAMON
GARDENS
SHYAM SELVADURAI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SWIMMING IN THE
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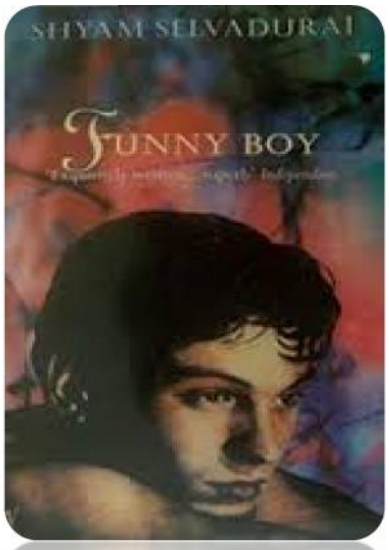
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FUNNY BOY