‘THE PERVERSE IMPLANTATION’: ENQUIRIES INTO TRANSGRESSION IN K. SELLO DUIKER, JULIE ANNE PETERS AND LAXMINARAYAN TRIPATHI

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BY

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DECLARATION

I, Sourav Upadhyaya, hereby declare that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute.

This is being submitted to the Mizoram University for the degree of Master of Philosophy in the Department of English.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled, "'THE PERVERSE IMPLANTATION': ENQUIRIES INTO TRANSGRESSION IN K. SELLO DUIKER, JULIE ANNE PETERS AND LAXMINARAYAN TRIPATHI" is the bonafide research conducted by Mr. Sourav Upadhyaya under my supervision. Mr. Sourav Upadhyaya worked methodically for his dissertation being submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy in the Department of English, Mizoram University.

This is to further certify that the research conducted by Mr. Sourav Upadhyaya has not submitted an application of this or any other University/Institute.

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CONTENTS

Chapter I

Introduction: Situating the Contextual Framework in the Discussion of Alternate Sexualities

Gender and sexuality studies have come of late to occupy a crucial space in the theoretical paradigm that informs the world literature today, interrogating 'perceptions' and 'hegemonic' discourses, which until very recently forced itself with profound and sustained bigotry. A more nuanced and subtle understanding on the alleged "mismatches between sex, gender and desire" (Jagose 3) in the second half of the twentieth century opened up discursive space for alternative gaze enabling people tagged under the umbrella term of 'queer' for the first time to operate out of the 'closet' with the sense of having finally 'arrived'. The need to assert itself was felt long time back but was held back under overwhelming intellectual and public pressure against it and thus though votaries of gender variations like Wilde, Forster and Hall, to name a few, protested in their own way the binary rigidity of sexes, it would not flourish as a formal discipline until many decades later when an increasing number of 'nonconformists' and 'misfits' would overtly and more articulately chose to stand on the 'other' side of this sexual divide.

The exclusive and marginalization politics that surrounds discourses on gender and sexuality forms a part of the cultural self-definition, deviation from which invites heated criticisms; a callous attitude and unsparing pronouncements often substitute, what could be an otherwise, informed debate. Repressive structures, institutional and otherwise, often call for prohibition, sanction and strict disciplinary penalty against deviant sexual practices in favor of compulsive heterosexuality.

> The problem of homosexuality hovers over society like a ghost or a scarecrow. In spite of all the condemnation, the number of perverts seems to be on the increase…Neither the harshest penalties nor the most conciliatory attitudes and most lenient sentences have any effect on the development of this abnormality. (qtd. in Weeks 693)

The above paragraph has been drawn from Jeffrey Weeks' 'Introduction to Guy Hocquenham's Homosexual Desire', where he quotes Alfred Adler's book *Das Problem der Homosexualitat* (1930) and in the context of our discussion serves to drive home two very important points: first, how plentitude homosexuality had turned out to be, and second, how discourse is consolidated to (mis)represent sexual preferences. While the first observation simply brings to fore an 'underrated' fact, it is the later that propels and veers our attention for an impersonal analytical comprehension, for in this discursive representation/misrepresentation lies the root of the problem. Dominant narratives on gender and sexuality see in terms of binaries of male and female, girl and boy, man and woman and this assumption of the binary nature of it coincides with a strong admonition for variations, in kind and degrees, in life and literature, an escape from which is not easily available. Sexual variations, including but not confined to lesbian, gay, bisexual are codified, registered and stigmatized with such discursive practices as calling them, 'contrary to nature', 'the infamous crime against nature', 'crime not fit to be named', 'the love that dare not speak its name' amongst others. Hegemonic narratives that administer sexuality not only assume the binary nature of it but also emphasize on a rigid control over it.

Interrogation of the binaries of sexes in literature and elsewhere reveal a different pattern than people's received understanding of sexuality. The emergence of gender and sexual liberation movements as well as its study across a wide body of disciplines in formal as well as in non-formal blocks has emerged as a strong anchor for advocacy of sexual variance against repressive structures calling for prohibition, sanction and strict disciplinary penalty of deviant sexual orientations. Theoretical and critical mass of writings today, that undertakes to articulate and contend for non-heterosexual discursivities, have been engaging with renewed passion towards dismantling of binary opposition that informs sexual preferences. Recent forays into gender and sexuality studies are however not only questioning the collective sexual consciousness that calls for routined and compulsive introspection of deviant sexual practices but also working to situate it as a 'standard' practice. Conventional patterns of sexuality that looks in terms of binaries of man and women, girl and boy, male and female are increasingly being questioned in favor of fluid sexual discourses that encompass a wide variety of sexual preferences. It undertakes to dismantle this binary opposition that informs sexual preferences, questioning the network of interconnecting mechanisms that administer it and vouch for a more open and liberal discourse around enforced sexual arrangements.

The heterosexual claim to truth is questioned through factual representation of the existence of homosexual practices in different societies, culminating with the idea that homosexual behavior have always existed and therefore attempts at arresting it are uncalled for. Gayle Rubin communicates one such factual representation of sexuality in New Guinea society in the following words:

> Homosexual behavior is always present among humans. But in different societies and epochs it may be rewarded or punished, required or forbidden, a temporary experience or a life-long vocation. In some New Guinea societies, for example, homosexual activities are obligatory for all males. Homosexual acts are considered utterly masculine, roles are based on age, and partners are determined by kinship status. (Rubin 680)

The idea that before the modern sexual arrangements came into being, non-heterosexuality was practiced in different societies since ancient times in different forms, that non-reproductive alternative sexual practices is still being practiced in some 'unadulterated' societies have been highlighted again and again by many other authors.

The investigation into desire and intercourse in ancient Greece has exhumed a sexual culture that is very different and radical from our own. Thomas K. Hubbard's *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome: A Sourcebook of Basic Documents* (2003) extensively covers the nuances of Greek sexuality and sexual identity. His book seeks to, "bring together, in as complete a form as is possible in a single affordable volume, the literary and documentary evidence concerning same-gender eroticism in ancient Greece and Rome, as well as a limited, but representative, sample of artistic evidence." (Hubbard xv) "To be sure, classical antiquity featured a variety of discrete practices in this regard, each of which enjoyed differing levels of acceptance depending on the time and place…" (Hubbard 1). K.J. Dover in describing the phenomena of homosexual behavior and sentiment found in Greek literature and art between the eighth and second centuries B.C. in *Greek Homosexuality* (1978) notes that ancient Greek saw and participated in sexuality not in

terms of gender roles but based on ‘active penetrator’ and ‘passive receiver’, one man enjoyed in relational to another human. Sexuality in Athens was organized to meet the needs of the adult male citizen, whose body was the locus of all power in the state. All other human beings - all women, all slaves, all foreigners, and adolescent aristocratic boys - existed sexually in relation to the adult male citizen and existed for his sexual gratification.” (Arkins 21) Classical scholarships like Herodotus, Plato and Athenaeus etc. are increasingly being investigated today and read in terms of deviant practices. The examples of Sappho, the Greek poet who immortalized verses of love and desire between women and how Plato eulogized her as the tenth Muse and how Plato himself stuffed some of his works with homoerotic materials (His book *Symposium* (c.385–370 BC) explores different aspects of sexuality, even those that we may deem ‘transgressions’ in today’s parlance) have become a point of ‘reference’ to many authors to insist on the existence and historicity of homosexuality. Lillian Faderman records nearly four hundred years of ‘relationship’ women shared amongst themselves beginning from the Renaissance in *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (1981), underpinning a lesbian history that was devoid of stigma that we associate it with today. *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past* (1989), written by Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus and George Chauncey is another path breaking anthology in non-heterosexual experiences. The book draws its materials from across the globe, through Cuba, India, Japan, Germany, America, England, Africa, France, China and classical Athens and posits homosexuality in terms of universal pervasiveness and continuity from ancient times.

"To imagine that sex and sexual acts were subject to a whole range of repression and prohibitions is to misread the evidence that highlights the extent to which sexuality has always been on social, cultural, and political agendas in one form or another." (Purvis 428). But it would also be wrong to assume that all ancient societies embraced deviant sexualities, that non-heterosexuals were never stigmatized, that they were not persecuted or that toleration largely shaped societies; whether homosexuals and, by extension, all non-heterosexuals flourished, or were tolerated, or invited vigilance or faced active persecution depended largely on the prevailing discourse that guided the popular consciousness of that particular society. Michel Foucault, whose ideas have become influential in modern day sexuality studies, and who spoke of 'certain frankness' prior to the eighteenth century in the discussion of sex, would himself deny in the following words: "I do not claim that sex has not been prohibited, or barred, or masked, or misapprehended since the classical age." (12) In fact, a large part of the history of sexuality is the history of repression and of persecution.

Foucault argues that prior to eighteenth-century, three major explicit codes regulated sexual conducts: canonical law, the Christian pastoral, and civil law. (37) "For Foucault, sexuality was a relationship of elements and discourses, a series of meaning-giving practices and activities, a social apparatus which had a history- with complex roots in the pre-Christian and Christian past…" (Weeks 18) Despite books like Hubbard's *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome: A Sourcebook of Basic Documents* (2003) and Dover's *Greek Homosexuality*'s (1978) attempt at situating same-sex relationship within the Greek social and cultural milieu, there are evidences of homophobic laws passed to

arrest ‘unnatural sex’. In 342 BC Roman emperor Constantius II together with his brother Constans issued decree that banned homosexuality. In fourth century AD, emperor Valentina II, in sixth century, Byzantine emperor Justinian and in sixteenth century king Henry VIII of England, likewise, outlawed same-sex in their respective territories. Such laws find their modern equivalence in the Penal Code of 1791 in France, the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885 in England, the Indian Penal Code 377 and the Sexual Offences Act of Africa. John Boswell, in *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*: *Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (1980) demonstrates how the late Middle Ages in particular saw an increasing and harsh stigmatization of same-sex activity as a threat to social and religious order (Hall 103). St. Thomas Aquinas in his influential but unfinished *Summa Theologica* underscores the importance of canonical laws, phrased often as eternal law, in the following words:

> …the rational creature is subject to Divine providence in the most excellent way, in so far as it partakes of a share of providence, by being provident both for itself and for others. Wherefore it has a share of the Eternal Reason, whereby it has a natural inclination to its proper act and end: and this participation of the eternal law in the rational creature is called the natural law. (Aquinas 1334)

Aquinas would argue that some sins are against nature and therefore unnatural vices, especially those that run counter to the intercourse of male and female. The *Summa* says nothing new and only rationalizes the long-held beliefs that have been passed unto the period. The natural inclination to participate in the ‘eternal law’, to be governed by ‘reason’ and act in accordance with ‘Divine providence’ was encouraged and alternatively punished

for ‘acts’ in accordance with what it deemed ‘divine’ or ‘transgressive’. With the resurgence of Christianity, the church matched its hegemony with that of the state in exercising power and exerting control over the popular consciousness; both church and the state wielded immense power and in the long run, the moral and political energies of both these powerful institutions would vie and cooperate alternatively with each other in its bid to control societal discourse- and this extended naturally to the realm of sexuality also. Christianity was a major force that regulated sexual discourse for a considerable period of time; though it continues to be a force in the present times, one cannot help but observe how reduced its power is in its capacity to dictate terms as earlier. Drawing a sharp divide between the free liberal world of paganism in the pre-Christian era marked by sexual promiscuity and gender fluidity and the binary world of Christianity strictly divided along the lines of male\female and girl/boy, Donald E. Hall in his ‘Gender and Queer Theory’ notes:

> One of the ways that Judaism, then Christianity, differentiated itself from paganism and Greco-Roman culture generally was in the strictness of its moral teachings and increasing specification of rules governing domestic relationships. The hedonism and the social chaos of the late Roman empire was what Christianity used to defines itself against, emphasizing, in contradictions, temperance, stable domestic arrangements based on well-defined marital rules, and strict obedience to church doctrine and political/religious hierarchy. And it is important here to emphasize here that the era’s ‘gender theory’ was one of an ever tightening regulation of

> male\female relationships and couplings, as well as a proscription of male/male and female/female sexual relationships. (Hall 103)

Despite strict enforcements of male/female divide, homosexual culture have always existed, either wantonly or as an underground subculture depending on the societal discourse that it lived in. “The prevailing gender and sexual paradigms of an era regulate everyone’s lives, working to curtail possibilities and relentlessly push sexual/erotic relationships into socially acceptable channels.” (Hall 103) While Hall castigates Christianity on account of its pathetic and disagreeable history in its handling of sexuality, John Boswell’s ‘groundbreaking’ work *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (1980) that traces the history of homosexuality in Western Europe, in its gay manifestation, from the beginning of the Christian era to the fourteenth century proffers us a paradoxical diegesis on the role of church, particularly the Catholic church, “arguing that the Catholic Church had not condemned gay people throughout its history, but rather, at least until the twelfth century, had alternately evinced no special concern about homosexuality or actually celebrated love between men." (Chauncey et al. Introduction 5)

Research outside the ‘Christendom’ evinces no less fascinating glimpses on the perception of ethical norms and the diverse arrangement of sexuality and desires, particularly in the Islamic past, the African tradition and the Eastern civilizations. Studies in homosexuality in these different traditions exhibit different worldview at different times. Although same-sex relation is prohibited and held impermissible in the traditional Islamic jurisprudence and invites swift and harsh punishment and while it has alternatively been influenced by multiple cultural and political historicity, authors have advanced arguments

on its scope to take on flexible and forbearing approximation, more especially its capacity to situate it outside the procreative role. Against the more current conservative attitude of confrontation and hostility where homosexuality is seen as vice or sin and interpreted in decadent terms as corruption in morals and ethics, same-sex relations in pre-modern Islamic societies reveal a multifarious affair, displaying multifaceted attitudes towards love among male members. This ranged from toleration to leniency to seeing it as amoral. Sabine Schmidtke in 'Homoeroticism and Homosexuality in Islam: A Review Article' offers a different insight to the entire discursivities. Schmidtke writes, "Islamic law condemned homo- sexual practice, not homoerotic sentiment. Mutual attraction between males was unanimously viewed to be perfectly natural and normal." (260) Richard C. Martin, the Editor in Chief, of *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World* captures this paradoxical state of affairs in the following words:

> Both erotic attraction and sexual behavior between members of the same sex have always been recognized phenomena in Islamic societies, but attitudes toward them have been complex, severe religious and legal sanctions against the latter coexisting with accommodating and at times indeed celebratory expressions of the former. (316)

While Martin highlights the complex nature in which same-sex desire is seen in Islamic societies, El-Rouayheb in studying the existence of homosexuality in *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800* (2005) argues that the western construction against homosexuality was absent in pre-modern Arab-Islamic world.

Rouayheb sees the ingression of nineteenth century European attitudes towards homosexuality as a major factor conditioning the current Islamic approach concerning it.

Homosexuality in Africa follows a similar trajectory as the Arabian counterparts. The Un-African nature of homosexuality goes side by side with a native appreciation of it. "In much of the debate about homosexualities and Africa, Africa is referred to as a kind of cultural, social, and political unity, and also as a kind of a unity in relation to homosexuality. African history is the history of a continent in flux and in contact and exchange with the world (Karenga 1993:74-75), and as such it is complex and many sided (Williams 1974:33)". (Pincheon 41) Homosexuality in Africa has been influenced by colonial contours like the colonial homophobia as fostered by anti-sodomy laws passed by the British administration.

Homosexual development in the Indian sub-continent is no less interesting. Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai's *Same-Sex Love in India: A Literary History* (2001), produces comprehensive empirical evidence on the existence and continuance of same-sex love across India tracing "the history of ideas in Indian written traditions about love between women and love between men who are not biologically related." (Vanita and Kidwai xxiii) The book derives its material from Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim and contemporary sources as it seeks to foreground homosocial, homophile, homoerotic and homosexual tradition that are firmly 'rooted' in Indian tradition. Foucault says that prior to Victorian era there was a certain level of frankness, comparatively speaking, with regard to sexuality in which concealment and undue reticence had narrow space, with space even for illicit things. And it was only the arrival of the Victorian era that on matters of sex, silence became the golden

rule': "Sex was driven out, denied and reduced to silence. Not only did it not exist, it had no right to exist and would be made to disappear upon its least manifestation- whether in acts or in words" (Foucault 4) When the British ruled India, the British education started shaping the ethics, morals and conscience of the whole populace. In the process, homosexuality that was so much characteristic of India prior to the arrival of the British became its casualty and languished at the altar of the new evolving morality. Sukhbir Singh in *Gay Subcultures and Literatures: The Indian Projection* (2014) argues thus:

> …no one took exceptions to the gay and lesbian bonding earlier in India, so much so that their erotic forms were spectacularly inscribed in the myths, literature, temple architecture,, and cave paintings…With the subsequent dominance of Moslems and Christians in India, homosexuality came to be morally stigmatized and socially segregated to the margins of the mainstream society…The British colonial government added Article 377 to the Indian Penal Code in 1868, which criminalized homosexuality and laid down stringent punishment of fine and/or life imprisonment for sexual acts against the so called "order of nature". (2)

Explaining the existence of homosexuality in Christianity, Islam and Hinduism and in fact beyond religion to secular lifestyles, Sukhbir Singh writes:

> Homosexuality is as old as humanity. The queer practices were secretly existent among the queens in harems, cowherds, soldiers, slaves, prisoners, nuns, priests, harvesting women, and the nightly spinning maidens in the olden days. The instance of "Ghilman in Islam, "Sodom and Gomorrah," in Christianity, and

> "Ardhnarishwar" in Hinduism testify further to the ancient inscriptions of homosexuality in the prominent religions of the world. (Introduction 1)

Homosexuality and by extension, any non-heterosexual experience, as a discursive site, invited criticism, embarrassment and persecution only a few decades back. And yet in the face of all hostilities, queer activists, historians and creative writers have been taking upon themselves to unearth and study this profoundly 'controversial' and 'distasteful' subject in the interest of non-heterosexual existence that has been repressed, tyrannized and ghettoed over many centuries. If a large part of the history of sexuality is the history of repression and of persecution, than it is also equally one of resistance.

The earliest of such defense would come from Utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham; His essay 'Offences Against One's' Self: Paederasty', which remained unpublished during his lifetime, was a major breakthrough in same-sex writing in that he for the first time argued on the necessity of repealing 'existing' laws that indicted homosexuality insisting that there was nothing in it for anybody to be afraid of, and, that "…it produces no pain in anyone. On the contrary it produces pleasure." (qtd. in Stevens 4) Bentham's concerns were not misplaced given the expanse of non-heterosexual sub-culture that flourished in England of the eighteenth century as recorded in Ned Ward's *History of the London Clubs* (1709). It is however only in the nineteenth century that we see a burgeoning of literature that began to explore homosexual and other alternative sexual propensities in a detailed and analytical mode. Karl Heinrich Ulrich (1825-1895) is today considered a pioneer in the modern gay rights movement that we witness presently all over the world. Ulrichs would become the first homosexual to come out publicly in defense of

homosexuality when he pleaded before Jurists in Munich urging repeal in the anti-homosexual laws just as Bentham would in England. His collection of essays published under the title 'Studies on the Riddle of Male-Male Love' (1864-80), where he coined new terms like '*Urning*' (for a man who desires men) and '*Dioning*' (for one who desires women) apart from being revolutionary during his own times when same-sex was considered a taboo, influenced an entire generation of writers who would come later in defense of non-heterosexuality. Karl-Maria Kertbeny, who famously coined the terms 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual', and wrote and campaigned extensively against the Prussian anti-sodomy law, was also a product of the nineteenth century response to homophobic 'heritage'. Carl Friedrich Otto Westpal's 'Contrary Sexual Feeling', Richard Von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886) and *Sex Variant Women in Literature* (1956) by Jeannette Foster are other seminal texts in LGBTQ literature.

Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) and more importantly his trial in 1895 under Britain's Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 that criminalized all sex acts between men as 'gross indecency' that saw Wilde in prison, was a major moment in the history of homosexual and non-heterosexual fight for rights. Wilde was not the first person who was accused of 'literary obscenity' and put on trial. Nearly one hundred and fifty years before Wilde was sent to prison, authors and publishers of *Memoirs of a Lady of Pleasure* or popularly known as *Fanny Hill* (1749), John Cleland and Ralph Griffiths already faced state persecution for incorporating hardly a few paragraphs of same-sex materials into the text. But Wilde was a famous dramatist and novelist and hence his trial received wider coverage,

appreciable response and unwittingly offered space for greater curiosity on the subject.

Freud's ideas on homosexuality, though ambivalent, are no less interesting and overwhelmingly progressive for his times. His arguments in favor of homosexuality are revealed in his 1935 letter to a mother who had asked him to treat her son's homosexuality. Freud would write back that, "Homosexuality is assuredly no advantage, but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation; it cannot be classified as an illness; we consider it to be a variation of the sexual function, produced by a certain arrest of sexual development." (qtd. in Burke) While defending homosexuality of 'shame', 'vice' and 'degradation' here, Freud's sees homosexuality as a 'half-baked' phenomenon. Freud's such ambivalent views find its way to the general field of psychoanalysis also. The importance of Freud and psychoanalysis to the study of sexuality and literature is not because the theories offer definitive account of sex but because of the impact they have had on the study of sexuality throughout the twentieth century. (Purvis 431)

The heterosexual claim to truth derived from a dualistic and overly simplified understanding of sexuality received its first fuller critical and analytical treatment in the works of Michel Foucault, especially in his *The History of Sexuality* (1976). Though the book was not written as literature 'proper', yet the influence of the book has moved beyond its confines and is today cited across a wide range of disciplines including literature, sociology, psychology, education, cultural studies and politics amongst others. *The History of Sexuality* (1976) challenged fundamental aspects of the western philosophical tradition, questioning dualistic and oversimplified worldviews and threw up new models of

existence. Foucault's book helped situate sexuality in a historical perspective as a social construct. Foucault locates the origin of our modern day collective parochial propensity towards what he would call 'peripheral sexualities', which is fancied and condemned as 'scandalous', 'dangerous', 'vice' and 'crime' etc., to Victorian era, arguing how 'open spaces', 'free expression' and 'certain frankness' that characterized the preceding ages, paved way for taboo, nonexistence and silence under the Victorian Puritanism, leading eventually to what he calls our 'mute', 'restrained' and 'hypocritical' sexuality'. The book is an iconoclastic and systematic exploration of the network of interconnecting mechanisms developed in the nineteenth century- psychology, psychiatry, medicine, pedagogy and prison- and the multiciplity of discursive practices it brought in its wake, that would transform sex into discourse, into a thing which one not only prohibited but also controlled, not only judged but also administered. Such mechanisms, Foucault notes, bore the mark and mask of 'rationality' and 'scientificity' and pretended to speak the truth, to speak 'for' the subject concerned while it worked inwardly to prevent its very emergence. Foucault, in particular, would take special interest in how sexualities in children and adolescent are regulated and governed through a complex conglomeration of institutional devices and discursive strategies including censorships, denials, observations, opinions, clinical cases, reforms and plans for ideal institutions.

> …reduction has not been the means employed for trying to achieve it. The nineteenth century and our own have been rather the age of multiplication: a dispersion of sexualities, a strengthening of their disparate forms, a multiple implantation of "perversions". (Foucault 37)

An important and ingenious aspect of the book is that contrary to the 'repressive hypothesis' that reads sex only in terms of repression and that govern our current understanding of sexuality, the book argues for a new model of sexuality studies in which the readers are invited to look into the connection between sex, pleasure, knowledge and power in a historical context. The book concerns itself with, in Foucault's own words, "to locate the forms of power, the channel it takes, and the discourses it permeates…how it penetrates and controls everyday pleasure." (11) The title of the present study has been derived from this book, and must be understood in terms of the discursive practices, institutional and otherwise, employed to censure and intimidate anyone that do not confirm to compulsive heterosexuality by implanting on them such adjectives as 'corrupt', 'queer', 'degenerate', 'pervert' 'abnormal' etc. or in Foucault's words, "the solidification and implantation of an entire sexual mosaic." (53) Another important aspect of the book is to be discovered in the division that Foucault makes between 'scientia sexualis' and 'ars erotica'. Sex, Foucault believes, has been perceived and fashioned in oriental civilizations like China, Japan and India from a non-utilitarian approach such that the question of power that 'permits' or 'forbids' sexual conducts do not arise at all, but nevertheless [sexuality is] held in 'reverence' and hence 'secrecy' (as divulging it would lose its effectiveness). This is distinguished from 'scientia sexualis' where sex and pleasure meet or encounter 'knowledge' and 'power' as mentioned above. Foucault's other books *Madness and Civilization* (1961), *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), *The Order of Things* (1966), *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), *Discipline and Punish* (1975), all share a similar preoccupation in deconstructing institutional practices that coerce people into particular subject positions and produce new 'truths'; they continue his ideas on power, each book

making a strong case on the deployment of ideological and repressive state apparatuses employed to govern and administer homogeneous views on a host of subjects. Throughout these works, Foucault analyses new 'productive' forms of power that goes into the making of a homogeneous worldview, conceiving them as, "an interactive network of shifting and changing relations among and between individuals, groups, institutions and structures." (Taylor 3). The paradigm shift in our current understanding and identification of homosexuality from sin, crime and pathology to being a variant of human sexuality owes itself largely to Foucault who played a critical role in changing the discourse in the late twentieth-century.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, American scholar and critical thinker, was another major influence in the fields of gender and queer studies in the last half of the twentieth century. Her books *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985), *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) and *Tendencies* (1993) have been influential and 'groundbreaking' reads in 'potential queer nuances.' *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* and *Epistemology of the Closet* evolved as important books in the west providing critical theoretical groundings on gay and lesbian studies at a time when the discursive field was just opening itself up to the world.

Gender and queer theory found another champion in Judith Butler. Butler is best known for her books *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993). They have been important influences in gender and sexuality studies ever since its publication. Butler's principal contribution to the gender and sexual criticism is her theory of performativity. Drawing her

influence from Simone de Beauvoir famous claim that, "one is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman." (Beauvoir 330), Butler in her essay 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory' rejects the claim of gender being a stable identity in favor of "social temporality" (520), arguing that it is an identity constituted through a "*stylized repetition of acts*." (519) and compelled by social sanction and taboo. To Butler, a gendered identity is a constructed identity, an illusory identity that is accomplished or achieved by repeated performances until everyone comes to believe that it is the truth and the only truth and hence perform again in, what Butler says, "the mode of belief." (520) Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) carries forward her idea of 'gender performativity' as she question what she describes as 'the heterosexual matrix', the 'regulative discourses', that "grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized". (194). The book was written as part of the 'cultural life of a collective struggle' who 'live, or try to live, on the sexual margins'. The book argues that sex and gender are complex mechanism culturally constructed with no inherent inner truth and held only by heterosexual matrix that allows and negates certain identities; the book is a fresh read against conventional feminism that harps on identity politics. The idea of identity as free and flexible and gender as a construct, a coerced performance enacted through repetition and imitation, and not natural, constitutes one of the foundations of queer theory today. Butler's another contribution to queer theory has been her insistence on the 'limiting nature' of identity categories; she considers such categorization as potential site for discursive regulations and therefore erroneous. Annamarie Jagose, Teresa de Lauretis, Adrienne Rich and Monique Wittig have made significant contributions towards 'queer's' contemporary proliferation in

their own way, each of them throwing up distinctive new theoretical models in which sexuality studies be taken up.

It is against this background that this research work seeks to study the three primary texts – K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001), Julie Anne Peters' *Keeping You a Secret* (2003) and Laxminarayan Tripathi's *Me Hijra, me Lakshmi* (2015) and construct the necessary arguments within the theoretical framework set by the critics mentioned above. The three texts not only explore non-heterosexual experiences but question in their own way established criterions of sexual practices that looks in terms of binaries of man and women, girl and boy, male and female, in favor of fluid sexual discourses that encompass a wide variety of sexual preferences.

South African literary canvas, post the 'apartheid', inaugurated a new kind of literature. While racial tensions continued to be a part of the literary culture and held its sway across genres, it took a different trajectory and marked a radical shift from the old materials in that new thematic concerns that were more contemporary, real and immediate came to be witnessed - urbanisation, identity crisis, feminism, AIDS, ecology, homosexuality, class divide, substance abuse amongst others. It is this newer canvas that gave birth to a new set of writers like K. Sello Duiker, Phaswane Mpe and Zakes Mda. Sello Duiker, who is the focus of this research work, would produce two significant texts in a short span of time – *Thirteen Cents* (2000) and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001) and make a significant and lasting contribution to the emergence of new South Africa.

Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* was published in the beginning of the twenty-first century and explores the pressures and the contradictions of living in the intimidating environment and vicissitude of post apartheid South Africa characterized by such engagements as drug abuse, racial tensions and homophobia. The book, in particular, is an exploration of what it means to be a gay in South Africa. Duiker's book offers interesting and many interruptions in the domains of compulsive heterosexuality, for the readers to construct and deconstruct meanings within the text. Duiker allows his readers to see through the binary division of gender and sexes as his characters come face to face with alternate realities. In cosmopolitan Cape Town, where Duiker works out his homosexual discursivities through the character of Tshepo, the body becomes a site of control and dominance. "Identities exist and are acquired, claimed and allocated within power relations. Identification is something *over* which struggle take place and *with* which stratagems are advanced- it is means and end in politics- and at stake is the classification of populations as well the classification of individuals." (Jenkins 45) Classification are not disinterested divisions but one that involves power play. It is hierarchal in nature and involves bias, prejudice and bigotry and as Jenkins would remind us, to identify someone could be enough to decide how to treat her (6) Duiker's novel offers interesting insights into this hierarchal power-play. This research work will seek to understand how identities are produced and maintained, the different vocabularies that are used in its stigmatization and the different network of mechanisms that exercises its power over same-sex relationship.

In Africa, where colonial legacies and African 'authenticities' struggle to imagine the relationship between Africa and homosexuality, Duiker played a significant role in

transforming the African homosexual literary tradition. Though homosexuality has been part of the African literary tradition much before the arrival of Duiker, its treatment was rather negligent, shoddy and very often than not negative and dismissive. It is in this context that Duiker would emerge in the African homosexual scene and bring fresh insights. Duiker's novel looks at the tension between being an African and a homosexual. The novel takes up the question of whether homosexuality is African or Un-African, particularly in the context of the colonial legacy. The research work seeks to understand how this tension is produced and resolved in course of the text. It also further tries to know how Duiker takes the help of cross-cultural narratives to build his argument against compulsive heterosexuality.

This research works also seeks to problematize Duiker's novel in context specifity. It seeks to understand how the intrusion of institutions such as race complicates the entire discursivities on sex. While Duiker brings the racial conflict early in the novel and continues throughout the plot, it is in the discussion of sexuality that it gains a significant meaning. Western-models of sexual studies are important tools of dissection in identity formations, but they are not sufficient to capture the complexities, nuances and subtleties in context specifity. In the African context, where race and compulsive heterosexuality intersect, lap and overlap each other, it becomes imperative to look at alternative framework in which it could be better understood. As such this research work factors in the best practices of 'intersectionality' research to uncover queer African archives. 'Intersectionality' has emerged as a critical tool, framework, and theory to deconstruct how social differences are produced. In this intersectionality research, Critical Race Theory has

emerged as an important theory. Critical Race Theory is a theoretical framework that studies society and culture as they relate to the categorization of race, law and power. Though Critical Race Theory developed in the arena of law, it was quick to move to other domains like political science, women's studies etc. In the context of our discussion, it seeks to understand the relation between race, sexuality and power and how tensions are produced or resolved within the text.

Julie Anne Peters' novel *Keeping You a Secret* explores the identity crisis of lesbian characters as they seek to forge and build space in a world that is not only avowedly rooted in but also zealously promotes compulsive heterosexuality. The text gives insights into the life of young adults as they struggle with their lesbian identity in the much touted 'liberal' environment of America. This research work will see how the heterosexual/homosexual tension is produced within the text. A critical literary approach requires that we address more than the manifested violence. It requires us to look at those subtle and nuanced aspects that challenges and silences queer as an evil. Peters' novel provides a coherent context for discussion through lived social relations into how differences are produced. The text bring to fore the rigidity of heterosexual discursivities, the hegemonic positions it enjoys in relation to alternate sexualities and the power dynamics that leads to social inequities. The standard parlance that calls for outlawing alternative sexuality manifests itself in different institutional orders. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault provides a persuasive historical narrative about the formation of a modern homosexual identity while also emphasizing on the network of mechanism that promotes compulsive heterosexuality. Peters' novel incorporates many of these Foucauldian aspects of institutional segregations

and control. This dissertation will look to deconstruct the different institutions like family, pedagogy, psychiatry that are advocates of compulsive heterosexuality in Peters. It will look into the working of these institutional mechanisms. It will look at the relationship between power and these institutions. The centrality of power that these institutions emanate in identity maintenance can be gauged from the fact that the discourse or narrative that the power centers upholds, howsoever 'wrong' it may be, is very often than not difficult to transcend, inviting fierce wrath and incisive punishment in the process. It not only asserts but also fiercely defends, imposes and resists any other alternative that might be proposed. It is in the maintenance of its discourse, in its ability to hold on to it, in its capacity to resist alternative approaches that power is exercised. Individual identities, under such a scenario, always remain subservient to the imposed collective identity. It shows how organized, institutional violence function in myriad ways to marginalize individual 'space' to the rigid boundaries of sexual orientation and its impact in real terms and the psyche. It will also seek to understand how the text attempts to break many misconceptions about gender and sexuality by questioning the binary model of engagement i.e. boy/girl, man/woman, male/female. The text offers many examples of the dangers of compulsive heterosexuality, how it asserts and forces itself. It will further look at how bodies become a site of control. In Peters, we also witness an increasing endorsement of 'queer' identity. Homosexuality exists in Peters as a marginalized entity but with a continuous and coherent mutinous history of its own. To subvert an existing dominant narrative Butler suggests that we, "affirm the local possibilities of intervention through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity and, therefore, present the immanent possibility of contesting them." (Butler 188) Butler's insistence on disruptive social

performances was a major idea that offered a new strategy and shaped the queer theory during her times. Peters' aggressively puts forward her characters to challenge and transgress the existing orders or performances that govern popular discourses on sex by inscribing on them a rebellious nature. The obstruction, regulation and policing of alternate sexuality are met with reverse power in course of the narrative. Peters' novel offers many instances of contesting forced identities through subversion of heterosexual practices and this is what the third chapter of this research work seeks to highlight. *Keeping You a Secret* serves as a document of social justice in line with 'queer's' contemporary proliferation in literary discourse.

Laxminarayan Tripathi's *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* deals in transsexuality. It is one of the rare work in transgender literatures that effectively captures the complex life and challenges of the 'hijra' community in India. Laxmi explores her autobiographic experiences in *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi*. Laxmi reframes the debate putting deviant gender and sexuality in the centre of discussion and where heterosexuality is displaced to the periphery. The book not only gives Laxmi a voice of her own, to speak for herself, to speak about her community but it illustrates a larger point of speaking about transgenders in general. Each and every encounter in Laxmi's book, works towards a sustained dismantling of the heterosexual proposition of 'two gender' and 'one sexuality'. The fourth section of this research work attempts to understand the transgender and trans-sexuality outside the category of gay and lesbian criticism as it is generally done. It further distinguishes the 'hijras' from the transgenders in general. 'Hijras' are transgenders but all transgenders cannot be 'hijras', as hijra is an institution and therefore involves membership. In a society

that celebrates 'softness' and 'delicacy' in women and 'macho' and 'toughness' in men, the Hijras become the proverbial 'other'. Amidst these, it is interesting to note how hijras seek to create a meaningful place in the society. While it will look at the transgender problem in general, it will do so keeping in mind the specifically Indian cultural context in which the hijras must be understood. It will look into India's past to find answers to the question of transgenders' role. In doing so, it will visit the religious and cultural sites as well as literature, archaeology, history and other artefacts that the hijras themselves use to foreground their significance. The fourth chapter will also highlight the question of how the importation of virulent homophobia in India from Europe and West is dealt within the text. It will further look at how the text deals with stereotypes highlighting in particular the role of art and activism in fighting those stereotypes. Laxmi highlights the role of patriarchy in the heterosexual discourse and as such it will seek to deconstruct the role of patriarchy in the perpetuation of compulsive heterosexuality.

If the three books are divided in their treatment of sexuality in its different orientations, then they are united in their chosen definition to speak for the 'underdogs'. Deviant sexual practices come under scrutiny but what is more important is the space given to opposing discourse that sets the homosexual narrative into motion. The power that the society wields upon them is met with reverse power. Holland Jaeger in *Keeping You a Secret* (2003) despite the unjust rulings of her mother, bullied by society at large decides to live a life on her own terms. Her decision to stay alone must be understood in terms of resistance to the popular culture of sexual homogeneity. Similarly, Tshepo and Laxmi revolt in their own way to the condemnation and violence meted out to them in the two

other books. It is important to mention here that in our analysis of the three primary texts, sexuality theories would not be used on a homogeneous note but rather cut to fit into where it fits. In our analysis of *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001) and *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* (2015), many of the opinions of Foucault would make no sense and as such new theoretical models and more especially indigenous critical inputs would have to be taken into account. In our discussion of the autobiographical experiences of Laxmi, we would as such work on writers like Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai. Similarly, we shall look from an African perspective in our discussion of Duiker's novel.

The books are set at different time frames and in different societies and culture. Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* was published 2001 and was one of the major gay novels to have come out from Africa in English, while Peters' *Keeping You a Secret* was published in 2003 and concerns a lesbian female character in an American setting. Tripathi's autobiography *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* was published in 2015 and involves transsexual and transsocial encounters. The timeline that these novels cover span a period of fifteen years. And as such, the study will also trace the line of argument over the years and seek to find out the discursive changes in the representation and reception of lesbianism, gay, bisexuality and other queer variations through these three texts.

An appraisal of previous historical records of gay and lesbian writing, for and in opposition to it, is principal and indispensable to our current understanding of the predicament that accompanies it in the present times. While the urge to find historical precedents and historical records can no longer be the sole framework in which the current discourses on sex will be discussed and interrogated in view of the shifting tenors in queer

studies in our own times, yet wheeling back to the past helps unravel many of the issues and complications surrounding homosexuality while we negotiate for it a ‘safe’ and ‘secured’ space in the ‘immediate’ thought-table.

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Chapter II

'Wheyting be Dat?': Investigation of 'Queer' in *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*

African literature has today come to be recognized as a major shareholder in the world literature today with its own array of themes, styles, plots and characterizations. The African literary can be divided into two distinct periods– pre-apartheid and post-apartheid. While writers during the pre-apartheid focused exclusively on racism, the post-apartheid shifted the focus to the other byproducts of the colonial rule. The end of apartheid witnessed the emergence of new social problems that writers have attempted to confront in their works. Post-apartheid writing is marked by an abrupt shift away from a racial focus towards a wider concern with various dimensions of African existence. Sam Durrant in 'The Invention of Mourning in Post-Apartheid Literature' writes that following the apartheid period, the African literary scene was characterized "in its transformative potential, its ability to grapple with legacies of oppression and imagine new states of being and even new beings of the state." (Durrant 441) African literature following the apartheid period started addressing on contemporary things like drugs abuse, AIDS, urbanisation, class divide, feminism, homosexuality, nationhood, identity, ecology etc. Amongst this new set of writers, K. Sello Duiker would emerge as a significant name. Michael Green sees K. Sello Duiker together with Phaswane Mpe and Zakes Mda as, "part of what has now become something of a regular triumvirate forming the kernel of a new canon for the new nation." (Green 334) Though Duiker belongs to South Africa proper, his works are an emblematic of a number of other nationalism in Africa.

Literature has emerged as an important site for the negotiation and renegotiation of cultural and civilizational differences in Africa where colonial legacies and African

'authenticities' struggle to imagine the relationships between 'Africa' and 'homosexuality'. K. Sello Duiker is one of the foremost writers of African descent who has been central figure in transforming the African homosexual literary tradition. Though he died young at the age of thirty one, his novels *Thirteen Cents* (2000) that won him the 2001 Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Text in the Africa Region together with *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001), that was awarded the 2002 Herman Charles Bosman Prize, have cemented his place in the pantheon of a new generation of South African writers post the apartheid. The 'Coming-Out' of the African Same-Sex novel and the burgeoning African critical attention to alternate sexualities, had started long before Duiker emerged on the scene. Wole Soyinka's novel *The Interpreters* (1965) was one of the earliest major novels to depict same-sex sexuality but its treatment of homosexuality like other contemporary write-ups is posited against gays and the lesbians. A character in Sierra Leonean playwright Amady Maddy's play *Big Berrin* remarks: "Homosexuality? Wheyting be dat?" (Maddy 16), displaying not only ignorance but also an implicit disdain and contempt. This also tells how the preliminary South African literary tradition dealt with the question of homosexuality. Others works like Yambo Ouologuem's *Bound to Violence* (1968), Kofi Awoonor's *This Earth*, *My Brother* (1971), Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973), Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977) and Mariama Ba's *Scarlet Song* (1986) are typical examples of if not outright homophobic, at least disagreeable and insensitive treatments.

Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* seeks to unravel the anxieties and misgivings of negotiating identity in the evolving South Africa post the apartheid. It

explores the pressures and contradictions of living in post-apartheid South Africa characterized by trauma and violence signified in such thematic concerns as racial engagements, drugs, rape, homosexuality etc. It in particular explores alternate sexuality, and more notably gay sex as character come face with new realities and possibilities about who they are and what their place in the world is. The text does this through different characters and most notably, in the character of Tshepo, the protagonist. The narrative centers on Tshepo and the characters around him as they seek to find meaning to their lives amidst drugs and it is in this interaction that the thematic concern of homosexuality is explored. Duiker does this through the interweaving of ten narrative voices, who offer their own point of view at different times. The plot of the novel unfolds through shifting perspectives of each character's consciousness.

The discursive and fictional construction of homosexuality, "[t]exts are not simply mimetic; they are not confined to describing worlds, real or imaginary. They are productive in giving rise to renewed performances of themselves in which the readers ploy a necessary and active part." (qtd. in Crous 50) Such texts call for the intervention of the reader as an active co-writer in the construction of meaning in the text. Duiker's text offers interesting and many interruptions, more importantly in the domains of compulsive heterosexuality, for the readers to construct and deconstruct meanings within the text. Duiker allows his readers to see through the binary division of gender and sexes as his characters come face to face with alternate realities.

The text revolves around the central protagonist Tshepo. We find Tshepo in the first half of the novel inside a mental hospital in Valkenberg in Cape Town for his 'cannabis

induced psychosis'. The text through a series of stream of consciousness let the reader know the psychotic wounds, the crude dreams, oppressive sadness, his restless physique, absent mindedness and distracted visions, the depressions and the solitudes, the pain and anger as he struggles to bring sanity to his small world. As the readers go through Tshepo's mental trauma, the narrative casts a terrible picture of Cape Town in which drug, thieveries, murders, rapes, corruptions and other vices come to dominate and commingle. It is as if the outer description of Cape Town is reflective of the trauma that Tshepo goes through. It is in this background that the narrative explores the question of homosexuality.

A major part of the novel is spent on describing the 'psychotic' sate of Tshepo as lives his life with other 'patients' in the hospital. As it describes Tshepo and his state of mental affairs, the narration focuses on critiquing the medical institutions that treat patients as criminals. It gives in a horrific picture of hospitals, doctors, of indifferent nurses and psychiatrists, "who only communicate through prescriptions" (Duiker 4), without understanding what drove Tshepo to the cannabis. Adjectives like decay, ugly, and nouns like depression, anxious that are constantly referred to in the narrative gives a gloomy picture and an apprehension of what might come. It becomes a place where, "…at the end of it all you sort of realize that you're the same person you were yesterday before you got sick and you'll be the same person tomorrow they say you can go home." (Duiker 24) The author brings the image of zombies and criminals to describe their precarious existence in Valkenberg. The 'kulukutz' or dark secluded cells inside the hospital in which some of the more serious patients are put up for 'treatment', which is another name for 'punishment', brings about the worst side of these institutions. As one of the character remarks, "I become

just another lab experiment." (Duiker 84) Characters like Zebron that figure in course of the narrative, that are held inside the hospital, only end up being bitter and more sinister and more unsure of themselves owing to the substandard and inadequacy of the institution.

> Only God knows what we are doing here. No one else does. The psychiatrist thinks they do. We are searching, asking, pleading, praying. Love us, we are not mad. Make sure we are all right because sometimes we break easily, that is our unspoken message because we have broken past speech. We always need the best friends because they give the best love. And that's what we need, the best love. Our reputations have been ruined by labels and gossip. Who really knows why we are here? (Duiker 64)

The events in the medical institution, that form a major part of the plot serve to highlight the excesses of power that medical and psychiatry wield. The text makes it explicitly clear that each of the patients have their own story and history and each need to be judged by what he actually is and not what one might conjecture of him. As the narrative unfolds, duiker lets the reader understand that it is not the drugs but something sinister that happened with Tshepo that was responsible for his predicament.

> What does "cannabis induced psychosis" mean? There is more to it than that. This is what the medical profession will never understand. I'm looking for a deeper understanding of what happened to me, not an easy answer like cannabis induced psychosis. And why don't they say it if they truly don't understand what happened? Why blame it on cannabis? (Duiker 5)

In letting the readers know, the reason behind Tshepo's psychosis, the text gradually opens itself to the thematic concern of same-sex desires. The first discussion on the question of same-sex takes place in the context of sexual assault and rape. As the narrative moves ahead, the readers are informed that beyond the drugs it is rape and a sexual assault on his mother and which Tshepo blames it on his father and his own rape as a child that is the primary driver of his mental health. It is only in the second half of the novel that the text really begins to touch on and expand on the question of alternate sexuality.

Homosexuality thus begins with a negative connotation in Duiker. The readers are immediately allowed to settle down on the precarious existence of Tshepo much before he would emerge out strong from his past and venture into uncharted territories. As Tshepo takes to drug and finds himself within the confines of the mental hospital, the readers sympathize with his 'violent' past and make sense of his present. The sexual assault, the trauma, the drugs and the hospital constitute a problematic category in that it casts a shadow of doubt over his character. But Duiker lets his reader understand thera there in in Tshepo an urge to fight back, to return to the normalcy. As Zebron, a hospital mate, notices, "I can see his mind going a thousand miles ahead with all the millions of things he is going to do once he gets discharged." (Duiker 57) Zebron, with all his faults, is quick to understand that Tshepo has been dealt wrongly by life. In Tshepo's own words, "The world is cruel. It cheated us out of our sanity. Our feet are soul from having walked into all the wrong places and having spoken to all the wrong people." (Duiker 64) Tshepo emerges as a sensitive soul who cares deeply about life, friendship amongst others. But his most

humane nature is brought forth in those stream of consciousness in which he talks to his mother, often reminiscing his childhood, her maternal care and always missing her.

In casting Tshepo against the menace of drug, sexual assault, medical hazard, the narrative prepares ground for Tshepo to enter into the thematic concern of the text. A mistake that Tshepo commits time and again is the question of trust. Though abandoned, laughed at by people whom he considered close, he continues trusting them in the manner of someone who is unable to make sense of the world.Though his eyes are open to the vast diversity in people, what they are capable of, how ruthless and unsympathetic they could be in their dealing and yet he continues to believe in them and things that they say. Though he wishes better things for himself and considers himself his only friend, yet he continues on a blind spree of trusting people. There is thus a conflict in what he thinks and what he does. And this conflict is not easily resolved. This conflict only serves to highlight major discrepancies in which he would throw himself at later part of the narrative.

We, initially, get a vision of homosexuality in Tshepo in his description of Chris:

> It's difficult. The thing is, I like him. It's terrible. I can't face myself in the mirror when I think about this…He is so beautiful, so furiously attractive, it breaks my heart that I can't say anything to him…His eyes, they shimmer like jade and his lips are pink and full and long to be looked at and observed closely…It is devastating to look at him. I just want to run towards him and be swallowed whole by his sensual presence. I want to disappear forever in his eyes. (Duiker 218-219)

As has been said, the first half of the text concerns itself with the mental set up of its central protagonist and apart from the sexual assault on him when he was a little kid, there is nothing in him or at least he displays no such emotion that separates him from others. It is only with the arrival of Chris in the narrative that his dormant same-sex appeal shows the quality of gradually waking up. There is both love and lust in it. Tshepo finds himself swayed away by his presence, his 'devastating' looks, his natural grace, his elegant neck, his smiles, discipline and even his moodiness, reticence and his pride. The profile of Chris is compared to a beautiful work of art and that of a flower. At another time, this acquires a sexual tone. There are times that Tshepo keeps guessing, "about the rest of his landscape." (Duiker 220) There is nothing uncivil or rude in the way Chris is described. Duiker does not make them sound crude or vulgar. In fact, they are lashed with deep poetry with a dash of philosophy.

It is only after he enters the gay parlour that Tshepo begins to understand and accept his sexuality. The narrative spends considerable time on the question of self-acceptance of the dormant sexual urges. He is confused about his sexual orientation. But it eventually gets him to his true sexual orientation, to what he actually is.

There are many gay characters in the novel and each has his own motivations on why they became a homosexual. When Tshepo is raped, he says, "I feel as though my mother died again." (Duiker 284) The pain however is real enough to keep him concentrated on trying to make himself comfortable. His resolve that, "I will survive. I'm not going back to a mental hospital." (Duiker 293), must be understood in terms of all the negative thought on the metal hospital, his dead mother and what Chris perpetrates on him

and his resolution to push to allow himself some space for a secured future. When Chris 'violates' Tshepo along with his friends, Tshepo once again relives the memory of his mother and once again his masculinity gets a jolt. This together with the fact that there was no one in Cape Town he could lean onto, that all the people he knew were only faces that he greeted and made idle chat pushes him towards a life of gay prostitute. For Tshepo the relations with men, even if they are clients, are beyond sexual gratification or even necessity. They are a relief to his life where, "…I have always had something to be sad about, my whole life.' (Duiker 298) Their attention, their gazes give him comfort and peace. Thus, sexual gratification is negated and paves way for peace, security and comfort, not just monetarily but something that heals his suffering soul, which eases his pain. Similarly, other character have different motivation in their homosexual inclination. The text looks at the absence of a father figure as one of the major motivations. The case of West in the novel is representative of what the absence of a father figure has in store for people. They feel incomplete as men. And they start seeking for love in some other male to fulfill the absence of their father. Working in Steamy Windows is seen as a daring job. It is seen as something that ripens a character. It is seen as something that forces people to examine their beliefs, to test their tolerance. Contrary to the characterless tag that is associated with homosexuality, the job is seen as something that builds a man's character. It forces people to question their shoddy morals. It teaches that life has many possibilities, that people never run out of options or choices, "of different ways of being, living and surviving." (Duiker 392)

Tshepo's encounter with his father about homosexuality is the first real instance of tension and conflict in the novel regarding sexuality. Tshepo finds himself cornered by his father for his homosexual inclination: "And what is this business that I hear that you got to faggot nightclubs?...I didn't bring you up to be a stabane. Are you a faggot?" (Duiker 250) Stabane in the above sentence is the Zulu vernacular for intersexual person. Tshepo is not scolded for being in the jail, not for being in the nightclubs but for having entered into the 'uncharted and 'disgraceful' territory of homosexuality, for having transgressed something which his father holds dear.

Duiker has an effective way of letting the readers understand the liberal/illiberal characteristics of Cape Town surrounding homosexuality. He advertises its liberal nature in the Cape Ads. The advertisements that requests for both male-male, female-female and even bisexual encounters are radical proclamation of the homosexual environment that Cape Town offers. The text sees Cape Town as a place where men can be on their own without women and the massage parlour is touted as a place that offers, "…something deeper, something real." (Duiker 322) Cape Town emerges as a place where prostitute trade without stigmatization and it harbours many gay bars and 'massage' centers. Cape Town has disco pubs where gays in large number assemble to celebrate their sexuality. It is a place where men become their own, unhinged by any societal pressures, where they cheer, drink, dance and love without worrying what people have to think of them. Tshepo interprets this as, 'the true face of humanity." (Duiker 401)

The massage parlour represents a Utopian existence where one is free to pursue how one deems fit. The clients belong to different genders, different age-groups, different

nationalities, different class, different race, of different vocations, and different sexual orientations and serves to highlight the universal nature of same-sex desires. No one is critiqued there for being of vague gender, or for belonging to an ethnic group or nationality or for sexual orientation or for that matter the age of the concerned person. Cape Town emerges as a metropolitan where French, Germans, English, Africans and others groups seek shelter from homophobic insults.

In sending Tshepo and others in bed together with people of their own sex, the author seeks to break the gender and sexual binary that that is at the root of heterosexual argument. The text looks at pleasure as one of the guiding factor in which different client come to the parlour. The communication of bodies with similar body is ripped of morality. The morality factor is thus pushed to the background and the pleasure factor takes centre stage. There are different motivating factors why the clients come to the parlour. Some of them come in search of pleasure. At other times, the clients are deprived of sex at home by their wives. Still, there are clients that see sex as great tension reliever. Mmabatho has many gay friends and she is quite comfortable with the idea of having relationship with someone of her own sex. In fact she has herself harboured a few lesbian relations prior to her engagement with Arne.

The reader is reminded again and again that even though Cape Town projects itself as a liberal metropolitan city, same sex is not acceptable to a lot of people. Sebastian's (one of the member of the brotherhood) treatment in the hands of his friends in school for his effeminate nature and homosexual inclination in the text is a stock example of what it means to be a homosexual in South Africa. Pedagogical institutes are major forces that

push the discursivities of compulsive heterosexual discursivities. Sebastian is laughed at, mocked and called various names. He is physically manhandled. They shove his head into a dirty toilet bowl and flush it. His homosexuality becomes his liability. And he had to opt out of school. For effeminates like Sebastian playing 'drag queen' becomes a 'performance', a performance necessitated by the fact that they are not acceptable to the society and thereby live the life of 'drag queen'. They are abandoned by their parents and deserted by friends. They are censored and banished to the margins of the society. But Sebastian also emerges as a character to subvert sexual normativity. One of way in which this text seeks to break the heterosexual normativity is to stop performing the heterosexual role. Sebastian says, "I decided that I was never going to be shy about loving men again." In deciding to love again without feeling guilty about it, Duiker turns Sebastian into an agent of subversion. Instead of being guilty about it, the narration celebrates victories in seeking love and pleasure with men. In Sebastian's effeminate character, the difference between gender and sex is resolved. In him, the binary polarization is mediated. In Sebastian's own words, "The men that come for me are not looking for a woman…Perhaps they want a woman who ejaculates like a man. Or a man who can be penetrated like a woman." (Duiker 448) Tshepo finds that many of the clients who were very tender with him looked away while he found them outside, hardly recognizing him. Many of them have stern looks on their faces warning him against approaching them in public, lest it should blow their 'secret' away. In Tshepo's own words, "Instead I have only met schizophrenic dancing queens by night who are rigid grey suits by day." (Duiker 440) The narration questions the rationale of black Africans hiding behind the heterosexual mask and thinks that the pressures of society upon them must be very strong to say the least. They stand

hidden inside the closet. They are supposed to act like rigid, macho men and this is what they do by day while secretly walking away into gay parlours like Steamy Windows by night.

Heterosexuality, in Duiker, is seen as putting limits on the body. It is seen as a site where the body is imprisoned. The text is explicit in its questioning compulsive heterosexuality and its supposed superiority and takes on the "bigots, hypocrites, hetero-fascists who only want to further their own prejudices and intolerance of life." (Duiker 444) Homosexuality is seen as a liberating exercise. The text argues in a most passionate manner: "Men are either married or expect to be. There is no in between. So men haven't really explored the possibilities of being men. There is no place for them." (Duiker 328) The lack of space for non-heterosexual relationships, the chance to explore alternate sexualities is broached again and again in the text. The institution of marriage, one of the residues of heterosexual compulsivity, is seen as something that negates any grey space or in-between which might exist. The text breaks the gender binary early in the text when Tshepo says that he has started bleeding much like women.

> I know people call this piles but his is different. I know it is different because it comes and goes like a cycle, a strange mutated cycle. Perhaps what I'm proposing is blasphemous. Perhaps it is an insult to women. But my body holds this pain sacred. It forces me to think inwardly. Perhaps the distance between a man and a woman is not that far. I know this sounds strange but this is the only logical exclamation I have to acknowledge what is happening to me. (Duiker 180)

The text breaks the gender binary by shrinking the difference between a male and a female by tying them together to the act of menstrual bleeding. Even if we were to disregard such a radical statement of Tshepo as pseudo-science and tie it to his insanity, yet the force of the argument is retained by virtue of what he feels about himself, the feminine feeling.

The brotherhood identified by its knack for refraining from judging 'others', is one of the refreshing break from a world that is only too quick to judge others. In a society where same-sex amounts to going into 'dark' and 'unorthodox' areas of human engagement, the brotherhood is a saving grace in which there is 'truth', 'beauty', 'tenderness' and 'simplicity'. Working in the massage parlour, where transgression is part of the journey, the brotherhood is realization that, "…we cannot walk in each other's shoes." (Duiker 431) The brotherhood becomes a site where men seek comfort and compassion from the ugly truths of life. For some the brotherhood is a chance to become a child once again where one does not form unfavourable opinions about others. The narration takes on the question of gender conformity within the institution of brotherhood. A man is supposed to be tough, to be strong, to be 'vicious'. Duiker topples down this and instead gives them a different identification. The brotherhood becomes a place where men forgets his 'performances' and instead plays artless, stupid and silly and even weakness and ignorance, for, "Who knows really what it means to be a man?" (Duiker 433) West remarks in the course of the text, "The first boundary to transcend is within." (Duiker 432) This is what the brotherhood seeks to instill in its members. In brotherhood 'I' and 'You' merge into 'We' and where the proverbial 'other' ceases to exist. It transcends all those

limitation that is enforced by societal forces; this transcendental is within before it touches on others. It teaches its members life's wisdom. It is in the arm of this brotherhood that Tshepo matures into a 'man' towards the end of the novel.

The 'spectral' presence of homosexuality is compounded by the presence of the great divide that race brings within and this together with the mental illness that young Tshepo suffers from and which is referred to as cannabis induced psychosis constitutes what Stockton calls, "intrusion of narratives on narratives." (Stockton 117) While the text bring the racial conflict early in the novel and continues throughout the plot of the novel, it is in the discussion of sexuality that it gains a significant meaning.

Mmabatho remarks in the preliminary course of the text that, "I think I came to Cape Town so that I could run away from that whole race thing…But it's here, even in Cape Town. You can't really avoid it." (Duiker 36) Such a remark acquires a visionary note as Tshepo would discover that even gays are not free from this vicious circle and that he would himself experience it firsthand. The narrative warns the reader against constructing South Africa as heaven for liberalism and freedom and making it explicitly clear that some of the worst bigots and hypocrites came from Cape Town It is true that Cape Town as distinguished from Joburg, which is short for Johannesburg and which is South Africa's biggest city, in Duiker, gives every now and then, the perception of a cosmopolitan town with its own liberal, humanistic, broad-based appreciation but as the readers delve deep into its interiors, in those parts in which people are free to express themselves who they are, what they really believe in and what they are capable of doing, that their real, actual character begins to surface. Cape Town turns into a place, like Joburg

for instance, where, “You have to fit into this or that.” (Duiker 36) Cape Town, in Duiker, acquires the character of a man who negates by night what he holds dear by day. Tshepo, unlike Mmabatho, in his naivety is innocent of the ways in which the township operates. Cape Town for Tshepo is free of discrimination; it becomes a place where “no one really cares you’re black…No one really cares that you’re white…People want to make their own reference about who they are and where they fit in or not.” (Duiker 37) For him it’s a place where, “They care that your girlfriend has a pierced tongue and that sometimes on a Saturday night she goes to bed another woman and likes to watch them…In some clubs a person will chat you up because you know what drum and bass is and can dance to it while appearing sexy…” (Duiker 37) and where, “They want to say ah you’re cool and not ah you’re black or white.” (Duiker 38) Tshepo is blind to the fault lines of the town and is optimistic of it to such an extent that would make him a “perfect targets for sarcasm and jokes.” (Duiker 58)

The text takes on the question of how gays and other alternate sexualities are handicapped by race and other factors. The fact that homogenizing sexuality as western authors would like to do without taking into various considerations like ethnicity, race, culture is worked out in this important section of the novel. Tshepo realizes that that he is the only black gay amidst white gays in a certain bar. His idea of a ‘race-free’ world receives a jolt: “I feel hopeless. Someone just tore up a beautiful image I had in my mind. It is offensive, even ludicrous...It is like a rude awakening.” (Duiker 458) Duiker wakes him up to the sad realities of racial discrimination. Cape Town, that looked so open and liberal at times, all sudden tumbles down to a state that harbours painful secrets. Tshepo, who in

his naivety and innocence had become accustomed to the sincerity and openness of the brotherhood, begins to realize that the world is not easy after all. He comes to the realization that, "Cape Town never ceases to remind us who we are." (Duiker 458) It is this realization about differences in race, of how certain races enjoy a superior place that opens his eyes to the ugly realities of the brotherhood itself. The brotherhood, that is supposed to reverberate with love and humanity, Tshepo discovers is as much guilty of discrimination as outside society is. His consciousness until that moment escaped the ugly and bitter realities of the brotherhood. He begins to realize that it is the white people who called the shots in the game, that it was Shaun, a white man who had all the power. Race is tied to the question of power. Race gives Shaun the power to include and exclude. It gives him the right to decide what is good and what is bad, who to keep and whom to fire. It is this realization that leads Tshepo to begin to understand his position in the supposed 'brotherhood', to feel his blackness, the ugly reality of race. West, whose eyes and ears ar open to the racial discrimination, explains this in such a way: "This whole brotherhood thing is very convenient…But make no mistake…This thing is about power and about who has it and who doesn't. We don't have it." (Duiker 462)

The Blacks are less integrated into and alienated from the larger White, urban, gay community institutions because of their racial 'lack'. Sexual careers of black, self-identified gay men are at a risk of being trodden down any moment. These conflicts arise from and are anchored to a core set of institutions, including kinship, and urban gay institutions. The race-class-sexuality nexus further complicates the whole issue.

An important theme that Duiker handles is the question of African stereotypes. A character in the text remarks, “Yes, but Africans are so…How should I put it? You’re expected to be manly, aren’t you?” (Duiker 418) The representation of Africans as hyper masculine exerts immense pressure for those born male. This pressure is again tied to the question of homosexuality. Representations of Africans as heterosexuals go side by side with the narrative of hyper-masculinity. It is this expectation to be manly, to be a heterosexual that is raised in the above quote. Duiker questions the, “American and their quaint ideas” (Duiker 417) on the acceptance of homosexuality in the African continent. The text takes up the question of whether homosexuality is African or Un-African. In his discussion with Tshepo, Sebastian argues:

> I mean, people always say that black culture is rigid and doesn’t accept things like homosexuals and lesbians. You know the argument - its very unafrican. It’s a lot of crap. In my experience that kind of thinking comes from urbanized blacks, people who’ve watered down the real origins of our culture and mixed it with notions from the Bible. It’s stupid to even suggest that homosexuality and lesbianism are foreign to black culture. Long ago, long before whites, people were aware of all this. (Duiker 329)

The idea of homosexuality being Un-African is hotly contested. It is held up as a ‘stupid’ proposition, a ‘crap’ that has been imposed upon the African psyche. The rigidity of the Un-African argument is linked to the arrival of white people, to the new urbanized culture and to Bible. On the other hand, the idea that homosexuality has little connect to the black culture, with the people of Africa is disputed in favor of native acceptance of it.

Acceptance of the existence of homosexuality and acceptance of the fluid nature of gender and sexuality is held up as the real African culture. It is seen as something that has been distorted over the years.

There are two school of thought deeply divided over the African nature of homosexuality. The first holds that there is no homosexuality in Africa. Texts like *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776) and Richard Burtons' *Terminal Essays* (1885) to his translation of the *Arabian Nights* in 1885 have been influential reads on African sexual 'exceptionalism'. Daniel Vignal in an article in, 'Peuples Noirs, Peuples Africains' writes that, "For the majority of [African writers], homophilia is exclusively a deviation introduced by colonialists or their descendants; by outsiders of all kinds: Arabs, French, English, metis, and so on. It is difficult for them to conceive that homophilia might be the act of a black African." (qtd. in Dunton 422) There is very little of research on homosexuality in ancient Africa. Questions of compatibility of homosexuality with African culture and identity, the un-African nature of homosexuality goes side by side on the free and liberal nature of African ancestry that not only tolerated homosexuality but was part of many African cultures has been a long debate. Critics have pointed out to the overwhelming evidence of predominantly heterosexual transmission and divergent sexual orientations in sub-Saharan Africa against that school of thought that situate it against African tradition and Biblical teachings. Investigations on the emergence of 'homosexuality' in a variety of African historical contexts throw interesting insights. Geoffrey Parrinder's seminal work *Sex in the World's Religion* (1980) that explores and investigates the different positions held by different religions of the world in relation to sex

is explicitly categorical in saying that it is homophobia and the condemnation of homosexuals that is UnAfrican. Arlene Swidler in his work *Homosexuality and World Religions* (1993) says that homosexuality was a thing not unknown in traditional African society and that it was a part of African "culture, cosmology and spirituality." "The colonialists did not introduce homosexuality to Africa but rather intolerance of it— and systems of surveillance and regulation for suppressing it." (Murray et.al Preface XVI)

In Wole Soyinka's novel, The *Interpreters* (1965), a character that plays the role of an African-American homosexual, Joe Golder, attempts to corner the Nigerian journalist, Sagoe on the issue of indigenous African homosexuality saying: ―Do you think I know nothing of your Emirs and their little boys? You forget history is my subject. And what about those exclusive coteries in Lagos? (Soyinka 199) What prompts Golder's history lesson on the existence of homosexuality in Nigeria is Sagoe's assertion that while America might be full of perversions, Nigeria is a "comparatively healthy society" (199). Lindsey Green-Simms in her analysis of African homosexuality writes that, "Joe Golder is typical of many of the homosexual characters that appear in African literature. He is lecherous and predatory—he's implicated in the death of the young boy Noah who jumps off a balcony—and he's a Western character whose outsider status seems to confirm the idea that homosexuality comes from a foreign source." (Green-Simms 140) Green-Simms sees the Golder moment as one, "that is characterized above all by silence and opacity rather than any clear-cut homophobia." (Green-Simms 140)

Stephen O. Murray in 'Homosexuality in "Traditional" Sub-Saharan Africa and Contemporary South Africa', argues that absence or lack of evidence of homosexual

culture in Africa should not interpreted as evidence of absence, but rather as an absence of research. Murray and Will Roscoe in their text *Boy-Wives and Female husbands* (1998), in their study of African homosexualities, assert that scholars have often, "denied (or dismissed) the presence of homosexuality even when they observed it." (Murray et.al Preface XIII) Murray and Roscoe write, "Among the many myths Europeans have created about Africa, the myth that homosexuality is absent or incidental in African societies is one of the oldest and most enduring." (Murray et. al Preface XI) They go on to assert that, "African homosexuality is neither random nor incidental— it is a consistent and logical feature of African societies and belief systems."

The arrival of western power is seen as a major event that led to the stigmatization of homosexuality. It is interesting to note that in those pockets of Africa, "where Western influences (notably Christianity and Marxism) have been strong, the belief that homosexuality is a decadent, bourgeois, Western import has become common." (Murray et.al Preface XV) and for a long time, the negotiation of African identity would remain tied to European standards of morality.

Homosexual practices has invariably been linked and attributed to the inimical influence of colonialism and imperialism and is seen as removed from African social and historical realities and therefore UnAfrican. Homosexuality that is posited as something that has been imported to Africa from the West and which will henceforth be referred to as Out-of-West-into-Africa theory is therefore seen as UnAfrican.

> What remains conspicuous in all these works is the abstention among African writers, and even among the most searching and responsive of these, from a fully characterized and non-schematic depiction of a homo- sexual relationship between Africans. It is true that the treatment of such relationships between African men or between African women would involve more than the transference of the category "homosexual"--which is, as has been seen, a highly marked term-to an African context. A non- schematic treatment of the subject in that context would, after all, have no need to acknowledge Western modes of self-representation. Nonetheless, the practice of homosexuality within African society remains an area of experience that has not been granted a history by African writers, but has been greeted, rather, with a sustained outburst of silence. Whether this has been carried out within or beyond the limits of the stereotype, the identification of homosexuality with the West has helped defend that silence. An "official" history has concealed the reluctance of African writers to admit homosexuality into the bounds of a different kind of discussion. (Dunton 445)

The deconstruction of these representations suggests that studies have tended to reduce the total phenomenon of the homoerotic relationship in non-Western societies to sex acts or sex roles or to those domains of cultural meaning, such as family and kinship organization, that diminish the erotic dimension of the relationship. What is missing in these representational accounts are deeper ontologies of the homoerotic within these tradition (Herdt 481) Chris Dunton in '"Wheyting be dat?" The Treatment of Homosexuality in African Literature' writes:

> Nonetheless, the practice, of homosexuality within African society remains an area of that has not been granted a history by African writers, but has been greeted, rather, with a sustained outburst of silence. Whether this has been carried out without, within or beyond the limits of the stereotype, the identification of homosexuality with the West has helped defend that silence. An ―official‖ history has concealed the reluctance of African writers to admit homosexuality into the bounds of a different kind of discussion. (Dunton 445)

The text questions contemporary culture and more pointedly western culture as something that sanitizes sex with politeness and manners. This in turn is contrasted to other cultures like the Xhosas of Africa and the Indians of the Amazon jungles. They are seen as people who are more open to sex and who knew more about sex. "What I'm trying to say is that so-called primitive people understand gender roles and the ambiguities of sexualities better than Western people give them credit for." (Duiker 329) The text also looks at other places like Port St. John in Transkei in which people were at ease with the idea of men being comfortable with men. The text also looks to certain tribes in South Pacific, members of which sleep with one another (read: homosexual relations), to make a point in favor of non-heterosexual relation. In doing so, the text looks at the sexual act as a ritual, as a spiritual act and something that celebrates and honours the phallic potential as a hot energy spot. Sweet expounds this in the following words:

> While there is precious little evidence describing the role of trans- vested homosexuals in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Africa, we can learn a great deal from more recent anthropological data. The spiritual role of transvested

> homosexuals appears to be important across Africa, especially in the southern third of the continent. Among the I(wayama, an ethnic group of planters and herders from Angola (roughly the same Angola from whence our sixteenth-century Brazilian Africans and our seventeenth-century Angolans came), many spiritual leaders wear womerfs clothing, do womenSs work, and become secondary spouses to men whose other wives are biologically female. (Sweet 191)

Duiker's text philosophizes sex. Men are seen as someone more sexed than women and therefore in need of sex 'beyond' women. While such a hypothesis can be passed off as myth and misogynist, it nevertheless serves as an important argument in favor of same sex relationship. At other times, gay is seen as beyond the understanding of common men and women, governed by some higher power, as nature balancing things out and as 'god-inspired'. The text sees gay celebrities as Oscar Wilde and James Baldwin amongst others as minds that have made excellent contribution to the society. It sees them as intelligent, cultured people, seeing more prominent role for them in the future since they are not regulated by marital conducts: "Gay men are going to take their place in the world arena in the future, and I'm not talking about the gay mafia. I'm talking about something beautiful, pure, something worth celebrating because it's honest." (Duiker 335) Against the much held view of MSM (men who have sex with men) together with WSW (women who have sex with women) as ugly, evil and bad, homosexuality is celebrated as beautiful, pure and honest.

Duiker looks at the homosexuals through the eyes of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Just like the Brotherhood's penchant for freedom, creativity and their love for

the natural, the homosexuals are seen as reactionary to the old ideas. They are seen as sexual visionaries. “The inspiration of the Pre-Raphaelites is like our foundation, you know. It’s like our motto, our mission statement…” The Brotherhood becomes an inspiration, an idea to be emulated. It gives them a direction, a vision. Sex in line with the Pre-Raphaelites, in the hands of Duiker, becomes a transcendental and an aesthetic experience, a beauty that needs to be nurtured. Such an artistic vision is reflected in the walls of the massage parlour that Tshepo works in.

Duiker’s text also intellectualizes sex. While being a homosexual is seen as deviant from what is passed as ‘normal’ and is seen as stripped of masculinity, the text argues that a homosexual may be more masculine than a heterosexual in his overt celebration of phallus, in using the phallic power beyond the small territory of ‘women’ to include ‘men’. Heterosexuality is seen as an emasculatory act, an act that has its root in the fear of women (read vagina) since they produced life, an act that has forgotten to celebrate phallus. To be denying a non-heterosexual alternative is seen as being apologetic about masculinity. This in turn is linked to the emergence of Christianity as a dominant school of thought. “But almost all pre-Christian societies have held the phallus in some esteem.” (Duiker 399) Christianity is accused of undermining the phallic power and having paved the way for a particular variety. Andromeda represents that era in which the celebration of phallus was a norm. The text on the other hand refutes violence that is so often passed on as a masculine act. “Violence as masculine – that’s just a myth that straight men have stupidly accepted, very Neanderthal….Who says violence has to be synonyms with men? Who says men can’t be tender? Who says men can’t look to each other for love and comfort beyond sexual

preference? Who says women are the only ones who understand tenderness and what it pretends to be nurturing?" (Duiker 399-400) Duiker turns the popular binaries of men being violent and cruel and women being tender and compassionate and casts them as someone who are capable of both giving and receiving love, tenderness and comfort, not necessarily to the opposite sex but even to their own. Apart from philosophizing and intellectualizing sex, the text also gives a touch of poetry to homosexuality at times.

The text seeks to break sexual binaries by not attaching by referring to it as a matter of choice. "You mustn't get confused about the sex, hey? Sex is always the same, whether you do it with a man or a woman, it's just a matter of choosing. How do you say again? Preferences." (Duiker 323) The text seeks to break the heteronormative question by questioning compulsive homosexuality as just an option, a preference. Heterosexuality is reduced as a choice amongst many other choices.The narration at other times negates sex itself, withelding any serious meaning it might have. Sex is reduced as something where, "You will see once you get past sex that there isn't much to it. …you will find that it is a way of communicating, a way of seeing things." (Duiker 323)

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Chapter III

Between Girls: Coming to Terms with Lesbian Identity in *Keeping You a Secret*

This chapter will look into the thematic concern of young adult experiences in Julie Anne Peters' *Keeping You a Secret* (2003) where the issue of sexual identity works as a major cohesive force that binds the text. It will argue on the text's palpable exploration of lesbian relationships amongst growing up young adults in semi-urban America, a heterosexual world that avowedly and inflexibly situates itself against homosexual fellowship. It looks at how identifications in the text, "draws upon the environment of people and things for its content" (Jenkins 71). It studies how institutions become the more important contexts within which identifications become consequential. In narrativising the central protagonists' individual cognitive and emotional development, it also looks at how the external discourse is integrated into the individual sense of selfhood and yet how the scope for newer identities in never wholly closed. Peters' novel seeks to break many misconceptions about gender and sexual identities in course of the narrative.

Julie Anne Peters' novels often cater to the young adult experiences in its thematic concerns, language and characters in not-so-large American towns. Her novels - *Love Me, Love My Broccoli* (1999), *Luna* (2004), *Far From Xanadu* (2005) later retitled *Pretend You Love Me*, *Between Mom and Jo* (2006) and *By the Time You Read This, I'll Be Dead* (2010) - concern themselves with teen bullying, love, suicide, alcohol addiction and sexual transgressions amongst other. It is however her exploration of sexual transgression manifested in gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender variations and the subversion of the institution of compulsive heterosexuality that has earned her a special place amongst the reading public. Her novel *Keeping You a Secret*, which is the focus of this particular

chapter, is an important work in 'queer' genre that seek to break the stoic rules that govern bodies and pleasures.

Sexuality, that "vast, infinitely malleable continuum" (Sterling 21), which "do not align with simple polarities" and "take multiple, highly differentiated forms." (Rivkin and Ryan 677), which we understand today in its liberal, broad-based definition, has often been a subject of fierce engagement and vicious confrontation in social, cultural and literary life, with lines sharply split into heterosexual and homosexual proclivity. Peters' text *Keeping you a Secret*, which is the subject for discussion here, is an excellent proposition of this divide and the transgression involved therein. The entire cast of characters in *Keeping you a Secret* can be divided into two houses depending on where they stand on compulsive heterosexuality; it is thus that while Holland, CeCe, Faith and CeCe's mother to a certain extent belong to the non-heterosexual camp, there are others like Holland's mother, and some of Holland's friend who not only detest homosexuality but also fervently seek to discourage it, with or without violence.

Keeping you a secret, amongst other ways in which it can be looked into, is a love story. Not tolerated by the society, but nonetheless a love story. From the humdrum of everyday prose that talks about homophobia, here and there are lines that do not seek to give any lesson or message, do not seem to care about gender approval but speak in a moving and passionate voice, in expressive words, in exalted terms and in aesthetic tone about someone being deeply in love. As Holland puts it, "It was exciting, like having a secrete lover..." (Peters 162) The gender in this case, at the least for the protagonist herself, acquires a secondary role. The primary and cardinal act is falling in love with someone. If

the readers were to withdraw the gender biasness that usually accompanies such engagements, there is nothing that might be considered problematic. Even while being engaged to Seth, Holland is attracted towards CeCe. As the narration moves ahead, this emotion that she displays would get the better of her and she ultimately would have to make choices and which she actually does. This way of engaging with the text must not be lost on the readers. Holland's remark that, "She was the first thought in the morning, my last thought at night. She'd taken possession of my soul." (Peters 125) or "CeCe and I are connected – physically, emotionally, spiritually." (Peters 232), are worthy of serious considerations that requires us to untangle her experiences from gender biasness and prejudices.

Keeping you a Secret has often been characterized as a coming-out-novel. But it is much more than just a coming-out-novel. The story takes the reader to a stage where the central character gradually awakes to her deviant sexuality. The author makes it very prominent in the introductory chapter itself, by way of subtly hints, that Holland, the central protagonist, was made of different stuff, that she had inclination for people of her own sex. The author immediately seeks to situate Holland in a place where she herself first gets an inkling of her repressed sexual desires.

The author does not initiate Holland immediately into the thematic concern of deviant sexuality when we look the text as a whole. Instead, she adopts two strategies. First, the narrative situates her, before everything else, in the 'mistakable' comfort of her own heterosexual appetency, in the character of Seth. And it's only with the entry of CeCe

that Holland shows the quality of waking up from her heterosexual 'falsity' to her dormant but true self.

But Peters also adopts another strategy of initiating the central character into the homosexual framework of the novel. The admittance of Holland to homosexuality abruptly, given that the story does not move back too much to the past into the lived childhood of the characters, and given that Holland had already been engaged with Seth, would bear falsity or at least betray reality. To believe that CeCe awakens Holland's sexuality Holland abruptly, that Holland's lesbian nature materializes as soon as she notices CeCe would startle the readers. To overcome this difficulty, that her character's new-found desire is not at odds with the spontaneity of the reader's vocation, Peters situates Holland in a position in which she is seen speaking up her mind in 'a stream of consciousness' practice of her natural propensity for homosexuality when yet still growing up into an young adult. As she concedes in one section of the novel: "…Ms. Fielding, in German class. I was so in love with her….And Leah. God. I had a torrid crush on Leah in sixth grade. Seventh grade. Eighth grade…" (Peters 102) They list out her crushes from very small grades. And it is thus that despite having Seth as boyfriend, the hasty alteration, the startling change, and the ruckus inconsistency in her sexual inclination following CeCe's appearance materializes into a measured and acceptable proposition. In order to show that these feeling are not 'abnormal', Peters also situates CeCe, in course of the narrative, during her childhood in love with their little neighbor aged six. "Did I ever tell you about the time my dad caught me kissing this little neighbor girl behind our garage?" (Peters 186) To make the protagonist's transformation more natural, more spontaneous, more real and more at ease

for the reader to absorb and appreciate, Peters would further not allow Holland the immediate comfort of a particular identity. And thus that she is unable to decide what she actually is: a heterosexual or a homosexual or both (read: bisexual): “Was I? Gay, I mean? If so, what was I doing with Seth? Maybe I was bi.” (Peters 102) It partakes of what Vivienne C. Cass calls ‘identity confusion’ in his study of homosexual identity formation. (147)

It is important to address the main concern of the novel and which is transgression: transgressions of sexual norms in its lesbian orientation. Foucault believes that transgression must always seek out new limits, new boundaries to push against. “The limit and transgression depend on each other for whatever density of being they possess: a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable and, reciprocally, transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusions and shadows.” (Foucault 60) Any transgression, generally speaking, go far beyond illusions and plastic mishaps or it would not be called transgression at all; but sexual transgression invites trouble, real and vulnerable and involves high risks as it upsets ‘foundational’ values. It is this transgression of the sexual expectations that plunge Holland and CeCe, the central protagonists, into unpleasantness and trouble.

Peters’ text attempts to break many misconceptions about gender and sexual identities in course of the narrative. The question of ‘identity’ has over the years proliferated into a significant literary discursive exercise, more especially in critical literary theory. Social constructionist theorists posit that an individual’s likes and dislikes and his choices are all shaped and directed by the larger societal framework to which he belongs.

The prevailing discourse, by and large, determines what an individual thinks and how he acts. Such social and cultural constructions are "represented in diverse modes of cultural expression: the law, media, literature, art, interpersonal interaction and individual self-representation and social presentation." (Hall 106) In other words, the construction of identity, in its primary stage, is established through what Louis Althusser calls 'ideological apparatus'. An individual's sense of place in society in terms of freedom and independence, as such, is an illusion, a fallacy distorted as it is by dominant discursive waves. 'Identity', thus, is best understood as a construct that reflects the conceptual structure in which the society operates. It therefore follows that gender and sexual identity which is inordinately skewed in favour of heterosexuality and against homosexuality is also read and understood as a construct, a powerful construct.

Dominant socio-cultural discourse perceives and conceptualizes deviant sexuality in terms of transgressions and puts it in a peripheral, marginal position, situating it very often against the centric, superior heterosexism. The heterosexist assumptions of heterosexuality as the 'default' and 'natural' sexual category is based on the assumption of binary nature of gender as male/female, girl/boy, masculine/feminine. This straight way of thinking about gender and sex commands strong power at its disposal. Wholesale subscription to this idea of compulsive heterosexuality is enacted through a network of social mechanisms, an escape from which is not very easy. Of the many expectations that Peters' young adult characters go through is the primacy of sticking to this binary division.

In *Keeping You a Secret*, the character of Holland and CeCe are constantly cast against this binary division, this straight way of thinking about gender and sex. At every

stage Holland and CeCe run into conflict with network of powerful forces attempting to shut them down to the heterosexist way of life. One of the earliest description is to be found in CeCe's recollection of Wash Central's unhealthy environment: "There's so much hate in people….I'm really afraid of physical violence….I had to put up with a lot of shit. And I can't stand the thought of you going through it, through any of it." (Peters 159) The unique individuality of the CeCe comes under scrutiny, condemnation and outright hostility from shared collectivity. Her individual identities, under such a scenario, remain subservient to the imposed collective identity. The manner in which these gender and sexual non-conformists are handled for their alternate sexualities is a microscopic reflection of the violence that is meted to gender and sexual non-conformists. While at the internal level, the subjugation of these non-conformists is attempted and in many cases established through ideological rationalizations, it effectuates into a frenzied affair at the external level. Violence becomes a tool to be used towards subjugating queers to the heterosexist modes of existence.

Of the current structural rhetoric in gay and lesbian identity politics is the inherent question of closet. Identity formation is seen as a developmental process marked by a series of changes, growth points, or stages along which certain experiences can be ordered. (Cass 145-146) One of the important growth stages in this developmental stage in Peters' text involves 'coming-out' of the closet and the ramifications involves therein.

To the gender non-conformists the ramifications of 'coming out' is huge and becomes the most difficult and painful process. Holland has to face different institutions like family, school, the society etc that are advocates of compulsive heterosexuality. The

fear of hate, violence, discrimination, ostracization, suppression, of being left out by these institutions always lurks behind. For Holland, taking on these institutes comes at personal loss. She's shunned by her former friends at school, is kicked out of house by her mother, is forced into living in an apartment meant for street youths, struggles for basic amenities like clothes, cash, gas and a decent job, is unsure of her future and at one point of time even considers quitting studies. As she would herself acknowledge, "And that happiness [read: homosexuality] hadn't come without a price. I'd given up a lot to be with CeCe: my home, friends, family. Maybe even my future family" (Peters 210). From a major misconception of America being a 'free' country where one is at liberty to choose for herself/himself what she/he thinks is best, to the realization that it is a "whole new world with different social mores…different rules…" (Peters 153), the journey of Holland mirrors an average American's predicament as he steers herself/himself away from gender and sexual conformity.

Individualized identities are often shaped by shared discursive collectives and very often plural identities are subsumed within the interactional process in favor of a homogenizing notion. The institution of family is a major power apparatus and constitutes a crucial component in the network of power mechanisms through which external moment of sexual identification is incorporated into the internal sense of selfhood. In looking at the role of family in anchoring sexuality by "saying no to all wayward or unproductive sexualities" (45), Foucault sees family as the most active site in the enforcement of heteronormative discursivities. The institution of family has, in fact, over the years turned into a powerful forte for perpetrating the heterosexist way of life. Just as other

heteronormative institutions govern and administer nonheterosexual relations by making statements over it and authorizing views of it, so does the institution of family command hegemony by reiterating those statements and by ruling over it in its own capacity. *Keeping You a Secret* offers numerous instances of this power mechanism in which heterosexism operates to subsume homosexuals back into the heterosexual fold. Although Holland and her mother enjoy a great relationship, she does not quite know how to broach the subject of same-sex desire. Holland in course of the text says, "But the thought of telling mom terrified me more than anything else….Mom and I had never discussed homosexuality, per se…." (Peters 179). In fact, the thought of telling her mother terrifies her more than anything else. It would be wrong and incorrect to read Holland's admission in isolation. It must be inferred in terms of the power mechanisms. To understand this, it must be mentioned here that power mechanisms ensures and defines who gets to talk about such things and when and in which circumstances. The institution of family thus ensures that if not utter silence, at least of tact and discretion would be the rule that would govern relationship between parents and children. Holland's admission must also be explained and understood in the context of homophobia. Heterosexuality thrives on fears, myths or misconceptions; it perpetuate fears, myths or misconceptions about alternate sexualities and then alternatively use the same fears, myths and misconceptions to thwart gender and sexual nonconformity. Not only it restricts certain words from being spelt out or from being articulated, it promotes, fosters, endorses and strengthens an environment where even to think of something deviant is a sin, taboo and perversion. And it is this taboo that is associated with same-sex that demoralizes, discourages and unnerves Holland from speaking to her mother about CeCe. Holland's mother becomes the unrivalled

manifestation of those powers that decides, accepts and rejects alternatively what one should do and what one shouldn't, what one should wear and what one's shouldn't, what one should think and what one shouldn't. It is thus that not only is her mother uncomfortable with deviant sexualities, she is uncomfortable with anything that deviates from the general norm. It is thus that the prints on Faith's (Holland's step-sister from another father) T-shirt with Dante's word sounds obscene, ridiculous and 'not normal' to her. She reminds us of Foucault's model couple who enforces norm, safeguards truth and reserves the right to speak. The utilitarian philosophy of sex perceives and identifies sex in terms of reproduction and procreation; any other variables in its gaze become a thing of dismissal and rejection and anyone that stirs or veers away from this single ulterior purpose becomes a pervert. Such a worldview negates not only the pursuits of pleasure but also 'anything' other than 'that'. In the character of Holland's mother, those utilitarian and puritan values find a perceptible reflection; she is a repository of those values in its 'full' and 'grandeur'. It is her puritanical and utilitarian ideas that lead her to pass such comments as, "I didn't raise you to be a lesbian" (Peters 180) or, "You disgust me". (Peters 181) It would be no exaggeration to say that her views are under pinned by the ontological assumption that heterosexuality is 'real' and 'substantial' and therefore closer to truth, while homosexuality is 'fake' or at best 'imitation' and therefore disgusting.

In a society where sexual stages or development from childhood to old age are carefully defined and described, alternate sexualities are called out in terms of 'identity crisis'. The external discourse is integrated deep into the individual sense of selfhood and

they are internalized to such an extent that anything contrary is discouraged. It is this internalization of the stages of sexual development that Holland's hemophilia is interpreted in terms of crisis. Holland's mother uses this ruse of 'identity crisis' to dissuade her daughter from keeping 'that' relationship active. Heterosexuality has not only its supporting institutions, but also its own vocabulary. Distinct vocabularies working towards implanting the label of 'perversion' are conjured up against non-hetero association. Peters' text provides many instances on the ability of such discursivities to limit the potentiality of alternate identities. When Holland admits that she and CeCe were seeing each other, not only her mother gets angry (she slaps and punches Holland) but takes care to use 'those' supporting vocabularies to argue her case. Words like 'lesbian', 'sick' and 'pervert', that she uses for her daughter, are not just words thrown randomly, but forms a significant part of that discourse that produces 'truth' about sex. Such terms suit the heterosexual framework well. While Holland wants her mother to know the truth, to understand what she felt but the burden of truth, the power of the network of interconnecting mechanisms that produces 'truthful' discourse about sex outlasts her will and capacity for it.

Heterosexism asserts and enforces itself upon homosexuality in two different ways; for a casual reader these different ways of enforcing itself might appear as two disparate things and yet a careful reading would reveal that they are closely knitted. First, it posits itself as 'superior' and hence having the exclusive right to speak. On the other hand, it posits homosexuality as the 'other', 'inferior' and therefore having no right to speak and defend itself. Same-sex discursivities is not only denied of any hearing but is also sought to be obliterated, dismissed or reduced to silence and made to disappear upon its least

manifestation (Foucault 4). It is this exclusive nature of heterosexuality that finds its reflection in the way Holland's mother call her by different stigmatizing names, in the way she hits her while not allowing Holland to defend herself and to explain her position and in driving her out of the house. In doing so, Peters thus brings to fore the exclusivity and the authoritative nature of heterosexism.

In the maintenance of identity, power plays an important role. The centrality of power in identity maintenance can be gauged from the fact that the discourse or narrative that the power centers upholds, howsoever 'wrong' it may be, is very often than not difficult to transcend, inviting fierce wrath and incisive punishment in the process. It not only asserts but also fiercely defends, imposes and resists any other alternative that might be proposed. Individual identities, under such a scenario, always remain subservient to the imposed collective identity. "Asserting, defending, imposing and resisting collective identification are all definitely political" (Jenkins 43), in that they serve towards the maintenance of that particular discourse in which a 'particular' party would like things to move. It is in the maintenance of its discourse, in its ability to hold on to it, in its capacity to resist alternative approaches that power is exercised. It is this exclusive nature of heterosexual discourses, the power it emanates that shatters Holland's conviction that she isn't guilty of anything, that she didn't do anything wrong to the realization that it is a "whole new world with different social mores…different rules…" (Peters 153) She would learn that, "it mattered what people thought." (Peters 171) Holland is neither aware of the 'power', nor the 'compromise' involved in the act. With little experience in the nuances of societal-experiences, her virtuous self had built for everyone a common manifesto

grounded on equity and a fair sense of justice. In her small little world, devoid of hard realities, all people stood on a single footing with equal rights and expression. In one section of the novel when CeCe asks Holland if her request for a LGBT club would get approved, Holland sees no reason in getting it rejected. Holland is naïve. But it also reflects her innocent side of a growing up young adult. This is a discursive strategy whereby the author puts Holland at par with the innocence of a child that has not yet been corrupted by the expansive social and cultural dynamics of power.

The figure of Holland's little sister helps further build the narrative of the institution of family as a power apparatus that constructs and emphasizes the boundary between 'members' and 'non-members' in children in course of the text. Jenkins writes that young human rarely have the cognitive, experiential or other resources available to older humans (81) and are therefore extremely susceptible or vulnerable to any implicit or explicit discursivities. The institution of family has been turned into an important institutional apparatus and discursive strategy directed to 'protect' and 'save' children from any 'unhealthy' (read homosexuality) influences. Peters looks at how sexualities in individuals are governed from an early age. Not only is Holland kicked out of home, her relationship with her siblings, especially with her little sister Hannah, is truncated by her mother in the belief that Holland might 'spoil' her too. Hannah, by the sheer force of societal discourse, as she grows up, we could say, would be groomed into heterosexual discourses and there would be no escape from it until she conditions and sets herself apart from such a discourse by sheer force of will. It is this realization, perhaps, that Holland's mother keeps herself in readiness in the face of this imaginary 'danger'. The power that this institution commands

is also to be witnessed in CeCe's home. CeCe tells Holland, "Mom doesn't want Eric to witness my perversion. He might get the idea that two girls kissing is natural or something." (Peters 149) In undertaking to protect little children from 'dangerous' influences, the fate is at once settled and sealed in favour of compulsive heterosexuality.

"Many of the fiercest gendered battles are fought on the bodies of newborn infants, elementary school children and adolescent- it is during childhood that the violence of making gendered individuals imposes itself with greatest force." (Love 159) When identity gets blurred owing to a person's desire and against the popular notion of what she/he ought to be, family becomes a means and provider of essential context for healthy and stable expression of gender and sexuality. The idea that this battle could be won when enforced during the most 'impressionable' age is not quite abandoned when it fails during that time but continues to exert its pressure as long as the object of 'contempt' continues to exist. CeCe is objected not to speak of homosexuality in front of her small brother; she is in fact reprimanded. Such silences filters, strips and robs it of 'those' shades of life even before it could consider such an option. This is not to be read as a plain and simple imposition of silence. A whole network of mechanisms that has been built up to look into the progression of sex into distinct binaries works towards the maintenance of this deadly silence. As Foucault would remind us, "we are dealing less with a discourse on sex than with a multiciplity of discourses produced by a whole series of mechanisms operating in different institutions." (Foucault 33) Homosexual desire is socially eliminated from childhood by means of a series of family and educational mechanisms. (Weeks 692) Parents want their children's life lived in a pattern that mirrors their own sexuality. Children are thus overtly

taught and covertly socialized into the heterosexist framework. It is a linear progression that starts with the family. On the contrary, against 'this' is built the male/female binary in the image of Greg (CeCe's brother) and his girlfriend. Greg brings his girlfriend home and there are no eyebrows raised, no questions asked. This binary of male and female is the very basis on which heterosexuality exists. While Greg with his girlfriend is quite a 'natural' relationship, CeCe with Holland is a 'perverted' idea.

The heterosexual identity derives its strength from the binary construction of gender and sex; unproductive activities, non-procreational affairs and casual pleasures have no space under such a discourse. Breaking the immanent rules of sexuality brings condemnation, indignation and punishment in accordance with the degree to which it had been perpetrated, while also varying in time and place. What Holland could not take cognizance of it, CeCe understands it well but lives an 'obtrusive' life, while her mother having lived and known the ways of the world, protests, "I don't understand why she has to flaunt her sexuality. It's a private thing. She should keep it that way. Be discreet, like her sister….I'm afraid for her all the time. I don't want her to get hurt." (Peters 190) While the need to be prudent in one's speech and action genuinely reflects her motherly tutelage and comes from being a protective guardian, it could be argued that the language of discretion is a language of subjugation as it emboldens the oppressor in its obligation to usher in the nonconformist to the heterosexual way of life.

Kirsten's (Holland's friend in school) reaction to Holland is the stock example of power equation that heterosexuality enjoys in relation to non-heterosexuality. Classification is rarely neutral and implies evaluation. To identify someone could be enough to decide

how to treat her (Jenkins 6) When Holland confronts Kirsten that, “It’s none of your business” (Peters 177), Kirsten is quick to retort, “Well, I just might have to make it my business." (Peters 177) The power that Kirsten displays does not have the form of law and yet Holland is helpless against this encroachment of power. Kirsten is, in fact, protected by the institutional incitement of proper living, of correctness of conduct, of decorum and decency. Confident in her own heterosexual orientation and having known full well that she stood significantly higher in the hierarchy of sexes, she faces Holland bluntly without any fear or alarm. Her tone in speaking to Holland is aggressive and is reminiscent of what CeCe faced earlier in Central Wash. Though Holland is offended, yet there is nothing she could do. The prevalent cultural discourse prevents her from taking a stand against the outrageous behavior that Kirsten was brewing and Holland is quite aware of it. Kirsten’s comment that, "I think he should experience what it’s like doing it with someone other than a queer.” (Peters 211), and, “And now we all know what your pleasure is. Dyke.” (Peters 212) must be viewed in the face of social construction of sexuality. Her sexual hierarchy allows her to call such names as ‘player’, ‘queer’ and ‘dyke’ and escape without being questioned. CeCe’s advise to Holland that, “You don’t have to do anything to be hated for being gay” (Peters 215) assumes universal significance in view of the fact that non-heterosexuals are looked down upon in social and cultural discourse. This gap in what is right and what people think is right is what Peters brings at the negotiation table.

The question of AIDS has turned into a significant literary discussion in young adult literature. The outbreak of AIDS has led to the death of many people and literary artists have not shied away from handling this subject. While in the cultural sphere texts

like Randy Shilts' *And the Band Played on: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic* (1987) and Jonathan Engel's *The Epidemic: A Global History of AIDS* (2006) have sought to chronicle the spread of AIDS and the modern day arrangements to stop it, there are also literary works like Sarah Schulman's *People in Trouble* (1990) and Rabih Alammedine's *Koolaids: The Art of War* (1998) describing what it means to have AIDS and survive in society. Critical works like Susan Sontag's *AIDS and its Metaphors* (1989), on the other hand, has sought to demystify the construction of AIDS in popular culture and in literature. In fact the epidemic of AIDS has been covered in such a way that a new distinct genre of literature has emerged out of it and loosely named 'HIV/AIDS Literature'.

There is a stigmatized association between homosexuality and AIDS. The notion of 'cultural anger' as developed by Gilbert Herdt in his book *Moral Panics, Sex Panics: Fear and the Fight Over Sexual Rights* (2009) gives us a better way to understand this linking and stigmatization of AIDS with homosexuality. Herdt sees 'crisis' like, "the fear of masturbation "epidemic"…moral crusades against abortion and unwed teenage mothers, antipornography campaigns…and panics surrounding homosexuality and HIV in the 20th century" (Herdt 1) as a major point of mobilization to provoke a 'cultural anger' in the society. This cultural anger is in due course of time converted into what he calls 'moral panics' in which the particular phenomenon is built in such a way that people fear it might tear individuals and communities and destabilize the society. As such it calls for moral regulation for governing others and governing the self in the pursuit of a well-being and social rights. "Such panics and great fears can be short or long term. However, the more serious they are and the longer they endure, the greater the likelihood that societies would

deal with them through the production of the reactive mechanism of surveillance, regulation, discipline and punishment." (Herdt 1) Herdt points out the mechanism by which one panic gives way to another: "It is this general process that I refer to as cultural anger - the marshalling of intense emotion across diffuse domains and arenas of action to unite disparate individuals and groups in political pursuit of a common enemy or sexual scapegoat." (Herdt 5)

In *Keeping You a Secret*, the question of AIDS attains importance in the context of homophobia. Kirsten, while in a one-to-one with Holland, as way of prank jests, "You know what gay means, don't you? Got AIDS Yet?" (Peters 91). The 'gay disease' characterization of HIV/AIDS in the text means that homophobic environment continue to inform the American psyche. Queer is often linked in popular discourse to AIDS. If other ways of disapprobation and objection does not not quite sufficiently work on the 'subject position', AIDS is used as a ruse, a tool to censure. While AIDS in heterosexual relationship is empathized, it becomes a subject of study in social and moral spoil. The discourses on HIV and AIDS as a symptom of social and moral decay are used to advance argument against homosexuals. It becomes an important area where power and pleasure meets. It also, in many ways, reflects on the question of stereotypes and misrepresentation in homosexual relationship. Stereotypes that homosexuality is not only morally disagreeable but also physically unsound and a transmission route for contaminable diseases like AIDS are often shoved in popular discourse. Value judgements or misrepresentations like AIDS being contracted through immoral acts (read: homosexuality) abounds. Instead of seen as a hygiene issue, it is by design pivoted into identity politics and

ends up metamorphosed as a gender issue. Although such precarious assumptions have no basis in facts, yet such misrepresentation registers an unwavering space in cultural discourse and ends up as a tool to pass judgements on non-conformists.

Are pedagogical institutions open to diverse sexual orientation? If yes how? And in what ways are schools manifestation of the old ideas on homosexuality? Does school authority uphold the fundamental rights to express freely oneself? In what many ways is our educational institutions a continuation of the old thought process that shuts down individual liberty at the altar of 'cultural values'? These are some of the fundamental questions that Peters explores in course of the novel. CeCe's maltreatment in Welsh Central School and Holland's own experience are major commentaries on how notions of shared collectivities in educational institutes continue to guide our sexual preferences. Peters' interest lies on analyzing how pedagogical institutions push the heteronormative discourses at the cost of individual freedom. A stock example is to be found in Holland's narration:

> Then suddenly, at school, everyone knew. Nobody actually confronted me, or said anything. But when I walked down the halls, it felt as if people could see it on me — a brand, or a mark, or a flashing red "L" on my chest. Their eyes lingered a little too long, and I could sense them judging me. Casting me out. The worst part was, I couldn't even defend myself. I wanted to scream, "Stop it! Stop looking at me. I'm still the same person. You know in, you voted for me. It's me, Holland. I haven't changed. (Peters 178)

The pedagogical institutions would be another important center, amongst innumerable and highly articulating interlocking institutional devices and strategies that devaluates homosexuality. As it has been said, the road to heterosexuality is a linear progression that starts with the family. And this is the stage where Holland and CeCe are currently in; this stage also marks an intensification of the interventions of power. A substantial way in which heterosexuality exercises its power devaluation over homosexuality is through the mode of silence. A more subtle and nuanced form of devaluation is silence. It partakes of what the French social anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu calls 'symbolic violence', a gentle and hidden non-physical violence perpetrated by group with more social power upon less powerful and which sets to work when outright violence is non-viable. "Whereas denigration is an open strategy to condemn or harm, silence is covert in its lack of acknowledgment that others exist who are different from what the majority prefers. Its technique is to ignore and thereby to marginalize and delegitimize persons excluded." (Fine and Weis 1) "Ultimately, silencing is power and control masked in another guise." (Norton and Vare 66) Acceptance of who they are, what they stand for by friends and families, at school, at home and at society at large is a crucial factor, a major problem in non-heterosexual experience.

> For some gays it's easier to tell their friends first, because the most important thing is to feel accepted by the first person you tell. And the hardest thing for most of us is coming out to our parents. (Peters 220)

Closeted identities are direct consequences of non-acceptance of alternate forms of pleasure, love and relationship. Acceptance is not same as toleration. To tolerate is to

accept something grudgingly. To tolerate is to believe in one's own superiority. But acceptance is showing maturity in understanding and believing that one's position or argument is not the only way, that there are alternative ways to produce truth.

Denial is a major question in homosexual discursivities. Denial stems from deep-rooted prejudice for non-heterosexuality as well as fears of cultural discourse that hangs on the air all over. Perfectly fine with her daughter's love affair in a heterosexual relationship, Holland's non-heterosexuality comes as a shock to her mother and her first reaction is one of denial, that her daughter is a homosexual. Her earlier concern for Holland that, "I promised myself I'd never do to you what my parents did to me. That I'd love you no matter what." (Peters 243), soon evaporates into a frenzied denial of her daughter and culminating with a strong warning that, "I won't let you throw your life away on that girl." (Peters 243) Holland's mother is unable to believe that her daughter has come to not only believe but also live in a relation which she considers 'sick'. Holland's change from a heterosexual to non-heterosexual orientation is what leads her mother to comment, "I know you, Holland. You're not…that way." (Peters 243) It is the same denial of truth which leads her mother to put the blame upon CeCe. Her mother blames all the people- CeCe, Kate etc- except her own daughter. That denial is not a solution but part of the problem and that acceptance of the truth is the only way forward is a major driving lesson that the text has for the readers. And to drive this truth home, Peters make Holland her mouthpiece. Holland insists on accepting the truth that she is a lesbian: "Stop denying the truth…Yes, Mother, I am. I'm gay… You don't know me at all… All you see is this person you want me to be.

And I can't be her. I'm not her. I can't live my life for you." (Peters 244) It is this non-acceptance that leads to closeted identities.

Keeping you a Secret is a critical text in 'closeted' identities. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues in *Epistemology of the Closet* that in the nineteenth century, same-sex desires were "distinctively constituted as secrecy," and most famously named as "the love that dare not speak its name." (Sedgwick 73-74) If Sedgwick's statement highlights the state of affairs in the nineteenth century, Peters' text is a commentary on the twentieth century. Not much seems to have changed in course of the century. The urgency to keep it a secret, to confide within oneself, to not communicate to the world outside and more importantly to jealously guard it from the advocates of compulsive heterosexuality are major exposes in the text. Closet unfolds as a 'deathtrap' which gradually kills an individual (metaphorically speaking). Peters describes closeted identities in the following words: "They got it wrong when they called it "the closet." This was a prison. Solitary confinement. I was locked inside, inside myself, dark and afraid and alone." (Peters 213) While closet is compared to a prison in the text, the coming-out experience is described in terms of liberation.

> The best thing about coming out is, it's totally liberating. You feel like you've made this incredible discovery about yourself and you want to share it and be open and honest and not spend all your time wondering how is this person going to react, or should I be careful around this person, or what will the neighbours say? (Peters 220)

Coming-out becomes a liberating experience where one could be honest and open about one's identity without terror or fear. Such an experience entails being carefree about how one is going to be judged. But while 'closet' represents 'prison' in Peters, critics like Sedgwick see underlying power in being closeted in a way that is empowering and manifests emancipation. "For Sedgwick, *not* telling, *not* describing one's identity or desire, still represents an articulation of sexuality. (Winning 57) The character of Faith in Peters' novel is an important illustration of this way of articulation. While Faith supports the idea of sexual liberation, we are nowhere told in clear terms if she is a lesbian herself. However there are enough hints to let our intellectual side argue on that side of the divide. If we are to believe in Sedgwick's idea that not telling or describing one's identity is still an act of identity, then it becomes amply clear that Peters uses the 'closet' in the dichotomy of 'prison' and 'liberation'. While 'closet' is something that oppresses and subjugates Holland, it is used by Faith as a tool of empowerment. Silence becomes a tool of power. It not only serves to ascertain her safety but also one's dignity and integrity. In the silence of Faith regarding her own identity, Peters finds her way of articulation in the inability of the readers to know nothing of her and thereby subverting the restrictive dialects of 'outside' and 'inside'.

The counter discourses to power structures are nowhere more seen than in those LGBT texts that seek to subvert the established order in their negotiation for rightful discursive practices. Peters aggressively puts forward her characters to challenge and transgress the existing order that govern popular discourses on sex by inscribing on them a rebellious nature. Time and again we see her characters violate, defy and infringe on those

fundamental assumptions of sexual culture that has come to be seen as 'normal' and 'natural'. They are found to be negotiating and subverting oppressive social conditions, sometimes very radically. One of the primary method through which hegemonic sexual regime is met with reverse power in course of the text is by inscribing 'contrary' sexual sensations in their clothes.

Adrienne Rich in 'Of Woman Born' writes that, "There is nothing revolutionary whatsoever about the control of women's bodies by men. The women's body is the terrain on which patriarchy is erected." (Rich 55) In this erection of patriarchy over a woman's body, clothes hold a paramount importance. Clothes not only covers body but signals 'morality' and 'virtue' as opposed to 'immorality' and 'sin' in the popular culture. What a woman wears decide her place in the society: moral as opposed to immoral and virtue as opposed to sin. In Anne Peters, it attains a symbolic meaning. Peters convert simple piece of clothing into a powerful tool of message. It becomes an instrument of dissent and revolt.

The T-shirts, that Peters' characters wear, comes up with different messages in different stages of the novel: JUST DO IT, OUT! AND PROUD!, I HAVE A QUEER CONSCIENCE, NOBODY KNOWS I'M A LESBIAN, I LOVE MY LESBIAN DAUGHTER, IMRU. CeCe aggressively projects forward her homosexual appetite or inclination through her clothes; the commentaries in the T-Shirts that she proudly and purposively displays, despite regular motherly cautions and injunctions, ignites an explicitly fierce and concrete way of radical conversation without having the need to say anything verbally. To put it in terms of Speech Act, it acts as a performative function. Through the illocutionary act of saying through signs that she is a lesbian, the narrator

converts it into an act that has been done. The textual space in the T-shirt represents a space in which a 'coming out' is enacted. Joanne Winning in her 'Lesbian Modernism: Writing in and beyond the Closet' writes that, "experimental modernist novels, in different ways, suggestively evoke that idea of text as space or container where desire might be put instead of speaking it." (Winning 58) We find a close affinity of this idea in the t-shirts that CeCe wears. Here in the t-shirt, desire and identity is put into words, instead of speaking it.

Judith Butler argues that gender is an identity constituted through a "*stylized repetition of acts*." (Butler 519). According to Butler, a gendered identity is accomplished by repeated performances until everyone comes to believe that it is the 'only' truth'. In wearing those clothes with coded messages, Peters' allows her characters to break away from 'performativity'. The T-shirt that Peters had CeCe wear becomes a radical invention, a quintessence of transgression. It becomes a tool to speak for one's body. It becomes a symbol of radical renunciation of the social compulsion, a powerful resistance to popular discourse. In an essay entitled, 'It Is the Lesbian in Us ...,', Adrienne Rich writes:

> For us, the process of naming and defining is not an intellectual game, but a grasping of our experience and a key to action. The word lesbian must be affirmed because to discard it is to collaborate with silence and lying about our very existence; with the closet-game, the creation of the unspeakable. (Rich 202)

Identity politics for Rich is an imperative route to gender and sexual neutrality. The articulation of identity 'labels', its assertion and reproduction in everyday life, to Rich, is a meaningful exercise and an imperative apparatus, a propelling workout towards resolving

gender and sexual conflicts. As such, in a lesbian context, “Not to use the word "lesbian" is to contribute to lesbian invisibility and oppression, and thus to collaborate, however inadvertently, with the institution of compulsory heterosexuality.” (Carol Guess 19)

This way of identifying and speaking to the powers back through clothes, powers that repress sex, condemn to prohibition, nonexistence and silence, involves a deliberate transgression. The person involved in the act is well aware of what dangers it might posit and yet involves herself/himself in such an act. According to Foucault, such a person “who holds forth in such language places himself to a certain extent outside the reach of power; he upsets established laws…” (qtd. in Marks 149) Not only he upsets established laws, he also opens door for new possibilities. This transgression is thus, while being oppositional, is an affirmative action into what Foucault says, “limitlessness into which it leaps as it opens this zone to existence for the first time.” (qtd. in Dean 71) CeCe would not be coerced into submission despite violence and death-threats. In wearing those clothes so boldly, so openly and thereby revolting against the popular culture, CeCe subverts the traditional ‘stereotype’ of a homosexual character that confines herself/himself to the closet in shame and fear and gives the image of a new animated character who is ready to face the world for what it is and also bear the consequences of what she/he stands for.

We see a marked difference in the way the question of alternate sexualities is handled by CeCe’s parents. We see a certain frankness and a more matured handling in the way the subject of sex or sexuality is ‘weighed’. While Holland’s mother is too prejudiced about such relationships and abhors it, CeCe’s parents are comparatively liberal about it. It is marked by toleration, if not respect; it is less repressed and less condemned. In struggling

over, in coming out of fears and denials and embracing the possibility of alternate sexuality as a lived-reality, CeCe's mother, perhaps, reflects the new woman/man that is waking up from the deep slumber of compulsive heterosexuality. The puritanical ideas that govern Holland's home is absent in her home. Having said that, CeCe's home is no Utopia; it is not completely free from prejudice and bias. There is certain level of muteness, of restrains, of hypocrisy and it is this 'restrained, mute and hypocritical sexuality' that existed in her house that CeCe questions. While her father bears no qualms, her mother has reservations about it. Kate with all her tolerance for CeCe's 'adventure' would not want Holland to stay in her home. Even if we allow for the fact that Kate's reserved behavior be attributed to her fears about her daughter CeCe being very vocal about her sexuality, there is no excuse for sending Holland away, especially when she knows what lay for her ahead. CeCe is also frank enough to admit that denial runs deep in the family. Though CeCe had come out two years before yet her mother had not been very open to the idea. The 'home rules' that is often referred to in CeCe's home are subtle rejections of homosexuality. The 'Home rules', that Kate invents, which forbids certain acts inside their home (and which may or may not restrict itself to consummated acts and sensual touching) might be a decent expression as opposed to explicit articulations and threats but only serves the assertion of aversion and the progression of stigmatization of alternate sexuality. Her words of comfort to Holland that her mother just overreacted, that she has to get used to the idea, must therefore be read in that light; it is not the encouraging words of a mother who happily rejoices in the choices of her children, but the sigh of someone who could not change the course of action of her own people.

The text lack instances of organized challenge to heterosexism. It is through individual characters' effort that compulsive heterosexuality is critiqued and challenged. The characters revolt in their own small ways. In the characters of Holland and CeCe, we see brave young adults fighting for their rights, choices, likes and orientations. The author devises numerous ways or strategies of rebelling against the 'heterosexist' penchant for binaries. One of the ways in which the characters revolt in course of the text is by claiming the term 'queer' ('queer' being derogatory for someone who does not play by the heterosexual text) and "turning it against the perpetrator by transforming it into a token of pride." (Ryan, 677-678) Consider the following lines:

> "Ow." CeCe grimaced. "Better get used to it. The best thing you can do is call yourself a dyke. A lezzie, a lesbo, a queer. All the hateful words, use them in fun. Claim them. Then they can't be used against you (Peters 214-215)

Holland, inexperienced that she is, does not understand how to confront such derogatory terms. In fact, in her innocence she does not even know that non-conformists are derided with such terms as 'dyke' or 'queer'. CeCe, on the contrary, because of her previous experience in hate and violence, knows that in claiming them, she would not only 'normalise' the terms but also claim them in such a way that it appears like a joke. Such a strategy averts someone from using those terms as a term of abuse because the term loses its value for being continuously used and also because its serious connotation no longer sticks to it. As such, it becomes difficult to coerce people into submission. CeCe's advice to Holland to laugh at, to make fun of such derogatory remarks as 'dyke', 'lezzie', 'lesbo', 'queer', not take it seriously and to claim them is a famed tradition in literary exercise.

'Queer', that was connoted with denigration, vilification and hatred, was reclaimed in the late 1980s in the resistant mode as a political term of radical coalition-building against heteronormative tradition. The text's attempt to normalize derogatory terms is not an innovation. Queer theorists had adopted the term 'queer' long way back "as a way of providing gays and lesbians with a common term around which to unite." (Ryan, 677-678). In using these 'strategies' in the novel, Julie Peters is only incorporating some of these critical literary traditions that have existed since its early days.

Peters' text also handles the question of pregnancy and motherhood in the context of same-sex relationship. The question of pregnancy in Peters' *Keeping You a Secret* crops up at different point of time and in different contexts. The earliest reference to it is made when Holland's mother warns her to not jeopardize her future, meaning thereby that she ought to take precautions. But the question of pregnancy attains a more serious discussion in the context of homosexuality and more importantly in relation to motherhood. Queers often become a subject of joke for their incapability to procreate and this comes at the cost of humiliation. In the novel, Peters' engages this question from a humanitarian point of view. In her, the question of kids is intricately woven with the sentiment of motherhood. Just as motherhood comes naturally in a hetero-sexual involvement, so does according to Peter, it comes in a homosexual relation. This Peter does through the character of Holland. To Holland, kids and children form a very important part of life. While sharing a healthy and lovely relation with children in the text, it pains her that with CeCe there was no future: "Kids. What about kids?....What if I never had children?" (Peters 174) Peters comes up with the novel solution of artificial insemination. This is an important development in queer

social discourse; Peters seems to suggest that the question of children need not necessarily come in between two same-sex couples as they can easily beget children with modern medical arrangements.

The finer contours of the novel are reserved in the art classes that Holland takes. The aesthetic discussion that the teacher rakes up and which Holland likes and relates to her life are not only some of the saving grace of the novel, they reflect a deeper and enlightened thoughts on art and life. Liberal values find its embodiment in the aesthetic expressions. The teacher's class not only serves as a rescue to the readers of the grave things happening in the novel but they are in themselves a commentary, although in subtle and nuanced terms, on the possibilities and expanding nature of existence. Art class salvages Holland. She could draw her own vision, her altered visions into those pages and it gave her comfort to know about the many possibilities that it offered: Don't worry about accuracy or realism. I just want you to focus on everyday things, to see them in a new way. I want you to develop your own approach to art as personal expression. (Peters 64-65) These words from the Arts teacher reflect a different approach to life, not which is limited by our immediate experiences and visions but that which transcends those barriers and constraints. The underlying approach negates the importance of accuracy and the imposing need for sticking to a particular reality; on the other hand it impresses on our faculty to look at things from our own perspective, to approach it as a personal expression. Such a narrative also underscores the role of art in transcending those petty boundaries. While we are limited by life, art frees us. It is the unbounded freedom that art offers that sets it apart from life. The teacher's insistence on 'personal expression' when linked to sexuality makes

greater sense when we consider again the larger thematic context of the narrative. As such, question arises: Is it important that we all subscribe to the popular discourse on sexuality? Can we not develop a personal approach to sexuality? Can we not see sexuality from a personal perspective? Can we not develop a personal liking/disliking to sexuality?

The Art classes also, at the same time, throws up another important question: Is Mackel, the Arts teacher, a homosexual himself? Is the author trying to hint in subtle terms, through those Art lessons, that Mackel is a gay? The author nowhere says it in clear terms. Yet there are a few subtle clues left here and there that Mackel could be a 'queer' himself. Take for example Mackel's above views on Arts or his fascination for Holland's vision of art. In one instance he surprises Holland by giving her a gift with a note: "I wish I had your vision. Oh, how I wish I had your vision" (Peters 42)

Together with Mackel, the character of Faith is also shrouded in mystery. Peters cultivates her (sexual) desirability in vague terms. Her voice is muted for most part of the novel and it is only towards the end that she opens herself up to the readers. All of our ideas and views on Faith, initially, come from what Holland thinks about her. Faith, at first, appears to be very immature. But this is because the reader views her from the point of view of Holland. It is only in the visit to the theatres that Faith opens herself to the readers and we actually get to know what she thinks and why she thinks. In fact, Faith emerges out to be a more matured character, when we place her side by side against Holland, when it comes to life. As soon as Faith opens herself up, it becomes ample clear to the readers that she is an entirely different stock than the one given to us from the eyes of Holland. She is a sensitive and matured girl who understands the situation that Holland has put herself in.

While a major section of the text is informed by bias, prejudice, closeted-lifestyle as well as dissent, there are a few instances in the text that offers some relief to the tensions that builds up in course of the narrative. The building in which Holland goes to live serves as a symbol of provisional 'Utopia'. The building is built as a paradox to the world outside and serves as a paragon of sexual diversity, of unbridled freedom, of love and care where Holland could imagine a better future for herself. The building by itself is of no consequence, but Peters converts the building, just as she converts a piece of cloth, to a symbol of great importance. While the world outside stands for prejudice, hatred and oppression, the apartment, howsoever murky it is in terms of infrastructure and aesthetics, becomes a symbol of Utopia, provisional it might be. The building with its ripped wallpapers, filthy furniture and stained mattress still offers freedom, rights and liberty. This is put in sharp contrast to the world outside with its own rules of enforced homogeneity and totalitarianism that tramples down on anything what it considers to be 'transgressive'. The other dynamic connected to the building is that the building serves as a moment for Holland to better understand the world, to better connect with the world. It is not a problem-free existence for Holland but it saves her from the imminent danger- homophobia. The people there are also cast in different mould- they are welcoming, loving and caring. It presents the vision of a hatred-free, prejudice-free, violence-free world where one is not categorized or put into certain subject positions. The shift to the building was also important considering the tension that had been built into the narrative. It also serves as a tool for the emotional outpouring of emotion. It is only here that Holland could cry her heart out; elsewhere she had been always guarded in her emotion, never displaying it.

The text's strength derives out of its capacity to not overly idolize the characters. The narration does not present either Holland or CeCe as idealized figures or as victims. On the other hand, it humanizes them, especially Holland. While we empathize with Holland for being a victim of homophobia, we also recognize her faults. She is not just a victim of prejudice, she is also a perpetrator; her biased attitude towards her step-sister Faith, in special, cast her as a figure that necessitates condemnation. But her good nature negates her positive traits. Her sadness at being misunderstood by her mother, her parting from her little sister, her profound sense of emptiness on questions of pregnancy and motherhood and many other episodes endears us to her. What also humanizes Holland is her propensity to understand and realize her fault; her feeling of guilt at being fault with Faith redeems her. Similarly while we chastise CeCe for her lies about closet, we also empathize with her for all biasness and hatred she had to face for asserting her identity, the deep pain she bore in her heart after being separated from Joanie, her ex-girlfriend. They central protagonists are portrayed as any other human being; except for their homosexual nature there is nothing that separates them from their peers.

Keeping You a Secret is an important text in queer liberation discourse in being critical of constructed sexuality and assertive of more evolved and matured interpretation, different from our current received understanding of it. Peters allows her readers to look through the politics of unique individuality and shared collectivity and the interactional process in which each identity is forged - imposed or resisted, claimed or counter-claimed within institutional orders. In seeking to subvert established order of things, Peters foregrounds the shifting, precarious and negotiable nature of identity politics. It is not an

easy task because it involves reversing the gaze, an articulation from an absolutely opposite standpoint. One has to move from simple binaries to multifaceted nature of sexual potentiality. It has to challenge what the people believe in dearly, absolutely. Peters' text may not have succeeded overnight in breaking perceptions and hegemonic discursivities, but it certainly may be counted a strong twenty-first century resistance to the exclusionary politics of compulsive heterosexuality.

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Chapter IV

Neither Men, Nor Women: Contingencies of Sexuality in *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi*

Laxminarayan Tripathi's autobiography *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* (2015) is one of the rare works in transgender literature that effectively captures the complex life and challenges of the 'hijra' community in India. The autobiography deals primarily with the question of sexuality, with Laxmi's own transgender experiences, of what it means to be a transgender in India and to the larger global audience. All other themes that are to be encountered in the text remain subservient to this central theme. The text is one of the earliest works that belong to the genre of 'hijra' literature. Originally written in Marathi, the text was translated into English by R. Raj Rao and P.G. Joshi, critics who have themselves worked substantially on LGBT literature. This chapter examines the (re)production of 'hijra' identity in the context of heterosexual politics in general and the Indian background in particular. Each and every encounter, in Tripathi's text, works towards a sustained dismantling of the heteronormative proposition of 'two' genders and 'one' sexuality.

Transgenders have always exerted intense fascination and exceptional interest for non-transgender people- "as symbols of transgression, enlightenment or degeneration…." (Love 150) This fascination and interest is triggered by their paradoxical existence in 'representational space' in social, cultural and literary milieu. 'Representation space' could be understood as that discursive expanse in various literary and non-literary preserve in which a particular subject is put to representation or paraded for description, so as to say. While there are many texts that speak of transgenders and transgender experience, there have relatively been few texts that have come from the transgenders themselves. One of the

main reasons why the transgenders are seen in the dichotomy of divinity and monstrosity and the continued popular misconception is the absence of a tradition of writing by transgenders themselves. Laxmi's autobiography could perhaps address this gap in it.

The, "universal assumption that the world consists of only two biological sexes and that this is the natural and necessary way of things" (qtd. in Herdt 33) is a major irritant in the acceptance of transgender identities. The 'hijras' (Indian moniker for transgenders) vex the heteronormative tradition with their very existence. Their existence is a problem, a hiccup, a constraint and a major irritant towards enforcing the idea of 'two' genders and 'one' sexuality. The fact that they are 'transgenders', a gender beyond the binary of male and female upsets the very foundational principles of heterosexism.

Laxmi's text is important for four important reasons. First, the text is an autobiography and hence a refreshing break from those texts that have been written about 'hijras'. Second, the text takes the reader into the lived experience of hijras in India. Third, the text is an important intervention in the LGBT literature. Fourth, the significance of the text comes from the fact that Laxmi was a party impleading before the Supreme Court of India on the rights of hijras and the transgender, against Section 377 of Indian Penal Code (IPC) that bars 'carnal intercourse against the order of nature'. While the four points raised above are interconnected in more ways than one, yet it is important to differentiate them for a more systematic study of the larger concern and significance of the thesis. It is keeping in mind these four important points raised above that we are going to dissect the text, not necessarily in the order mentioned above.

Tripathi's text is an autobiography, a text that narrates the author's journey from the discovery of being an effeminate, of inwardly being a woman while being born into the 'body' of a boy, of being attracted to boys and strong desiring them to the realization that "I was not the only one like this, but there were others too..." (Laxmi 11) Laxmi takes her reader into the lived experience of hijras in India. Her narrative captures those pains and suffering that comes from being a hijra. Tripathi's autobiography is not the first autobiography or a text to be written by a transgender. In India, A. Revathi had set the genre of hijra literature into motion when she published her *The Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story* (2010) in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Apart from *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* and *The Truth about Me: A Hijra Life Story*, Living Smile Vidya's *I am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey* (2013) is another celebrated work in hijra literature.

Critics have often questioned the current framework of academic inquiry and argued on the importance of finding new mechanisms and framework towards understanding transgender or transsexuality. Heather Love suggests an excellent proposition when he writes, "Establishing a transgender tradition means addressing the crucial distinction between literature about transgender people and literature by transgender people." (150). Gayatri Reddy recognizes the need for hijra's self-narrative when she writes, "In charting the history of these representations, perhaps the most noticeable feature is the silence of the people who are so represented…it is important to note that hijras' own accounts of their individuality and their crafting of person hood are central to the analysis..." (17) In other words, it is the embodied experience of the individuals concerned that should serve as the ultimate basis for theorizing and understanding difference/identity.

(Reddy 210) Allowing and putting an emphasis on 'insiders' or those that have the most at stake to speak for themselves than those who are 'outsiders', that do not belong to the category is an important precondition for authentic discursivities. Addressing this distinction is a key to transgender studies since much of the ideas we have imbibed are drawn from heteronormative supposition on sexuality.

In articulating the hijra identity, it is also important that hijras be distinguished from transgenders in general. It is true that hijras fall under the transgender category, but not all transgenders are hijras. Laxmi writes, "Had I not become a hijra, I might have been any ordinary effeminate homosexual guy." (Tripathi 169) The narrative thus itself speaks the difference between an everyday homosexual and a hijra. The term 'hijra' has its origin in Urdu; in old Sanskrit and Pali, such people were known variously as 'trtiyaprakrti, kliba, and napumsaka.' (Reddy 21) Western epistemologies or uniform rendition subsume native terminologies, expressions and meanings and the many subtleties and nuances of what it means to be a hijra in the Indian context. A critical look at Laxmi's text necessitates taking into account this fundamental difference between a hijra and a transgender.

Laxmi's text is an important intervention in the LGBT literature and more especially transgender literature. Each story, each narrative in the text works towards dismantling the heteronormative tradition by questioning and subverting institutional support systems. The text is at once a celebration of her 'unique' transgender identity as well as a scathing attack on compulsive-heterosexual that administers and governs sexual domain.

The autobiography begins with the description of her childhood when she first discovers her unique sexuality, her realization that she is different from the heterosexuals, that she was and there were many people who were of her own kind, who shared similar sexual attraction for members of their own sex. Laxmi's own admittance, "While I did not want some boys anywhere near me, I was attracted to others and strongly desired them. I wondered if this happened because inwardly I was a woman. I did not know. I was only in the fourth standard then." (Laxmi 10), bears a close resemblance to another transgender author Jan Morris's famous memoir *Conundrum* (1974) where she looks back to the period when, "I was three or perhaps four years old when I realized that I had been born into the wrong body, and should really be a girl." (9) Such a narrative is also to be found in many of the lesbian and gay texts where the narrator shares a similar experience in having to cope up with gender binary. Tensions produced by binary are immediately opened up to its readers and goes on to show that such discrepancies are real and original and not acquired sometimes in later period of life under external influences. The narrative furthers this thematic concern and let the readers know and understand the difficulties endured, the exclusion and subordination framed by the assumption of compulsive heterosexual discourse.

The text situates Laxmi as a young adult who in naivety and innocence cannot understand or make a reasonable assumption of her own body, of why despite being born in the body of a male, she felt a impulse to act in a contrary manner, of why she felt like a woman, of why she walked and talked in a feminine style. To Laxmi's question, "Why am I not like everyone else? Am I abnormal?" (Tripathi 11), a character in the text responds

thus: “No, my child, you are not abnormal. You are absolutely normal. What is abnormal is the world around us. They simply don’t understand us” (Tripathi 11). Laxmi only begins to understand the complications of gender and sex as she grows up and comes into contact with different sets of people; she would understand in due course of time that bodies are not only biological phenomena but also complex social creations onto which meanings are imposed, that gender and sexuality forms a part of hierarchy with distinct discursivities and power relations and that there is no easy escape from it.

The hijras are born as male biologically but the psychological set up is that of a female. They are sexually attracted not to the opposite sex, but to their own sex. There is thus a conflict between their biological, and psychological and sexual identities. But there is more to the hijra identity than just psychological and sexual. And which is the hijra body itself. In the social construction of identity, body serves some distinct purposes. Different bodies are meant for different tasks and each body is supposed to perform its own task. Body that deviates from its expected behavior is universally shamed, silenced and punished. The hijra body, by virtue of its ambiguous anatomic formation, becomes a major site of dispute and altercation. While homo-sociality carries the benefit of being hidden under the body, the hijra body is something that is already there for everyone to see and judge.

Laxmi gives an interesting twist to identity politics of body while she defines hijra as such: “The word ‘hij’ refers to the soul, a holy soul. The body in which the holy soul resides is called ‘hijra’. The individual is not important here.” (Tripathi 39) The body that is so much a subject of tag of war between the individual and the society and for whom

there is so much of antagonism recedes to the background. This body is replaced by an identity-less entity 'soul'. The narrative furthers this line of thought when Laxmi says that a hijra is, "neither a man nor a woman. She is feminine, but not a woman. He is masculine, a male by birth, but not a man either…God loves the hijra community and has created a special place for it outside the man –woman frame." (Tripathi 40) But such a definition of hijra hardly holds any importance before a heterosexual audience that sees gender and sexuality sharply divided in binary oppositions. To the exclusionary politics derived from a dualistic idea of gender of and girl, man and woman, and, male and female, such definitions hold no meaning.

Tripathi's text recognizes the immanent danger of being born in a hijra body: "When a person's biological and psychological and sexual identities are at odds with each other, he becomes a freak in the eyes of society." (Tripathi 172) The text problematizes this disjunction in the little Laxmi who is just beginning to understand the exclusionary politics of body.

> While I did not want some boys anywhere near me, I was attracted to other and strongly desired them. I wondered if this happened because inwardly I was a woman. I did not know. I was only in the fourth standard then. How was I to know? (Tripathi 10)

Laxmi's remark that when she was attracted to a man, she didn't think of herself as a man but a woman brings to fore the anomalies of gender, that is so frequently generalized, simplified and cast in straight terms. Laxmi's physical built up (she is born

with male anatomies) would require her to be drawn with people with contrary anatomies, to be engaged with them, to think of them as the 'natural' associates and to encourage this line of thought in others. Being attracted to the same sex is something not which one should desire, least alone express it.

Richard Jenkins in his influential book *Social Identity* (1996) writes that any categorisation is the result of internal-external dialectic. Birth inaugurates the process of individual initiation into the human world and the assumption of identities within. (Jenkins 77) An individual's identity is in fact pre-determined before she/he is born. Individuals engage in what Jenkins terms "interactional space" (Jenkins 47), a social space in which identities are asserted, defended, imposed and resisted. An interactional space may be understood to be that space in which an individual interacts with other individual or group or an institution for that matter to make sense of who one is and where one situates herself/himself in the social order or the nature of relationships. In this interactional space, in which an individual interacts with another individual or group, "Your external definition of me is an inexorable part of my internal definition of myself- even if I only reject or resist it- and *vice versa*." (Jenkins 47) On the indispensable role of other(s) in the infant's development of mind, selfhood and identity Jenkins writes that the human world is *always* a world of others, and during infancy the balance is infavour of the identificatory work done by those others. (77) Under such circumstances, the sense of belonging requires that she/he prepare and conduct themselves as competent social actors in prescribed ways.

It is thus that in transgenders during early childhood, the feminine behaviour that is nourished and nurtured in girls/females are actively discouraged and if not a hyperactive

male or a macho image, nothing less than a boyish persona is incentivized. It is this statutory that Laxmi comes face to face with and which she seeks to transcend, arguing on the inner urges of her body. But identificatory games come with great consequences and being too small she is no match for the great game. While it is for her to accept or reject the shared collectivity, she lacks the competence to successfully respond to categorization of us offered or imposed by others. Jenkins explains this in the following words:

> Very young humans lack the competence to counter successfully their identification by others. They have limited capacities to question or resist, even if they are disposed to. And they may not be: during and before the process of language acquisition the powerful human learning predisposition leaves the individual open to forceful and consequential definition by others. (84)

The incapacity to resist the external dialectics of identifications, in children, is a direct consequence of her/his lack of cognitive and experiential resources that are generally available to adults. This perhaps explains Laxmi's helplessness that, "I was only in the fourth standard then. How was I to know?" (Tripathi 10) The incapacity to resist forced identities meanwhile leads to maintenance of two different identities: the public image and the private image. The public image is one that an individual holds forth for 'others', while private image is one that which he actually 'is' and which he may or may not share with a small members who might share a similar preoccupation or those that might sympathize with her/him. Tripathi's text offers numerous instances in the maintenance of this dual image.

Jodie Medd, in his analysis of how texts offer distinct ways of engagement in queer literary field, takes cognizance of how "past may function as a structure of pedagogy, an inspiration for future transformation, a literary template for addressing past and present queer issues, a source of narrative pleasure that transforms established genres while imagining occluded sexual desires and cultures, and an imaginative playground for destabilizing temporality and subjectivity." (168) Laxmi's strength lies in her ability to not only mirror the present but also foreground the historical literary and cultural artefacts that have over time, if not cushioned, at least harboured heterogeneous views on gender and sexuality without malice that accompanies our times. Laxmi looks back at history, to ancient literature, and native and foreign customs that speaks of transgender history to speak for herself and her community. She refers back to the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and even the *Kamasutra* to strengthen her case, contending throughout that these texts constantly upend the 'third gender' cause without stigmatization.

Arguments and counter-arguments on the category of transgender- their acceptance or rejection- in ancient Indian society have come of late to be a major discursive site. L. Zwilling and M. J. Sweet's comprehensive study on the existence of the category of the third gender in India usher them to the discovery that, "the category of a third sex has been a part of the Indian world view for nearly three thousand years." (362) Reddy endorses this world view when she affirms that the notion of a third nature in India dates back to at least the third century, if not before." (21) But the most important intervention in this direction (towards exposing the false myth that same-sex desire is unknown in Indian traditional culture) has been Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai's celebrated work *Same-Sex Love in*

India: A Literary History (2000) that explores third gender roles and gender transfiguration as important mythological thematic issue. Tripathi's text while foregrounding the 'sex-positive' attitude of Hinduism in order to defend their own precarious existence under the current social and cultural milieu, also looks at the hijras as integral part of the courtly traditions of Muslim kings during the Mughal era.

But the history of sexuality in India is much more complex than one would generally allow. A look at the *Sushruta Samhita* (6^{th} century BCE) which means Sushruta's Compendium, an ancient Sanskrit text on medicine and surgery would be sufficient to understand not only how alternate sexualities was discarded in favour of 'two gender' and 'two sex' but also patholized and medicalized, reflecting perhaps the first patholization and medicalization of deviant sexuality in human history. This also perhaps negates Foucault's assertion that the first patholization and medicalization of deviant sexuality happened only in the nineteenth century. These are however a few exceptions and by and large there was a tolerance for alternative gender and sexuality as Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai's explore in their important book *Same-Sex Love in India: A Literary History*.

The discontinuity of historical frankness observed in relation to gender and sex is a major concern to be discerned in the text. Laxmi views the British rule as a major factor affecting transgenders. To understand how the western scholarly imagination gendered sexual behavior and brought in the homo-hetero divide, the social demarcation of sexes we only need only to visit Kitts's *A compendium of castes and tribes found in India* (1885). "The hijras were classified and registered along with other "criminal castes," a new category of being in the discourse and polity of colonial India." (Reddy 26) Shane Gannon

writes that the third gender in India, “troubled British notions of masculinity and sexuality as well as the relationship between the two” (Gannon 1) There are a host of other authors and critics who share a similar view with Laxmi. Ruth Vanita explains how ghazals and Rekhtis that incorporated male-male/ female-female homoeroticism during the pre-colonial period were heterosexualised in its encounter with British colonialism (110). Explaining the ambiguous position held by the Indian way of viewing gender and sexuality against the polarity of the western culture, Nanda writes, “Whereas Westerners feel uncomfortable with the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in such in-between categories as transvestism, homosexuality, hermaphroditism, and transgenderism, and make strenuous attempts to resolve them, Hinduism not only accommodates such ambiguities, but also views them as meaningful and even powerful.” (20) Against this background, the hijras had been systematically subsumed by a new culture of hetero-normativity. Tripathi’s text, on that account, is a major indictment of the myth of the Un-Indian nature of alternate sexualities.

In line with gender and sexual identities that crystallized into rights movement that involved activism across the globe, Laxmi is quick to understand the power it wields and the possibilities and opportunities that it opens in upholding the human rights of LGBTQ community. Activism plays an important role in shaping social and cultural worldviews and interpretive framework, in overcoming the rigidity of social and sexual hierarchy, in the resistance and formulation of political identities by creating progressive changes in the lives of people. In the sexual hierarchy that, “resembles a class system where sexual practices, expressions, identities, and communities are ranked, from the most normative

and socially approved to the most stigmatized and despised." (Ocholla 124), queer activism translates into a critical tool of resistance and change. Laxmi's text foregrounds the role of activism and art as a tool to fight stereotypes, discrimination and violence. Activism becomes a strong weapon in the hands of hijras to negotiate space in the wider sexual conduit by shaping the social networks and relations. The emancipatory politics of queer activism helps subvert, enact, define and celebrate alternative sexual identities by raising necessary questions out in the open. Laxmi writes, "We immersed ourselves in welfare work, aimed at empowering the hijra community and educating society. To us, the hijra were the ultimate subaltern, deprived of fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution. We were slaves, non-persons. We had been suffering injustice for centuries." (Tripathi 91) We find Laxmi use various platforms that comes her way to, "make the viewers aware that hijras are normal people, just like them." (Tripathi 125)

The text also looks at the role of art in transcending constructed identities and boundaries. While Laxmi's interest for dance is seen in 'distasteful' taste by the society at large, it holds an entirely different meaning for her. In art she forgot who she was or where she was. The identity which hold so much value in social life faded into oblivion in dance stage. As Laxmi says, once on it, she would forget who she was and danced to frenzy. While this relates a personal affair, it also casts art as something in which people lost their sense of identity. Art has the capacity to transcend people beyond the ugliness of identity politics including gender and sexuality. The author draws a line of distinction between the 'world outside' and the artistic world of glamour. Art, to the author, is remarkably free from narrow discursivities of 'outside world' that tie certain identities to particular gender.

Curious eyes that often move from one body to another in search of 'violations' are not to be found amongst the artistic kind and this is what that separates them from 'run-of-the-mill'. 'Activism' and 'Art', united as they are in their pursuit for change and in their capacity to dismantle status-quo, holds different significance for Laxmi. While art continues to be her source of inspiration, it is activism that takes a front seat in her fight against injustice.

The autobiography also looks at the role of such intellectual engagements as seminars and conferences as open forums, as places of liberal ideas in sharp contrast to the world outside. In the words of Laxmi, such conferences, "served as a bridge between the common man and the experts who enlightened us." Seminars and conferences allow the deviants to formulate new knowledge and thereby subvert the existing power paradigms. It helps in creative reformulation of who they are and their place in the society.

Feminist Adrienne Rich in her influential essay 'Of Woman Born' writes that, "There is nothing revolutionary whatsoever about the control of women's bodies by men. The women's body is the terrain on which patriarchy is erected." (Rich 55) It could also be said that there is nothing revolutionary whatsoever about the control of non-heterosexual bodies by heterosexists, that the non-heterosexists' body is the terrain on which heterosexuality is erected. Heterosexuality often situates itself against alternate sexualities. Not only it has manipulated many powerful ideological apparatuses like family, educational institutes, psychiatry to name a few, but it has also built distinct vocabularies to separate itself from 'others'. It is thus that while it applies for itself such terms as natural, legitimate, central and superior etc., gender variables are discredited as abnormal, sickly, pervert,

corrupt and inferior amongst others and seen in the dichotomy of nature/culture. But as Robert Edgerton would remind us: "… culture is both more diverse than nature and more insidious in its potential to "play" symbolically with the classifications of human bodies and minds." (Edgerton Introduction 34) Desires, instead of being measured in terms of pleasure, are validated and invalidated on the law of utility and seen in disdain and contempt. While it bring Laxmi peace and tranquility in knowing that she was not the only one who felt attracted for people of her sex, but there were others too who shared a similar sexual attraction for members of their own sex, the peace is short lived in that while knowing 'that' gave her peace, the visceral homophobia that she would encounter since then would in many ways transform and alter her life.

> But my flamboyance on stage made some people uncomfortable. In patriarchal, misogynistic cultures such as ours, dancing is seen as a womanly pursuit. So I was teased. People began to call me a homo and a *chakka*. They couldn't see the cathartic and therapeutic effect that art had on me. All that she could see was that though I was a man, my body language was that of a woman. (Tripathi 4)

The misogynist patriarchal brotherhood, assuredly confident in the heterosexist way of life, is unwaveringly austere about vocations, on what and how an individual ought to conduct herself/himself in the society. The identity of a person decides her/his vocation, hobby, profession and job etc. The lines are strictly divided and crossing these lines is seen in terms of transgressions. Laxmi's inclination for dance goes against the patriarchal codes as dancing is viewed as a womanly pursuit. This is one area where power and pleasure unite. As Foucault would remind us, "Pleasure and power do not cancel or turn back

against one another; they seek out, overlap, and reinforce one another" (48). The function of the body does not stop at dancing. The demands of the heterosexist society from body are many. It is thus that certain bodies are sought to marry and beget children. Religion also requires a certain kind of body. In Hindu religious rituals it is mandative for a dead body of parents to be burned by male member of the society. Laxmi's father's death requires that a male member of the family conduct the necessary rituals. It is against such demands on the body that Laxmi is pitted.

Tripathi's text offers interesting insights into the construction of the self inside the institution of family. In the internal-external dialectic of identification in which an individual is shaped and framed, the institution of family becomes the most important influence in its capacity to systematically aggrandize or deprecate an individual's selfhood. As the self depends for its ongoing security upon the validation of others in its initial emergence, it is the institution of family that plays the greatest manipulator; in its capacity to validate and invalidate what an individual might think or believe, it carries the potentiality to enormously influence decisions by virtue of being the immediate social environment to which an individual is first exposed. Gender and sexual identities are two such areas where it has great 'constructive' role to play. It may reinforce bias and bigotry or make space for alternative arrangements depending on where one stands on gender and sexual roles. The need for acceptance in the family is a major theme in queer studies and more so in transsexuality. In fact, where deviant sexuality is enough for parents to disown their offspring, to the transgenders, whose identities are at once inscribed in their bodies, to be accepted by family and peers come before anything else. While Laxmi is fairly

comfortable with the idea of being a gay, having properly schooled herself in the conduct of her body, the idea of spelling it out to parents becomes a burden. Referring to how the institution of family resist alternate identities, Laxmi writes, "…their families emerged as the biggest villains of the piece." (Tripathi 124) Laxmi's fears are not misplaced since the acceptance of transgender identities by parents is fraught with mistrust and abomination. While Laxmi herself wants to assert her sexual difference, the regressive nature in which the institution of family conducts itself stops her from opening herself up to her parents. The heterosexual discourse that the institution of family advances is major irritant in her acceptance of trans identity. It is this (the institution of family) that eventually decides subsequent practices of identification, at later stages. The text throws light on what toxic or macho masculinity are manifested in institutes like 'defense'. The text sees institution like Army as a profession "that put a premium on manliness." (Tripathi 59) It gratifies people's notions of the world and reinforces their prejudices. Such an idea is a linear progression that starts with family. The text cites other instances from gymkhana, the police and opens the eyes of the readers to the dangers of being a hijra. Tripathi further problematizes the question of trans identity in its intersection with patriarchal character of the Indian society, further complicating the issue of identity.

An important thematic aspect in Tripathi's novel is the transgressive nature of the text. A character in David Leavitt's novel *Equal Affections* (1989) says that "the most political thing a gay man or woman can do is to live openly with another gay man or woman." (25) Despite all the condemnations, the text shows Laxmi enter into transgressive relationships many times with different people. Laxmi embodies that political entity that

defies the pre-existing set of rules and conducts in which a man is strictly placed against woman by choosing to stay in relationships across gender lines.

The realization of hijra identity by way of sartorial desire and gendered (female) practice, or what Reddy calls, "hijras' mimetic production of female gender." (134), is another important transgressive aspect that has been explored in the text at different points of time. "While looking like a woman is not a necessary criterion of hijra authenticity, it is valued and contributes significantly to their sense of self and identity." (Reddy 123-124) The construction of a feminine appearance and enacting gendered performances is also an act of subversion. Perhaps, the most important and most visible markers of masculine erasure, the construction of femininity and subversion of gendered practice is sartorial preferences. Hijras are identified by the society and often identify themselves as hijras through women's clothing that includes sarees and blouse. Female attire, together with jewelries, serves the dual marker of (public) recognition, and 'honour' (within the community).

Sartorial preferences are a major and critical point of discussion in transgression studies. Clothes are not gender-neutral more importantly in the Indian context. They are designed keeping certain identities in mind. They are designed according to one's gender. Laxmi transcends these identities when she decides to swap her men's cloth for women's clothing. It is not just a change in attire, a cloth that cloaks her body but it reflects a change in identity. In changing to women's clothes, Laxmi transcends her gender. The 'jogjana' saris, the community 'dupatta', the 'reets' gives Laxmi an identity with which she is a

peace with. The sarees in special gives her identity. In constantly changing those clothes, gender identities are transgressed and in many ways blurred.

A hijra body is not just a transgression of the natural order, she is also an object of ridicule, of mockery, derision, contempt, sneering and laughter. The hijra is as such not only ugly but also uncreative, dull, untalented etc. They are seen as criminals, child-kidnappers amongst others. The crimes are often exaggerated and they become an object of disproportionate punishment. Reddy writes, "…instances such as these occur is well known, though they are highly exaggerated in popular conceptions...By reporting only on this feature of hijras' "bizarre" or "evil" lives, the media both vilify hijras' current existence, and more important, reinforce the strictly corporeal basis of hijra identity and thereby perpetuate the stereotype and, subsequently, the very practice they condemn. (Reddy 95) Such negative stereotypes further build bias, prejudice and hatred against the hijra body. Laxmi writes, "If a hijra commits a crime, the mob rushes to beat her up, while the police are only too glad to press charges against us. This is not to justify crime, but to reiterate that all crimes have a social dimension, and in the case of hijras, this cannot be over looked." (Tripathi 155-156) The social dimension that Laxmi refers to is the rigid stereotypes that have been built around the hijras. The text seeks to break many stoic examples of stereotypes that dehumanize them.

An important way in which it seeks to break this stereotypes and biases and prejudices is through a humane portrayal of the hijras. Such a humanistic framework casts them as normal being who deserve the same respect as anybody else would. Laxmi describes the hijra life and death, which is shrouded in great secrecy and around whom

there is a conspiracy of silence in general, in great details. The autobiography gives us account into the inner working of the hijra life. Laxmi lets the reader know and grasp the various social customs and rites about the hijra society including *haldi-mehndi*, *Chatala* etc. The text looks at the role of gurus in the *hijrakhana* explaining how different hijras that worked at different avenues: bar dancer, sex-worker, and those that perform *badhais* at weddings and childbirths live as family. Laxmi constantly refers to the other hijras as "My family", allowing her readers understand the close bond that they were knitted in, while also indicating how the burden of being a *hijra* dissipated in their presence and at their service and gave a favourable turn to her otherwise painful life. One of the highlights of the text is the process involved in becoming a hijra. The hijras are very protective about their culture, its rituals, about its society and strongly keeps its secret guarded against any outside interference or curiosity. The author lays bare those secrets, those cultures that are hidden from common people. Bringing their stories, challenges and pains out of the closet renders them humane.

Laxmi brings a very important question in 'queer studies' when she says, "The gay community of Ashok Row Kavi and his friends did not enchant me because they were co-opted by the everyday world." (Tripathi 33) Critics have argued on the need for a separate transgender studies, as distinct from gay and lesbian studies. Explaining the significance of having a separate body of transgender studies, Heather Love writes: "Transgender has been an important political tool because it draws attention to the shared element of gender variance in all of these practices and forms of embodiment. As such, it offers an alternative to lesbian and gay frameworks that would read many cross-gender practices as versions of

homosexuality (often as underdeveloped or pre-modern versions). In addition, it offers a powerful term for a coalition politics based on opposition to gender discrimination and compulsory gendering. (Love 150) One of the reason why looking at gender and sexual question from gay and lesbian studies have been abandoned is because trans-sexuals do not see eye to eye with gays and lesbians on many issues. A trans that she is, Laxmi would want to wear sarees and skirts and other feminine qualities but these are areas where gays and lesbians are not into. The question of clothes as an identity marker is an important question that signals difference between what the gays thinks and what the trans thinks.

Laxmi's own sense of community is at odds with the heteronormative tradition that the world largely subscribes to and it is only in the people of her own disposition and orientation that a certain recognition, purpose and sisterhood enacted. While all transgenders are not hijras, the hijras form a part of the larger transgender world and Tripathi's text recognizes this aspect of the trans identity. While a major section of the narration concerns itself with the hijra body, Laxmi is quick to understand that without broader coalition with the larger trans-sexual movement, the hijras of India are doomed to a fatal experience. But the comparative analysis of the larger trans movement across the world also helps us understand the fundamental difference of the position of hijras vis-à-vis the transgenders of the world.

Laxmi's text looks at the different treatments that transgenders are subjected to in different parts of the world. In doing so, she bring to fore the essential difference of the nature of exclusion in each of the societies.. Laxmi is a traveler and she travels to different cities across the world and she lets her readers know how in each of these cities the hijras

were looked at and treated. There are two important things that are worth noting about the description about the transgenders in this comparative enterprise. Laxmi in describing the life of the transgenders in these countries transcends from her hijra identity to one of transgenders. She is not a hijra, but a transgender and it is this transgender identity that becomes the object of comparative analysis of treatment. In describing the transgender experience in those countries, the text while seeing them as transgenders also looks at the national etymologies. Such a lense of looking at the transgenders of foreign origins also help her situate herself as a hijra to the more general term transgenders. It is thus that Thailand's transgenders are called by their native name kathoys or lady boys. The text looks at the different vocations like school and colleges, workplace and fashion that have been made open for the kathoys while comparing them to the hijras of India that are shunted and who wait for acceptance by the society. While the hijras of India are better positioned in comparison to their Malaysian counterparts, the Canadian, Australian and the American experience exposes the hollowness of the Indian psyche. Laxmi writes of Amsterdam, "…everybody was so non-judgmental, unlike us. It did not matter whether one was straight or gay, man or woman, Hijra or non-hijra. There was a tolerance towards all. And not just tolerance, but acceptance." (Tripathi 95) Against this non-judgmental and open nature is situated the pariah like Indian experience of the hijras. The life of a hijra is compared to the subaltern existence of an untouchable life. The text recounts horrors of rape and the callous attitude of law enforcing agencies in investigating cases of harassment, murder and rape of a hijra and further looks at how hijras are denied space in different fields like doctor, engineer, teacher, journalist, or business manager, law or IT arguing that, "It would take us more than a century to become like that." (Tripathi 95)

New York presents a very different image in the text, a sort of Utopia for the transgenders. While in the discussion about Bangkok, Thailand and other countries the text casts aspersion on the current condition of the transgenders, New York is looked at in terms of times past. It is such that the famed Stonewall Riot of 1969, and which is seen as the Mecca of the LGBT movement, is referred to as something that let the transrights rolling in different parts of the world. But the text is honest enough to accept that societies are changing and becoming more accepting of who they are. This change is reflected in the Indian society also and is reflected in the newer generation. The text lets us know and understand how the older generation and the new generation hold divergent views on homosexuality. It is thus that while his parents fume at the idea of homosexuality, her brother Shashi and her sister and brother-in-law were more willing to have a dialogue.

The text also looks at the role of mass media like television in setting the agenda for the 'mainstream' society. To Laxmi, televisions programs are excellent means of reaching out to a wider audience, carrying immense potentiality to make or break bias, prejudice and stereotypes that exists in the society. Laxmi is critical of Bollywood where hijras are cast in stereotypes with disreputable representations. She seeks correction in such misrepresentations, often herself using the platform. Televisions become a double edged sword that could be both advantageous and disadvantageous for the hijras.

But the most important correction in hijra stereotypes comes from such texts as *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* itself. As has been said, Tripathi's text is an important departure in third gender literature in that it comes from someone who is a hijra. One of the reasons why an 'insider's' perspective is important is because 'outsiders' often build stereotypes and falter

in their misrepresentation of the hijras. Serena Nanda's text *Neither Man, nor Woman: The Hijras of India* which has substantially been quoted here is itself an important attestation of what it means to be an insider and an outsider. A comparative analysis with Laxmi's text brings out the anomalies in the representation of the hijras. Nanda writes that, "…renunciation of male sexuality through the surgical removal of the organ of male sexuality…is at the heart of the definition of the hijra social identity. This understanding is true for both hijras and their audiences." (15) Laxmi's text however offers a very different understanding of the removal of sexual organ. Laxmi reminds that hijra identity is not one defined by castration. Laxmi writes that she had not gone through this removal of her male organ and yet she is hijra. Hence hijra identity cannot simply be established with either castration or hormone therapy. What matters in the performative acts of a hijra. Referring to a certain anecdote in which a filmmaker wanted to film the life of hijras, Laxmi says, "Anita had her own way of looking at things, and I couldn't see eye to eye with her. Though she had observed the hijras closely, she observed them as an outsider and not as a hijra herself. That made all the difference…it 'others' us." (Tripathi 70-71) The text cautions against using exotic and oriental lenses while viewing the hijras.

Institutional segregation is a major point of discussion in gender and sexuality studies and Tripathi's text is no exception. Institutions have become the more important and immediate contexts in which the hijras identity is open for biased and prejudiced reception. The text confronts their role in furthering the idea of two-gender and two-sexuality. Laxmi's identity is partly constructed/deconstructed during interactions with institutional mechanisms like bureaucracy and police. The text cites many instances where

such institutional mechanism not only is prejudiced towards trans identity but all together negates their existence. Laxmi's many interactions with bureaucratic officials and the system lays bare the uninformed and jaundiced nature of our exclusionary politics. The idea that the world consists of two-gender and two-sex and that there cannot be any other intermediate way of expression or desire is not only deeply ingrained in our consciousness/sub-consciousness but manifests actively through institutional mechanisms becomes the focal point of criticism in Laxmi. The text looks at how governmental institutions locate the citizens within collectives through the bureaucratic registration of names. While emphasizing similarity and difference of the subject, such institutional mechanism work to reward or punish in relation to where who stood in the hierarchies of sex. The government application forms that categorically offers only male and female as options to choose from is a fit case for discussion here. The Hijras being neither male, not female but being a distinct third sex are denied the services of filling the forms. Such forms, meant only for male-female category, systematically not only deny their fundamental rights but their very existence. Such documents in turn become markers of identity based on the simple gender binary that we have constructed for ourselves. While the immediate implications are that hijras cannot get ration cards, passports, visas, government jobs and other services, it is the long term insinuation manifested in the nullification and invalidation of the hijra identity that is of primary question; it is their emotional and psychological setup that is at stake here.

In a society that deeply cares about 'penis' - or phallic pride - the hijras are seen as sub-human. Penis takes on a symbolic meaning in a heterosexual world symbolizing

virility, sturdiness, masculinity and manliness. A hijra is seen as a deficient being since he lacks the minimum basic quality that makes 'man' a 'man' and which is basic procreative power accomplished in a virile penis. The hijras lack of penis thus carries a negative character in the heterosexual world. It is hijra's lack of phallic machismo, that vital element that marks someone as male and differentiates them from non-males, that makes 'man' blunt and straight in their bias and prejudice and treatment of hijras. Though hijras wear their hijrahood up their sleeves by proclaiming their status publicly as part of performative correctives, they also recognize their marginality as 'neither men nor women', their location outside the binary frame of reference. And therefore there is always this basic existential question of who they are and what were they doing, lurking behind. Lack of that virile quality or alternatively being born in the wrong body keep them as a group at the lowest end of the Indian social hierarchy, thus continuing to haunt them forever in that they are condemned to be outside the bounds of social, gendered, and religious and other markers of society. Every incident, every narrative, every anecdote, every criticism and all the characters that appear in the text attempts to send the core message of 'acceptance', acceptance of who they are and what they feel - "I was a woman and the world must see me as such." (Tripathi 40) - and not what others would like to think of them.

While the text casts aspersion on the sexual binaries and hierarchy and negates much of what exists in the stereotypical domain, the author is honest enough to look into and criticize those aspects of hijra life and rules that disciplines them to set themselves apart from 'other' heterosexual lots. The defence of hijras, their conduct in public life – how to beg, how to flatter, how to harass and how to curse amongst others (which she dubs

as revenge on society for ostracizing them) – goes side by side with the criticism of the institution of hijra. It questions the restrictions that the hijra institution places upon its members not to open themselves up to the public and also restricting many of its members from freedom to do things. Laxmi herself rebels at this restriction and the segregated and ghettoed existence many a times.

In rebelling against the institution hijra, the text explores the tension between modernity and traditional in the hijra's ways of life. The hijras way of life necessitates and demands abstinence from spotlight and publicity. It is important to mention here that while transgenders in countries like USA or Canada prefer mainstreaming themselves through discursive practices, the transgenders of India i.e. Hijras live a 'closed' lifestyle. Such differences in lifestyles remind us that 'transgender' studies cannot assume a universal discourse and that there are regional variations to it. To generalize the transgenders, their challenges, their position in society would be doing injustice to variations we find in transgender life in the context of geo-spatial differences. A hijra living with her family, as Laxmi does, is considered to be a deviation in hijra life. Laxmi says, "I was the object of a custody battle, with my parents on one side and Lataguru on the other." (Tripathi 73) On a similar note, the hijra institution enforces strict sanctions on dress codes. It is thus that the hijras are prevented from donning boy's attires as it is considered as deviant. Individual identities are governed by authoritative social processes and in Tripathi serves to communicate the toxic realities of, "collective internal definition" (Jenkins 105) Laxmi's body turns into an object of control, claimed by both the heterosexual world and the hijra orthodox and presents her in a difficult position of double deviancy. She writes, "I felt I

belonged nowhere, neither to the normal world, nor to the hijra world." (Tripathi 76) This tension between the two words of compulsive heterosexuality and orthodox hijrahood is reconciled in the subsequent proposition:

> It is tiresome to swim against the current. I have been swimming against two currents- one society and the other community. Both need to change their attitude. Whereas society need to confront its biases towards the hijras, the hijras themselves must be forthright. We have paid a hefty price for living an estranged and secluded life. (Tripathi 160)

While collective self definitions are often hard wired by individual, it also presents them an opportunity to revel in their unique individuality. In choosing to swim against the double current of heterosexual society and the hijra community, Laxmi asserts her own individual space.

One of the highlights of the text lies in how the author disengages the question of hijra identity from the gender and sexual structure and articulates a vast network of other 'sub-structural' identities in which a hijra may operate. If the extensive corpus of literature that construct, situate and mediate hijras against the larger cultural and academic discourse explicitly within the framework of sexual deviance and obscure the multiciplity of other identities in which a hijra may operate, Laxmi's text attempts to redress this emphasis and lays bare the multiplicity, variations and nuanced quiddity of hijra existence. Such a shift in analytic frameworks of 'hijrahood' proffers a new horizon in which a hijra is looked into, saving him/her from the extremely narrow and exclusive categories of identification. In this

reformulation, the hijra is looked as any other human being attending to different issues with differ identities.

One of the ways in which the hijras themselves see is in terms of Koti and Panti. A Koti is one who is penetrated and Panti is one who penetrates. This is the hijra world view of sexuality. For the hijras, the classifications of gender and sexuality into binary makes little sense. Don Kulick in his analysis of transgenders of Brazil in 'The Gender of Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes' writes, "Males who enjoy being anally penetrated by other males are, in many places in the world, an object of special cultural elaboration. Anywhere they occur as a culturally recognized type, it is usually they who are classified and named, not the males who penetrate them…". (Kulick 574) "Gender in Latin America should be seen not as consisting of men and women, but rather of men and not-men, the latter being a category into which both biological females and males who enioy anal penetration are culturally situated." (Kulick 575) In this worldview only the male who is penetrated is a homosexual and not the one that penetrates. This is very different from our current idea of homosexuals in which we consider both the partners to be homosexuals Drawing on the distinction between Euro-American and Latin American view of sexuality, Kulick would say, "only males who are penetrated are homosexual is clearly very different from the modern heterosexual-homosexual dichotomy currently in place in countries such as the United States, where popular understanding generally maintains that a male who has sex with another male is gay no matter how carefully he may restrict his behavior to the role of penetrator." (Kulick 574) Thus, despite geospatial differences, some worldview of

these third genders remain the same, whether they are in India or Brazil. The gendering of the koti/panti in the constructions of self is important in our analysis of sexuality.

The text throws interesting light on how hijras incorporate cultural meaning in constructing and presenting their "selves" for themselves and to the society. Living at the periphery of cultural discursivities within the framework of deviance, it is not easy for transgenders to live their life. Hijras have their own strategies by which they create a place for themselves in the Indian society. India's innate openness and tolerance for diverse sexuality derived from a sexual ambivalence in (Hindu) myth and life gives significant meaning to their lives as they conduct themselves in the society. There are many types of identifications that give legitimacy to the hijra identity. An integral element of hijra identity is constructed through and by their religious affiliation, and which is combining elements of Islam and Hinduism. While Hinduism is the primary religion followed in the country, there is a significant concentration of those that follow Islam. A syncretic culture helps them situate and identify with both the religious orders and validate a positive identity. The text bring to discussion the case of Lord Shiva where he is cast as half-female and half-male, called as 'Ardhanarisvara', a union of Shiva and Parvati. The 'Purusha' and the 'Prakriti' symbolized in the image of Shiva and Parvati is the universal cosmic representing male and nature. Both Purusha and Prakriti are eternal, universal, indestructible realities and truths of life. The union is a powerful symbol of gender fluidity. It is not man but God(s) or life force that seems to speak on behalf of Laxmi, to accentuate her pain, to come to her defense, to embolden her beliefs, and question the parochial and myopic vision of her detractors. Of the Mother Goddesses, the major object of devotion is Bahuchara Mata,

whose main temple is near Ahmedabad in the state of Gujarat. They also evoke the images of Arjuna as Brhannala, Vishnu as Mohini and Shikhandi as potential sources of legitimacy of their gender-ambiguous form. Another important icon around which they configure their identity is that of 'sannyasis' or ascetics and their emasculated body symbolized in the etymology of 'nirvana' help generate a substantial amount of legitimacy. Their avowed 'asexuality', which links to Hindu idea of renunciation, legitimizes hijra identity and practice. "While hijras obviously perceive and understand the stigmatization of impotence in normative Indian conceptualizations, the nirvana operation serves to elevate them beyond this vilified state to the realm of asexual sacredness." (Reddy 96)

The dominant cultural role of the hijras, as we have seen, is that of ritual performers and this constitutes a major element of legitimization of their existence and source of the hijras' claim to respect from the larger society. Hijras are endowed with the power to confer fertility on newly weds or new born children. While such a thing as traditional role of conferring blessings fertility on newly wedded couple may appear to be a paradox, in that they are castrated impotent men, the Indian cultural milieu sees them as a powerhouse of divinity. Nanda explains this thus: "As ritual performers, they are viewed as vehicles of the divine power of the Mother Goddess, which transforms their impotence into the power of generativity….The faith in the powers of the hijras rests on the Hindu belief in shakti—the potency of the dynamic female forces of creation that the hijras, as vehicles of the Mother Goddess, represent." (Nanda 5) Their function as a ritual performer forms the core of their collective virtuous image. In other words, Hindu mythology and iconography play an important part in hijras' constructions of their identities, serving as one important

legitimizing discourse of hijra history and ontology, and demonstrating the significance of religious symbols in everyday life." (Reddy 91)

The question of transgender people and the question of trans-sexual affairs has never been a more visible concern than what it is today and constitutes one of the major preoccupations in literary discourse. Laxmi's autobiography is an important articulation on how hijras are 'othered' in the light of antiquated ideas of gender and sexuality and on the need for transcending categorical absolutes. In a society where one has to be an ardent and passionate follower of two-sex and two-gender model to be considered civilized and rational, Tripathi's text is a refreshing departure from what is considered as 'normal' in hijra cultural discourse. The autobiography is a choicest attack on different institutions that see sexual dysfunctionality and gender ambiguity as reason sufficient enough to throws hijras outside the social mainstream. The text looks at how culturally instituted heterosexual norms and relations, that privileges a certain discourse over the other, that ostracize people who do not conform the heterosexual modes of existence, are reinforced and reflected in different institutions like family, education, defense, media, bureaucracy and others. In doing so, the text foregrounds history as a powerful tool wherein the identity of the hijras is sought to be redeemed. The text also questions the representation of hijra as third sex, an identity that has the capability to take on numerous identities as any other normal being. As the narrative explores transgenders' stigmatized identity, their ghettoed existence, their subsistence at the margins of society and their struggle, the text seeks major realignment of values as Laxmi "de-centres through her being, the very idea of an essential identity." (Rao 188)

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Chapter V

Conclusion

The importance of literature as a tool to advance conflicting positions and dissent, subvert and shape dominant social and cultural narrative in the present times can nowhere be more seen and most felt than in those LGBT texts that seeks not only to examine powerful sexual discourses but also subvert and undermine them with subtle and nuanced arguments. Literature has worked as a powerful platform towards a radical interrogation of the present and the past, through queer intellectual investment, with a view to forge an acceptable future for liberal sexual discourse.

While sexuality is internally a dimension of the self, it is also a category that is imbued with the cultural expectations of the others. Cultural discursivities, that see an innate and natural difference between men and women, and a belief in monolithic gender and sexual identities based on binary divides, provide a rational basis for the exclusionary politics of heterosexism. Such emphasis on cultural differences perpetuates a misogynist and regressive belief system that is resistant to changes. Mandated by heteronormative etiquette of nature/nurture dichotomy that interprets sex as stable as opposed to its mobile nature, compulsory heterosexuality is embedded as a normative value in popular culture, law, and medical practice and in every aspects of our life. “A sense of gender is typically powerfully incorporated into the embodied individual point of view of selfhood” (Jenkins 84-85). The artificial construction of heterosexist rationality disrupts the free flow of fluid gender and sexual discourses and implicitly and explicitly contributes towards an environment of bias, prejudice and often outright hostility. The relationship between heterosexism and homosexuality must be understood as a deeply embedded power structure

with political implications. “When boundaries and borders are constructed in institutions, they function to include and exclude simultaneously.” (Sanjakdar 132) Celebration of heteronormative sexuality and a xenophobic presumption of homosexual perversion generated in a network of shared influences and concocted in time and culture create space for penalization and in turn reassert and strengthen its seemingly objective value-judgements.

Initial participation in discourses of collective identities is however no guarantee for shared loyalty in future engagements. Identities are shifting and negotiable and are capable of changing over times. They are flexible in that the dialectics of identification are never wholly closed. (Jenkins 84)While the prevalent cultural and social discourses work on fixity and coherence, identity continually expands over time and creates new ‘queer’ possibilities. Gender and sexual identities are two such areas where the above proposition holds true. If the history of queer is the history of repression, it is also one of acknowledgement. It is in this capacity of recognition of the provisionality of gender and sexual identities thus that same-sex discursivities today form a subculture within the literary tradition with its own array of characters, thematic interests, patterns and its own distinct identity.

The three texts that have been undertaken for discussion problematize these aspects of gender and sexuality. Common to each of these narratives is the extreme antagonism to any expression of either same-sex desire or gender non-conformity. Tshepo, Holland and Laxmi venture out in to the non-heterosexual world and bear the brunt for their transgression into non-transgressive territories. The transgressive, subversive and disruptive

nature of the texts constitutes the new radical discursivities in literary domain that is not only critical but also scathing. Such dialogic encounters or face-off has a redoubtable capacity in exposing the inherent biasness in our received ideas that govern social relationship in order to forge a change in the ongoing conversation in the broad social terrain. Duiker, Peters and Tripathi offer interesting insights into how identities are created, asserted, defended, imposed and resisted in the 'interactional' order and how it relates to power in different cultural contexts. The texts constitute, above all, telling examples on the increasing acceptance and legitimization of non-heterosexual identity in the queer intellectual scene.

Duiker, together with Phaswane Mpe and Zakes Mda, has been a major force in the post-apartheid South African literary scene. Though Duiker's text *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* deals with same-sex identities in the South African context, the text can also be read as representing a host of other African nationalism. While same-sex thematic concerns in Africa have been explored by many writers prior to Duiker, in Duiker it receives a more matured treatment. The dissertation highlights how the treatment of homosexuality in Africa is marked with distrust, negativity, partisanship, discrimination and hostility. Duiker contests the bias and the prejudices that accompany compulsive heterosexuality.

Duiker spends a significant part of the book in highlighting the liberal nature of Cape Town, where the novel is set, through the character of its central protagonist Tshepo. Cape Town with its disco pubs, dance bars, massage centers and gay parlours makes an impressing debut. Duiker gradually lets the readers understand how beneath the liberal surface, the city harbours deep distrust and hostility for non-heterosexual desires. In the

discussion of homosexuality in the African context, the UnAfrican nature of it has been upheld and contested in different domains. The text's narration makes itself explicitly clear where it stands on the African and UnAfrican debate without any subtleties. The text sees the UnAfrican discursivities on homosexuality as fundamentally flawed and instead argues on its presence, continuity, righteousness and naturalness. The text highlights the role of colonial governments in changing the popular discourse on same-sex desires.

Duiker's novel, in the manner of texts that rebel against heteronormative bias, subverts popular narrative, enabling same-sex discursivities to 'speak' or become 'visible' by producing its own terms of resistance and deconstruction. Duiker sees sexuality in the spirit of "ars erotica" (Foucault 57) against the more popular "Scientia Sexualis" (Foucault 58). Duiker negates the morality and the immorality and the forbidden and the permitted discourse with a more philosophical and more poetic optic as well as something that concerns more to an immediate experience. We find that sexual identity, in Duiker, becomes more of a question of choice and option. In Duiker, we also see how the intersection of race with compulsive heterosexuality produces new dynamics of power. In studying the complex dynamics that is produced when race intersects with compulsive heterosexuality, the dissertation looks at 'intersectionality research' as a major framework in the deconstruction of 'queer'.

While Duiker's concerned himself with the representation of gay identities in the African context, Peter's text *Keeping You a Secret* looks into palpable exploration of lesbian relationships amongst growing up young adults in semi-urban America, a heterosexual world that avowedly and inflexibly situates itself against homosexual

fellowship. This dissertation looks at how identifications in the text, "draws upon the environment of people and things for its content" (Jenkins 71) and how collective internal definitions makes a difference in individual's lives. Peters let her readers understand how institutions become the more important contexts within which identification becomes consequential. In narrativising the central protagonists' individual cognitive and emotional development, Peters' text looks at how the external discourse is integrated into the individual sense of selfhood and yet how the scope for newer identities is never wholly closed. Peters breaks many misconceptions about gender and sexual identities in course of the narrative.

Peters looks at the role of different institutions, especially family and pedagogy, in furthering heterosexual bias. Peters let her readers grasp how individual identities are shaped by collective social discursivities and how heterosexual bias leads to closeted lives. It also lets the readers understand the personal and public cost of 'coming out' of the closet. The text in particular looks at how the institution of family becomes a manifestation of the heterosexual bias. Holland's mother represents how the institution of family works in myriad ways to clip any same-sex desires. One finds in the tenor of her dialogue in Holland's friend an inbuilt distaste and abomination for same-sex and the cultural conditions in which heterosexuality is constructed. The text also looks at the role of pedagogy in furthering heterosexual discursivities. Peters' characters are bold and ready to fight for their rights. CeCe, unapologetically brave in her demeanor in wearing explicit and provocative T-Shirts despites substantial hostility including violence, represents the new

woman/man who will no longer be silenced into discomfort, anxiety and fear for what she stands for and what she is.

While gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual criticism is of comparatively recent origin and the very act themselves have existed at different times through different cultures, the first full-fledged literary representation of lesbianism in English literature appeared only in 1928 with the publication of *The Well of Loneliness* by Radclyffe Hall. The treatment of 'queer' invited sharp criticism, charges of obscenity and temporal ban on her books. Ever since, new books that dealt in lesbian experiences have appeared from time to time. While Peters' discursive exercise lacked risk that Hall involved herself in the treatment of the 'queer', nevertheless the 'social' and 'cultural' framework in which they cast their characters are same. A character in Peters' novel remarks that "You don't have to do anything to be hated for being gay." (Peters 142) The right to existence without exciting any emotion for non-heterosexuals is at the very core of the discursive space that occupies much of the book.

Peters' book brings positive response and hope towards homosexuality in that the book recognizes deviant sexuality as just another way of existence. It throws light on how pedagogic institutions are gradually becoming open to same sex relationships. The presence of gay/lesbian association in the text is a telling example on the changing notions of sex and gender. This is a very radical jump from previous discursive attempts that were finding it difficult to bring their characters out of the closet even at home.

In a 1984 article published in English Journal, David E. Wilson while analyzing seven books accessible to gay and lesbian young adults comments that, "more books with healthy, happy homosexual characters need to be written, published, and made available to young adults". (Wilson 62). Peters' characters are constantly under pressure to live up to the expectations of others and therefore do not qualify to Wilson's 'healthy' and 'happy' criteria. Peters' text perhaps reflect the transition in literary discourse where character are not yet 'free' to pursue their own sexuality but revolt openly, boldly and publicly.

In the LGBT formulation, the 'transgender' is the only category that is referred to by its genders. The construction of transgender identities constitutes a problematic category, possibly surpassing the gay and the lesbian lexicon in that identities are self-evidently written all over their bodies and there is no escape from it. It is in these inherent features that Reddy sees Hijras as powerful subversive agents, serving self-consciously to cause gender trouble. Tripathi brings out these complexities of transgender identities in the narration of Laxmi.

The narration aggressively positions itself against compulsive heterosexuality and advocates alternate sexualities in the ever changing linguistic landscape. It questions the agencies that put the transgenders as a problematic category. It highlights the role of patriarchy and hyper-masculinity as oppressive social systems that that work on hierarchies. The text shows how the system is contrived and rigged against them and how the hijras live through damaged and disreputable image amidst all these.

Tripathi's novel is scrutinization and a scathing attack the deliberations of the heterosexual discursivities. While the transgenders upsets the very foundation of heterosexual discourse with their very presence, Laxmi highlights how transgenders use different method- including art and activism- to celebrate, enact, deconstruct, subvert and define alternative sexual practices.

Laxmi also looks at how the transgenders create their space in a heteronormative world. It foreground history, religion, literature, culture, architecture amongst others through which the trans identity is advanced. Hijras derive both legitimacy and power from such myths and explicitly use these sources as affirmation of their special status in the society. She also narrativizes the role of hijras during the medieval age in India, highlighting how against the current discursivities derived from western Victorian model, the hijras led a envious life under the Mughal rule. The dissertation looks at texts like Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai's *Same-Sex Love in India: A Literary History* and Gayatri Reddy's *With Respect to Sex* to better situate the trans identity in the historical past. If the past is to be called upon to legitimise the existence of the hijras, than scholarship in deviant sexualities are creative reformulation of who they are. The dissertation also looks at how the hijras derive their cultural meaning in the present times. It highlights the role of ritual performance as a dominant cultural role in the legitimization of their existence and source of their respect in the larger society. Another important highlight of the text is how the narrator articulates a vast network of other 'sub-structural' identities- like being a dancer, or an activist, or an actress- in which a hijra or a transgender may operate, liberating them from limited and exclusive categories of identification.

Though Tripathi's text is thematically related to the other two texts taken up for discussion in terms of non-conformity to gender roles, it is different in terms of characterization, the story line and the poignancy at which it makes itself felt upon the reader. The most important expect of this text is that it narrates real life experiences, unlike the two other texts that are wholly fictional in terms of character and plot. Besides, the narrative also assumes significance in that in a history of "near invisibility" (Reddy 3), it comes from someone who has actually gone through the pain that comes from being a trans-sexual. Though works like *The Invisibles: A Tale of the Eunuchs of India* (1996) by Zia Jaffrey seeks to give a humanistic touch to the life of hijras in India, yet these books are only a replication of a mind that is not hijra, and hence less authentic when we take into account such texts as Revathi's or Laxmi's.

Me Hijra, Me Laxmi constitutes an important mediation in the 'queer continuum', critically questioning as it does in a language overt and assertive and marking a paragon shift in transgressive studies in queer studies. Exuberant and confident Laxmi is not only an exemplar in hijra studies, she stands as an embodiment of the fighting spirit to readers in the queer studies as a whole.

The interrogation of sexuality and explorations of its variants continue to be a major occupation in the 21st century India. *Yaraana: Gay Writings from South Asia* (1999) edited by Hoshang Merchant and *Forbidden Sex/Texts: New India's Gay Poets* (2009), *Facing the Mirror: Lesbian Writings from India* (1999) edited by Ashwini Sukthankar, *Love's Rite: Same-Sex Marriage in India and the West* by Ruth Vanita and Raj Rao. Rao's *The Wisest*

Fool on Earth and Other Plays (1994), amongst others, have been significant books to have been written on same sex.

Though the three primary texts that have been undertaken for discussion can be linked in their optimism for a more liberal and more inclusive world where alternative sexualities become a part of 'normal' life, they also are a remainder to the dominant social and cultural conditioning that continues to shape our psyche and influence and regulate our conduct. The texts reflect the lack of what Donald E. Hall calls, "perfect or conflict free state." (19) But gender and sexual studies are changing, and changing rapidly then what we have thought. It is thus that works like *Close, too Close* (2012) abandon the heterosexual framework that has so far been the rule and represent homosexual discursivities in terms of passion and aestheticism.

The spectre of compulsive-heterosexuality that was the dominant discourse a few decades back has come under increasing purview and interrogation in what constitutes new evidence in areas related to sexuality in different cultures around the world. Homosexuality has been decriminalized from most of the major democracies of the world, same-sex pleasure, relationship or marriage no longer stand outside the cultural consensus as it was a few decades back and there is relatively some degree of tolerance and respect for it. Breaking gender and sexual rigidities in its totality still remains an uphill task, but no longer impossible, as it was once thought to be.

Queer comes with an, "open mesh of possibilities, gaps overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses" (Sedgwick 7) The three texts that have been undertaken

for discussion give us only a fragmentary idea of the dynamics of queer politics. There are many other dimensions to it. Problematizing gender and sexuality in context specifity can throw new insights and provide complementary space for engagement to address the spaces in gender and sexuality studies. To understand how the intersection and intrusion of compulsive heterosexuality with such institutions a race, caste and class complicates the entire discursivities on sex and produce complex dynamics of power, for instance, can be a major and exciting area of study.

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‘THE PERVERSE IMPLANTATION’: ENQUIRIES INTO TRANSGRESSION IN K.SELLO DUIKER, JULIE ANNE PETERS AND LAXMINARAYAN TRIPATHI

ABSTRACT

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to the Department of English, Mizoram University, Aizawl

Gender and sexuality studies have come of late to occupy a crucial space in the theoretical paradigm that informs the world literature today, interrogating ‘perceptions’ and hegemonic ‘discourses' which until very recently prevailed with profound and sustained bigotry. A more nuanced and subtle understanding on the alleged ‘mismatches between sex, gender and desire’ (Jagose 3) in the second half of the twentieth century opened up discursive space for alternative gaze enabling people tagged under the umbrella term of ‘queer’ for the first time to operate ‘out of the closet’ with the sense of having finally ‘arrived’.

Identities are mainly categorised into individual and the collective. While it is fair to say that identity is not fixed, that it varies from individual to individual and that selfhood is complex and multifaceted, it is also equally true that our own sense of selfhood is largely influenced by the shared collective self definition that we impose (or are imposed) on ourselves. It therefore follows that our own ideas on gender and sexuality are also largely underpinned by the ontological assumptions that we derive from the interactional order or what Jenkins calls “internal-external dialectic”. (Jenkins 71) “The prevailing gender and sexual paradigms of an era regulate everyone’s lives, working to curtail possibilities and relentlessly push sexual/erotic relationships into socially acceptable channels.” (Hall 103)

Gender and sexuality have neatly been wired in the classificatory binaries of man/woman, girl/boy and male/female. Such classificatory nature of human sexuality creates hierarchies and multiple marginalized identities and this in turn produces social differences. Heterosexuality often situates itself against alternate sexualities and while it applies for itself such terms as ‘natural’, ‘legitimate’, ‘central’ and ‘superior’ etc., gender

variables are discredited as ‘abnormal’, ‘sickly’, ‘pervert’, ‘corrupt’ and ‘inferior’ amongst others. Classification implies evaluation and to identify someone could be enough to decide how to treat her/him. (Jenkins 6)

Heterosexual discursivities on gender and sexuality see in terms of binaries of male and female, girl and boy, man and woman and this assumption of the binary nature coincides with a strong admonition for variations, in kind and degrees, in life and literature, an escape from which is not easily available. Sexual variations, including but not confined to lesbian, gay, bisexual are codified, registered and stigmatized with such discursive practices as calling them, ‘contrary to nature’, ‘the infamous crime against nature’, ‘crime not fit to be named’, ‘the love that dare not speak its name’ amongst others. Compulsive heterosexual narratives that administer sexuality not only assume the binary nature of it but also emphasize on a rigid control over it.

Homosexuality and by extension, any non-heterosexual experience, as a discursive site, invited criticism, embarrassment and persecution only a few decades back. And yet in the face of all hostilities, queer activists, historians and creative writers have been taking upon themselves to deconstruct and study this profoundly ‘controversial’ and ‘distasteful’ subject in the interest of non-heterosexual existence that has been repressed, tyrannized and ghettoed over many centuries. But if a large part of the history of sexuality is the history of repression and of persecution, then it is also equally one of resistance.

Interrogation of the binaries of sexes in literature and elsewhere reveal a different pattern than people’s received understanding of sexuality. The emergence of gender and

sexual liberation movements as well as its study across a wide body of disciplines in formal as well as in non-formal blocks has emerged as a strong anchor for advocacy of sexual variance against repressive structures calling for prohibition, sanction and strict disciplinary penalty of deviant sexual orientations. Theoretical and critical mass of writings today, that undertakes to articulate and contend for non-heterosexual discursivities, have been engaging with renewed passion towards dismantling of binary opposition that informs sexual preferences. Recent forays into gender and sexuality studies are not only questioning the collective sexual consciousness that calls for routined and compulsive introspection of 'deviant' sexual practices but also working to situate it as a 'standard' practice. Conventional patterns of sexuality that looks in terms of binaries of man and women, girl and boy, male and female are increasingly being questioned in favor of fluid sexual discourses that encompass a wide variety of sexual preferences. It undertakes to dismantle this binary opposition that informs sexual preferences, questioning the network of interconnecting mechanisms that administer it and vouch for a more open and liberal discourse around enforced sexual arrangements.

The three primary texts taken up for discussion here i.e. K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001), Julie Anne Peters' *Keeping You a Secret* (2003) and Laxminarayan Tripathi's *Me Hijra, me Lakshmi* (2015) are excellent examples of literary endeavours in normalizing the 'queer'. They not only explore how pluralities that might exist are subsumed in the interactional process in favor of a homogenizing notion, but question in their own way established criterions of sexual practices that looks in terms of

binaries of man and women, girl and boy, male and female in favor of fluid sexual discourses that encompass a wide variety of sexual preferences.

In Africa, where colonial legacies and African 'authenticities' struggle to imagine the relationship between Africa and homosexuality, Duiker played a significant role in transforming the African homosexual literary tradition. Though homosexuality has been part of the African literary tradition much before the arrival of Duiker, its treatment was rather negligent, shoddy and very often than not negative and dismissive. It is in this context that Duiker would emerge in the African homosexual scene and bring fresh insights. Duiker allows his readers to see through the binary division of gender and sexes as his characters come face to face with alternate realities. Julie Anne Peters' novel *Keeping You a Secret* explores the identity crisis of lesbian characters as they seek to forge and build space in a world that is not only avowedly rooted in but also zealously promotes compulsive heterosexuality. The text gives insights into the life of young adults as they struggle with their lesbian identity in the much touted 'liberal' environment of America. Laxminarayan Tripathi's *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* deals in transsexuality. It is one of the rare work in transgender literatures that effectively captures the complex life and challenges of the 'hijra' community in India. *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* constitutes an important mediation in the 'queer continuum', critically questioning as it does in a language overt and assertive and marking a paragon shift in transgressive studies in queer studies.

The first chapter of this dissertation entitled "Introduction: Situating the Contextual Framework in the Discussion of Alternate Sexualities" situates the context and the general framework in which the discussion of 'queer' is cast. It specially takes into account how

identities are created, asserted, defended, imposed and resisted in the 'interactional' order and how it relates to power. It carries this line of thought to understand how the binaries of heterosexual/homosexual come into being or originate. In doing so, it explores the arguments for and against homosexuality. It further gives a historical background in the proliferation of 'queer'. It also gives a brief overview of the critical theories in which the 'queer' is deconstructed. It further gives a brief introduction to the text undertaken for discussion.

Richard Jenkins in *Social Identity* (1996) writes that, "Identities exist and are acquired, claimed and allocated within power relations. Identification is something *over* which struggle take place and *with* which stratagems are advanced- it is means and end in politics- and at stake is the classification of populations as well the classification of individuals." (Jenkins 45) In this classificatory game, power and authority become critical in determining whose definition counts. Gender and sexuality is one of the most basic identities that humans are classified and divided into. They are constituted by implicit or explicit collectively defined criteria which are exclusive by nature.

The exclusive and marginalization politics that surrounds discourses on gender and sexuality forms a part of the cultural self-definition, deviation from which invites heated criticisms; a callous attitude and unsparing pronouncements often substitute, what could be an otherwise, informed debate. Repressive structures, institutional and otherwise, often call for prohibition, sanction and strict disciplinary penalty against deviant sexual practices in favor of compulsive heterosexuality.

The heterosexual claim to truth is questioned through factual representations of the existence of homosexual practices in different societies. But it is in the critical theoretical domains developed after the 1970s that a more subtle and nuanced articulations in favour of liberal sexual discourse can be evinced. The heterosexual claim to truth derived from a dualistic and overly simplified understanding of sexuality received its first fuller critical and analytical treatment in the works of Michel Foucault, especially in his *The History of Sexuality* (1976). Foucault's text, that discusses in great detail the transformation of sex into discourse, helped situate sexuality in a historical perspective. Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) and Annamarie Jagose's *Queer Theory* (1996), apart from the writings of Teresa de Lauretis, Adrienne Rich and Monique Wittig have been other influential reads in the deconstructive enterprise of sexuality. An important point of intersection, amongst these critics, has been the social construction of sexuality in which gender and sexual identities are seen as being artificially constructed vis-à-vis the prevalent discourse.

The second chapter titled "'Wheyting be Dat?': Investigation of 'Queer' in *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*" examines homosexuality in the African context. It in particular explores the question of what it means to be a gay in South Africa. It seeks to unravel the anxieties and misgivings of negotiating sexual identity in the evolving South Africa post the apartheid in K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001). It looks at the different ways in which Duiker takes on the "bigots, hypocrites, hetero-fascists who only want to further their own prejudices and intolerance of life." (Duiker 444) It in particular

seeks to understand the intersection of race and sexuality through 'intersectionality' research. Though Duiker belongs to South Africa proper, his works are an emblematic of a number of other nationalisms in Africa.

Sam Durrant in 'The Invention of Mourning in Post-Apartheid Literature' observes that following the apartheid period, the African literary scene was characterized "in its transformative potential, its ability to grapple with legacies of oppression and imagine new states of being and even new beings of the state." (Durrant 441) In this transformative capacity, Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* explores the pressures and contradictions of living in post-apartheid South Africa characterized by trauma and violence signified in such thematic concerns as drugs abuse, homosexuality, and racial engagements amongst others. It in particular explores alternate sexuality, and more notably gay sex as character come face to face with new realities and possibilities about who they are and what their place in the world is. Duiker does this through the interweaving of ten narrative voices, who offer their own point of view at different times. The plot of the novel, that is marked by, "the intrusion of narrative on narratives" (Stockton 117) unfolds through the shifting perspectives of each character's consciousness.

In cosmopolitan Cape Town, Duiker works out his homosexual discursivities. Cape Town initially emerges as a place where, "People want to make their own reference about who they are and where they fit in or not." (Duiker 37) But as readers are let into the inner working of the Town, it gives in horrible pictures of 'corruption', 'discrimination' and 'power-play' and it eventually turns into a place where, "You have to fit into this or that" (Duiker 36), more so in terms of alternate sexualities.

Against the "Scientia Sexualis" (Foucault 58) vision of sexuality in terms of moral/immoral, permitted/forbidden and utilitarian/inutility binary, Duiker's text looks at sexual acts in the spirit of "ars erotica" (Foucault 57) where sexuality is seen not only in terms of pleasure but also as a spiritual act that celebrates and honours the phallic potential as a hot energy spot. Against the much held view of MSM (men who have sex with men) together with WSW (women who have sex with women) as ugly, evil and bad, homosexuality is celebrated as beautiful, pure and honest. For Tshepo, the central protagonist, the relations with men, even if they are clients, are beyond sexual gratification or even necessity. They are a relief to his life where, "…I have always had something to be sad about, my whole life.' (Duiker 298) Sexual gratification is thus negated and paves way for peace, security and comfort, not just monetarily but something that heals his suffering soul, which eases his pain. While homosexuality is generally seen as 'deviant' from what is passed as 'normal' and is seen as stripped off masculinity, the text argues that a homosexual may be more masculine than a heterosexual in his overt celebration of phallus, in using the phallic power beyond the small territory of 'women' to include 'men'. In doing so, Duiker reduces heterosexuality as a choice, an option, a preference amongst many other choices, options and preferences. The narration at other times negates sex itself, withholding any serious meaning it might have. Sex is reduced as something where, "You will see once you get past sex that there isn't much to it. …you will find that it is a way of communicating, a way of seeing things." (Duiker 323)

An important highlight of Duiker's text is the intersection of race and sexuality. While the text brings the racial conflict early in the novel and continues throughout the plot

of the novel, it is in the discussion of sexuality that it gains a significant meaning. The fact that homogenizing sexuality as western authors would like to do without taking into various considerations like ethnicity, race, culture is worked out in this important section of the novel.

Literature has emerged as an important site for the negotiation and renegotiation of cultural and civilizational differences in Africa where colonial legacies and African 'authenticities' struggle to imagine the relationships between 'Africa' and 'homosexuality'. Daniel Vignal in an article in.'Peuples Noirs, Peuples Africains', writes that, "For the majority of [African writers], homophilia is exclusively a deviation introduced by colonialists or their descendants; by outsiders of all kinds: Arabs, French, English and so on. It is difficult for them to conceive that homophilia might be the act of a black African." (qtd. in Dunton 422) . Duiker's text contests the UnAfrican discursivities and sees it as being tied to European standards of morality. The idea of homosexuality being Un-African is held up as a 'stupid' proposition, a 'crap' that has been imposed upon the African psyche. The rigidity of the Un-African argument, , the sanitization of sex, the stigmatization of homosexuality is linked to the arrival of white people, to the new urbanized culture.

Duiker's text offers interesting and many interruptions in the domains of compulsive heterosexuality for the readers to construct and deconstruct meanings within context specifity. Duiker allows his readers to see through the binary division of gender and sexes as his characters come face to face with alternate realities.

The third chapter looks into Julie Anne Peters' *Keeping You a Secret* (2003) palpable exploration of same-sex relationships amongst growing up young adults in semi-urban America, a heterosexual world that avowedly and inflexibly situates itself against homosexual fellowship. It looks at how identifications in the text, "draws upon the environment of people and things for its content" (Jenkins 71) and how collective internal definitions makes a difference in individual's lives. In this, it studies how institutions become the more important contexts within which identification becomes consequential. In narrativising the central protagonists' individual cognitive and emotional development, it looks at how the external discourse is integrated into the individual sense of selfhood and yet how the scope for newer identities is never wholly closed. Peters seek to break many misconceptions about gender and sexual identities in course of the narrative.

Dominant socio-cultural discourse perceives and conceptualizes deviant sexuality in terms of transgressions and puts it in a peripheral, marginal position, situating it very often against the centric, superior heterosexism. The heterosexist assumptions of heterosexuality as the 'default' and 'natural' sexual category is based on the assumption of binary nature of gender as male/female, girl/boy, masculine/feminine. Wholesale subscription to this idea of compulsive heterosexuality is enacted through a network of social mechanisms, an escape from which is not very easy. Of the many expectations that Peters' young adult characters go through is the primacy of sticking to this binary division. In *Keeping You a Secret*, the character of Holland and CeCe are constantly cast against this binary division, this straight way of thinking about gender and sex. At every stage Holland and CeCe run into conflict with network of powerful forces attempting to shut them down to the heterosexist way of

life. Peters' engages her characters with different institutions like family, school, the society etc that are advocates of compulsive heterosexuality. From a major misconception of America being a 'free' country where one is at liberty to choose for herself/himself what she/he thinks is best, to the realization that it is a "whole new world with different social mores…different rules…" (Peters 153), the journey of Holland mirrors an average American's predicament as she/he steers herself/himself away from gender and sexual conformity.

The text offers interesting insights at the relationship between power and the institution of compulsive heterosexuality. It is in the maintenance of its discourse (compulsive heterosexuality), in its ability to hold on to it, in its capacity to resist alternative approaches that power is exercised. Individual identities, under such a scenario, always remain subservient to the imposed collective identity. Holland's mother becomes the unrivalled manifestation of the power of the institution of family that decides, accepts and rejects alternatively what one should do and what one shouldn't, what one should wear and what one's shouldn't, what one should think and what one shouldn't. Peters' text also looks at the institution of family in regulating sexuality in little children, through the character of Holland's little brother. The pedagogical institutions would be another important center, amongst innumerable and highly articulating interlocking institutional devices and strategies, through which compulsive heterosexuality is advanced. Are pedagogical institutions open to diverse sexual orientation? If yes how? And in what ways are schools manifestation of the old ideas on homosexuality? Does school authority uphold the fundamental rights to express freely oneself? In what many ways is our educational

institutions a continuation of the old thought process that shuts down individual liberty at the altar of 'cultural values'? These are some of the fundamental questions that that this section of the research works deal in. Peters' text also looks at how silence and denials work in alternative ways to produce truth about sex.

Foucault writes that, "Power travels in all direction, to and fro." (Foucault) The power of heterosexuality is met with reverse power. Peters seeks to subvert the 'the heterosexual matrix', the 'regulative discourses' by breaking what Butler calls "stylized repetition of acts". (Butler 519) Joanne Winning in her 'Lesbian Modernism: Writing in and beyond the Closet' writes that, "experimental modernist novels, in different ways, suggestively evoke that idea of text as space or container where desire might be put instead of speaking it." (58) The commentaries in the T-Shirts that CeCe proudly and purposively displays, despite regular motherly cautions and injunctions, ignites an explicitly fierce and concrete way of radical conversation without having the need to say anything verbally. To put it in terms of Speech Act, it acts as a performative function. Through the illocutionary act of saying through signs that she is a lesbian, the author converts it into an act that has been done. The textual space in the T-shirt represents a space in which a 'coming out' is enacted. In doing so, her characters become a radical invention, a symbol of radical renunciation of the social compulsion, an instrument of dissent and revolt, a quintessence of transgression, a powerful resistance to popular discourse. Peters' text, while being a commentary on the culture of homophobia, also reflects another reality of growing recognition for LGBT. Peters' text is a strong twenty-first century resistance to the order of

sexuality that had hitherto enjoyed immense patronage from various corridors and mechanisms of power.

The fourth chapter seeks to study the construction and the treatment of trans-sexual identity in Laxminarayan Tripathi's *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi* (2015. It looks at how hijras are 'othered' in the light of antiquated ideas of gender and sexuality and how they are trapped in 'categorical' absolutes. In doing so, it attempts to understand 'transgenderism' and 'trans-sexuality' outside the category of gay and lesbian criticism. While it looks at the transgender experiences in different parts of the world and how they are related or unrelated to the Indian experiences, it takes care to abandon the uniform rendition that subsumes native terminologies, expressions and meanings in favour of a native discourse that looks at the subtleties and nuances in which any identity is best understood. It further discusses how bodies become objects of control by both the heterosexists as well as institution of hijra. It further looks at how tension between the two words of compulsive heterosexuality and orthodox hijrahood is reconciled in the text.

The universal assumption that the world consists of only two sexes and that this is the natural, ingenerate and legitimate way in humankind is a major irritant in the acceptance of hijra identity. The narrator's own sense of identity is at odds with this heteronormative tradition that the world largely subscribes to and it is only in the people of her own disposition and orientation that a certain recognition, purpose and sisterhood is enacted. In a society, where phallic pride precede everything else and where femaleness is thoroughly naturalized in terms of reproductive capacity, the hijras who are mixed with male and female characteristics or are 'in-between' are seen as dirty, incomplete, sub-

human, aggressive and manipulative. The text seeks major realignment of values as Laxmi "de-centres through her being, the very idea of an essential identity." (Rao 188) Each and every encounter, in Laxmi's text, works towards a sustained dismantling of this heteronormative proposition of 'two genders' and 'one-sexuality'.

Institutional segregation is a major concern in deviant sexuality and Laxmi's text is critical of institutional support systems that strengthen animosity against the hijras. The text is a choicest attack on different institutions like family, education, defense, media, bureaucracy and others that see sexual dysfunctionality and gender ambiguity as reason sufficient enough to throws hijras outside the social mainstream. In Laxmi, queer activism and art translates into a critical tool of resistance, to transcend temporary boundaries and dismantle status quo.

The text looks at how the hijras incorporate cultural meaning in constructing and presenting their "selves" for themselves and to the society. In doing so it foregrounds the literary and cultural artefacts, ancient and medieval, which have over the ages, if not cushioned, at least harboured heterogeneous views on gender and sexuality without malice that accompanies our times. This discontinuity of historical frankness observed in relation to gender and sex following the internalization of Victorian puritan ideas on gender and sexuality is a major concern to be discerned in the text.

An important highlight of the text is how that narration disengages the question of hijra identity from the gender and sexual structure and articulates a vast network of other 'sub-structural' identities- like being a dancer or an activist or an artist- in which a hijra

may operate. It takes them away from the framework of sexual deviance that obscure the multiciplity of other identities in which a hijra may operate and attempts to lay bare the multiplicity, variations and nuanced quiddity of hijra existence. Such a shift in analytic frameworks of 'hijrahood' proffers a new horizon in which a hijra is looked into, saving him/her from the extremely narrow and exclusive categories of identification.

The final chapter titled "Conclusion" attempts to sum up the ways in which the earlier chapters explore the multi-faceted dimensions of 'queer' in its gay, lesbian and trans-sexual manifestations. It makes a comparative study of how the three texts attempt to engage with compulsive heterosexuality in their own ways. It also looks at scope in which the discussion of queer can be taken up for further studies.

The importance of literature as a tool to advance conflicting positions and dissent, subvert and shape dominant social and cultural narrative in the present times can nowhere be more seen and most felt than in those LGBT texts that seeks not only to examine powerful sexual discourses but also subvert and undermine them with subtle and nuanced arguments. The spectre of compulsive-heterosexuality that was the dominant discourse a few decades back has come under increasing purview and interrogation in what constitutes new evidence in areas related to sexuality in different cultures around the world. Homosexuality has been decriminalized from most of the major democracies of the world, same-sex pleasure, relationship or marriage no longer stand outside the cultural consensus as it was a few decades back and there is relatively some degree of tolerance and respect for it. Breaking the gender and sexual hierarchy still remains an uphill task, but no longer impossible, as it was once thought to be. It has been set into motion and more and more

texts and magazines and articles have been written that contest the dominant hetero-normative narrative and offers alternative ways of expression. The horizons of sexuality are constantly pushed to newer boundaries and newer frontiers are being generated and investigated, substantiated with scholarship devoted full time in understanding and articulating its variegated manifestations.

Adrienne Rich in 'Of Woman Born' writes that, "There is nothing revolutionary whatsoever about the control of women's bodies by men. The women's body is the terrain on which patriarchy is erected" (Rich 84). It could well be said that there is nothing revolutionary whatsoever about the control of homosexual's (and also transsexual's) by heterosexuals. The homosexual's body is the terrain on which compulsive heterosexuality is erected. In the three texts taken up for discussion we see how deviant sexual practices are held under scrutiny. But what is more important is the space given to opposing discourse that sets the homosexual narrative into motion. The power that the society wields upon them is met with reverse power. Holland Jaeger in *Keeping You a Secret* (2003) despite the unjust rulings of her mother, bullied by society at large decides to live a life on her own terms. Her decision to stay alone must be understood in terms of resistance to the popular culture of sexual homogeneity. Similarly, Tshepo and Laxmi revolt in their own way to the condemnation and violence meted out to them in the two other texts.

The discursive and fictional construction of homosexuality, "[t]exts are not simply mimetic; they are not confined to describing worlds, real or imaginary. They are productive in giving rise to renewed performances of themselves in which the readers ploy a necessary and active part." (qtd. in Crous 50) The three texts emerge as a strong twenty-first century

resistance to the order of sexuality that has hitherto enjoyed immense patronage from various corridors and mechanisms of power. Any change in dominant discourse resulting from such concerted engagement would be a success in that though it might not over-night change the though-process in the social and cultural sphere, but it sure delivers a counter-argument to the votaries of compulsive heterosexuality who have for a long time have escaped such strong response. It is not an easy task because it involved reversing the gaze, an articulation from an absolutely opposite standpoint. One has to move from simple binaries to multifaceted nature of sexual potentiality; it has to challenge what the people believed in dearly, absolutely. And though the texts undertaken for discussion did not succeed overnight in breaking perceptions and hegemony, they can be counted as a strong anchor for lesbian, gay and bisexual rights.

Queer comes with an, “open mesh of possibilities, gaps overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses” (Sedgwick 7) The three primary texts undertaken for discussion are limited in their scope in that gender and sexual studies provide much more space for engagements. Problematizing gender and sexuality in context specifity can throw new insights and provide complementary space for engagement to address the spaces in gender and sexuality studies. To understand how the intersection and intrusion of compulsive heterosexuality with such institutions a caste, race, class and nationality complicates the entire discursivities on sex and produce complex dynamics of power, for instance, can be a major and exciting area of study.

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