

**Tracing the Differences in the Representation of ‘Queer’ Identity Found in
few 20th and 21st Century Novels**

By

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the requirements for the degree of
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Approval

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Ethics Statement

Abstract/ Executive Summary

This paper aims to trace how the representation of ‘queer’ characters in literature has metamorphosed over 20th to 21st century as traced in the novels *Anne of Green Gables*, *Nightwood*, *Crossing* and *Call Me By Your Name*. The portrayal of ‘queer’ in the aforementioned novels is binary opposite and this change is the result of several movements on queer rights. It took hundreds of years of protests and rebellions for bringing this change. This paper is a neo-historical approach for depicting the gradual process of the evolution in the representation of ‘queer’ in literature over the century, thus it includes brief history of several ‘queer’ movements. This paper also shows the contrast of ‘homosexuals in denial’ to ‘sexually fluid’ characters in the aforementioned novels.

Keywords: Neo-Historicism, Queer, sexuality, identity, sexual fluidity, movement, self-acceptance, gender binary.

Dedication

Firstly, I dedicate this thesis to my undergrad faculty member Mohammad Hasan Jan sir for his insightful lectures and conversations that did not only made literature and theories apprehend better but also contributed in understanding life. Secondly, I want to dedicate my thesis to my supervisor Dr. Abu Sayeed Mohammad Noman whose empathy has always inspired me to go beyond the odds in both in the academia and in personal sphere.

Last but not the least, I dedicate my thesis to Conan Gray whose calming music and soulful vlogs brightened my days when works got overwhelming.

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Tracing the Differences in the Representation of 'Queer' Identity in 20th Century Novels to 21st Century Novels

Chapter: 1

Introduction:

In recent years the representation of 'Queer' characters has taken place broadly in literary arena. The postmodern world is a celebration of diversity where a vast number of people are welcoming towards any race, religion, economic class and so on. However, the current acceptance of 'queer' people in society let alone the portrayal of 'queer' characters in literature had to go through a number of movements. In this paper, the author has chosen four novels from 20th and 21st century to identify the differences in portrayal of 'queer' identity. In the 20th century novel *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery the writer has shown the same-sex desire in a faint way and the 'queer' theme is marginal. Many critics have identified the protagonist Anne and her best friend Diana to be bisexual in the novel *Anne of Green Gables*. The other 20th century novel *Nightwood* by Djuna Barnes is one of the explicit novels that portray homoerotic relationship but this novel lacks self-affirmation of homosexuality between the characters of the novel. Djuna depicted the protagonists Robin and Nora's relationship in a way where Nora is the masculine counterpart and Robin the feminine one in their same-sex relationship. In contrast, the 21st century novel *Crossing* by Pajtim Statovci centers on the 'queer' identity. In *Crossing* the author has directly portrayed the protagonists Bujar and Agim as person with fluid identity both sexually, culturally as well as in terms of their religion. *Call Me By Your Name* is another 21st century 'queer' novel by Andre Aciman and in this novel we can find bisexual relationships. The novel portrays the real life scenario of how queer relationships are perceived in today's world. In current years

some families are welcoming towards homosexual relationships like protagonist Elio's parents. On the other hand, some families do not approve of homosexuality like the other central character Oliver's. During the earlier years of 20th century the authors did not have the full liberty to write about 'tabooed' topic such as LGBTQIA. The authors from that 20th century had to write using pseudonyms to write about same-sex relationship or bisexuality as these were not 'socially approved' back then. Lucy M. Montgomery used to write with her own identity and thus she probably could not directly portray the bisexual side of the main character and she left Anne's sexuality undefined and kept it open for interpretation. In *Nightwood* Djuna Barnes quite boldly has portrayed homosexual relationships but under the notion of showing it as heterosexual one. She created binary within the same gender by portraying masculinity and femininity within same gender. In contrast, a century later authors now have the privilege to depict the queer identity directly in their works as the 'queer identity' has gained social approval in many parts of the world. This acceptance of LGBTQIA community in society and its portrayal in literature came with the cost of several movements. In literature it started with the writers of 'beat generation' and their protest reached the mass through their writing. 'Homosexuality' was once considered as mental illness. Homosexuality was on the list of the diagnosis of American Psychiatric Association till early 1970s and homosexuality gained its acceptance as sexual orientation in 1973. (Brill, 1998) Now with the Gay/Lesbian and Queer movements, 'homosexuality' is considered as a natural phenomenon. In some parts of the world 'queer' community is still unwelcomed and considered as an offence if anyone involves in same-sex relationship or transforms their gender. In the novel *Crossing*, Pajtim Statovci perhaps criticizes this disapproval of the society of 'queer' people. In the novel the protagonists Bujar and Agim migrate to several countries from their homeland Albania where even cross-dressing is a punishable offense let alone belonging to LGBTQIA community. In the novel, Statovci has problematized the

concept of identity from various perspectives such as gender, religion and nationality. In his attempt of doing so he mostly has gave voice to people who chose to listen to their own emotions rather than conforming to the social norms in their quest of gender performativity and identity. In *Call Me By Your Name* Aciman has shown how a 17 years old person like Elio explores his sexuality and identifies his fluid sexuality. Aciman beautifully portrayed the emotion of two young men who know that they perhaps will not end up together still they were not frightened to express their emotional and erotic desires. In this paper, author will show that the movements of beat generation and present day LGBTQIA movements have created a 'queer' friendly world where the writers have the freedom to represent 'queer' characters in a straightforward way.

1 LGBTQIA is initials stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning (one's sexual or gender identity), intersexual, and asexual/aromantic/agender. (Merriam-Webster)

Chapter 1.1

Research Questions and Research Rationale:

The writer of this paper is doing a qualitative study and is using the library research as the method of the study. This paper uses neo-historicist approach as this paper examines the selected texts based on the socio-cultural circumstances the novels were published in. With the help of neo-historical proposition this paper will also show how the time of publication affected writer's point of view and vice versa. The primary source used in writing the paper is mostly acquired from the novels *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Nightwood* by Djuna Barnes, *Crossing* by Pajtim Statovci and *Call Me By Your Name* by Andre Aciman. The secondary sources are mostly obtained from different books concerning queer theory, the internet and encyclopedias which contain related information needed to prepare this paper.

While writing this paper the author wanted to trace the differences in the portrayal of queer identity in literature from 20th to 21st century. The author did not come across any similar works that were previously published in distinguishing the representation of 'queer' characters. The writer thinks the following questions are relevant to support her claims. The research question is as follow:

1. How are Gay/Lesbian, Beat Generation's movements and now Queer Movements playing a role in normalizing LGBTQIA identity in literature?

The objective of the paper is to show how gender performativity and LGBTQIA or queer movements have reshaped the portrayal of queer characters in literature from 20th to 21st century novels. In doing so the author of this paper will show how the protests and movements of 'beat generation' has opened a path for the authors to write about Gay, Lesbian relationships in their literary works and also prepared the readers for reading about 'queer

identity'. This paper intends to understand the probable reasons behind the indistinct representation of bisexuality in *Anne of Green Gables* as a 20th century novel. Similarly, this paper will interrogate the possible reasons of Djuna Barnes' problematic representation of homo-erotic relationship in *Nightwood*. On the other hand, this paper inspects the social norms of 21st century where novels like *Crossing* and *Call Me By Your Name* do not get banned for 'queer' representation but gets recognized.

This paper focuses on the emergence of 'queer' theory and tracks down the crucial elements that have played a role in normalizing the portrayal of LGBTQIA identities in literature over 20th to 21st century so far. This paper, at first addresses the social differences in understanding gender and sexual orientation between 20th and 21st century. Then goes on discussing the contribution of LGBTQ movements and the movements of 'beat generation' have paved the way of change in literature. Lastly, it discusses how Statovci and Aciman have confronted the social stigma by portraying 'queer' characters in his novel *Crossing* and *Call Me By Your Name* respectively. Statovci's characters Bujar and Agim challenge the social norms by crossing the borders for living with full liberty, crossing their gender identity by cross-dressing, and also by crossing the barrier of heterosexuality to homosexuality. Similarly, Aciman's allusion to *Pederasty* from Greek mythology in his novel shows how homosexuality is as old as the creature of mankind and is a normal phenomenon.

2 *Pederasty* is derived from *Paidierastia* which translates "the love of boys". The Greek practice of *Pederasty* was a romantic and erotic relationship between older and younger men. (Khondekar, 2020)

Chapter: 2

Literature review

In this section, the author will provide a brief idea of queer theory, movements and of scholarly sources that provide an overview of the aforementioned novels.

First of all, this I will give reference to the book *Queer Theory: An Introduction* by Annamarie Jagose. I will review some of the chapters of this book for showing the historical movements against the discrimination of queer people. The chapters I will review are chapter two: Theorizing same-sex desire, chapter three: Homophile movement, chapter four: Gay Liberation and chapter seven: Queer. In the chapters mentioned above the author discusses homosexuality, historical anecdote on homophile movement and gay liberation, analyzes the limitations of identity and also discusses 'queer' from different perspectives like performativity and identity, post-structuralist context of queer, queer identity and so forth.

The second chapter of the book deals with understanding homosexuality from different perspectives. The author questions what actually makes a person homosexual, whether that is confined in having sexual interest in the same-sex person or there are more criteria to define that. She uses the survey answers of some male and female interviewee from HIV research. A man said he has gay sex occasionally but he is happily married with his love of life (a woman) and he does not want to identify himself as gay. Same goes for woman as well, some of them also do not want to address or confine themselves as lesbian. Jagose then goes on discussing homosexuality from essentialist and constructionist perspectives. She states that essentialists consider identity as something natural, innate and rigid. In contrast, constructionists think identity as something fluid, conditioned according to one's culture. She then quotes from Edward Stein, "Essentialists hold that a person's sexual orientation is a culture-independent, objective and intrinsic property, while social constructionists think it is

culture-dependent, relational and, perhaps, not objective.” (Stein, 1992) The essentialists think that homosexuality is a universal scenario and it has been marginalized and yet is prevalent in the history. The constructionists think that homosexuality is somehow acquired. Jagose also questions that if it can be acquired then does it also imply that it can be corrected? The definition of homosexuality is thus based on both the claims; it is essential as well as cultural. She also quotes from Mr. Kris Pickering, the spokesperson of a heterosexual foundation, “Only a small percentage of homosexuals were genetic homosexuals, and most were psychological homosexuals who chose that lifestyle because of a bad experience with a member of the opposite sex, together with influential propaganda promoting homosexuality.” Later in the chapter she discusses the origin of homosexuality. She mentions that Michael Foucault argues homosexuality to be a modern day construct. Foucault thinks that even though same-sex sexual acts were already there but there was no identifying category to address the phenomenon. Foucault thinks that homosexuality was first brought into light through medical case histories. Before 1870s, homosexuality was strictly prohibited in religion and civil law and for this reason many people at times felt tempted to involve in same-sex relationships. Later on, when medical advances were made, people started to accept it as a natural scenario and homosexuality was then turned into a ‘species’. (Foucault, 1981) She then explains that many theorists think that homosexuality is derived from heterosexuality but she argues that heterosexuality rather in the latter position in the formation of homosexuality and thus heterosexuality is a derivative of homosexuality. (Katz, 1983) Jagose then says that heterosexuality was always considered natural and during 20th century homosexuality also was getting to be considered as normal. (Jagose, 1996)

Jagose, in the third chapter of her book gives a brief anecdote on homophile movement. The approach of homophile movements was to organize educational programs to make the world queer friendly. The origin of this movement was in Europe and to be specific

in Germany. During the late 19th century, the activists demanded 'homosexuality' to be considered as a natural human behavior. The activists protested to get rid of institutional detriment against homosexuality. In 1869 German law makers wanted to pass a law for identifying same-sex physical relationship as a crime. After that an activist Karoly Maria Benkert wrote an open letter opposing this proposal to the ministry of justice. He debated that homosexuality is an innate condition and thus it can be only subjected to the law of nature not the legislation system. Benkert also wrote how homosexuals are not harmful to anyone neither they are violating someone else's right. He also wrote about the contribution of famous homosexual people of different periods such as, Shakespeare, Michael Angelo, Byron, and Napoleon and so on. Jagose also mentions of a group of theorists who think that homosexuals are being marginalized in the society and thus they are being deprived of their economic rights. The homosexuals were being oppressed because of the dominant cultural values and homophile movement's primary motive was to normalize homosexuality in the society. The latter motives included getting rid of discrimination and establishing their identities as an essential part of the society not the marginalized ones. The activists also tried to show that giving equal rights to the homosexuals can actually contribute in fields like medicine, law, education and so forth. (Jagose, 1996)

In the fourth chapter Jagose talks about Gay Liberation of 1960s. The homosexual movements were taking a more strong position during this time. In 1969 police raided a Gay bar in New York and then the activists made riots to show their protest against this. In the homophile movement people wanted to secure the legal and social recognition as homosexual gradually and this resulted in dissatisfaction among many as there was hardly any progress. In the meantime, more radical groups began to model new left social movements and they criticized the heterosexual dominance. The riots made against the police after Gay bar raid acted as a stepping stone in Gay liberation. The homophile movement was an attempt to

assimilate homosexuality whereas Gay liberation's main motive was to establish gay identity exclusively. This is where the notion of being proud of gay identity started. (Jagose, 1996)

Lastly, in chapter seven Jagose discusses the umbrella term 'queer'. She starts the chapter saying that the widespread use of 'queer' is a recent scenario. From the 19th century many terms have been used regarding 'homosexuality' and the term homosexual was at first coined by a Swiss doctor and since then it is a widely used term in pathology but some theorists think using 'homosexual' as an identification is inappropriate because it is a medical condition and thus latter terms like 'gay', 'lesbian' and now 'queer' came into being to address one's sexual orientation. This change in the 'labeling' has also gone through various criticism. The term 'gay' has been considered slang till 1960s. People opposed the idea of using 'homosexual' as it is considered a derivative condition of 'heterosexuality'. To challenge politically the activists started to use the term 'gay' widely. It was also considered a non-clinical term by the sexologists. The evolution of the terms like 'homosexual', 'gay/lesbian', 'queer' also indicates the historical change of different periods. It was only in 1990s that the term 'queer' was added in the *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality* and people started realizing that the queer are harmless, average people. Even after all these the term 'queer' was used as abuse to the homosexuals till 20th century. Even though the terms 'gay/lesbian', 'homosexual', 'queer' carries similar meaning still these should not be used as synonymous. Some theorists argue that it should be left on the person how they want to be addressed, 'queer' or the previous terminologies. On the other hand, some theorists argue that all people of 'LGBTQIA' community should be addressed by the umbrella term 'queer' as it is better to have one single term to be used uniformly.

Jagose then discusses the post-structuralist context of queer. She thinks that 'queer' marks both continuity and an interval between the 'gay liberation' and 'lesbian feminist' movements. She explains that lesbian feminists showed their opposition on the male bias in

gay liberation although gay liberation was the result of dissatisfaction in the homophile movements. She thinks that finding enchantment in identifying as 'queer' depends on the context of history. She states that the most recent widespread of the term 'queer' cannot be exactly dated but it is noticeable that its popularity rose during the 1990s. She thinks that the recognition of 'queer' is the result of cultural and theoretical pressure in both social life and in the academia. She thinks that the most important break-through was made by the post-structuralist as they understood that 'gay liberation' and 'lesbian feminism' had power politics in them and thus the post-structuralists considered using 'queer' as an unified approach. Many theorists think that using one single term like 'queer' makes the whole LGBTQIA community politically more powerful because it diminishes the differences and hierarchy. In this regard, Donald Morton writes:

“Rather than as a local effect, the return of the queer has to be understood as the result, in the domain of sexuality, of the (post)modern encounter with—and rejection of—Enlightenment views concerning the role of the conceptual, rational, systematic, structural, normative, progressive, liberatory, revolutionary, and so forth, in social change.” (Morton, 1995)

Morton thinks that 'queer' is not only the construct of lesbian and gay movements but it is an intellectual model that includes twentieth century's modern western ideology. Jagose mentions, “Both the lesbian and gay movements were committed fundamentally to the notion of identity politics in assuming identity as the necessary prerequisite for effective political intervention. Queer, on the other hand, exemplifies a more mediated relation to categories of identification.” (Jagose, 1994) As a result of post-structuralist theorization of identity, 'queer' has emerged as both personal identification and political or organizational identification. Jagose also mentions that this change has been possible to happen with the help of the

writings of theorists like Freud, Foucault, Saussure, Lacan, Ferdinand and so forth. (Jagose, 1994)

She concludes the chapter by discussing performativity and identity. In this section she discusses the points made by Judith Butler on her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity* (1990). Butler in the book discusses Foucault's arguments on power operation and resistance for explaining how the marginalized are intrigued by the pre-existing identities. Even though *Gender Trouble* is more of a feminist book, it is influential in the field of 'queer' studies. Butler has identified how gender operates in the world and also pointed out the privileges of heterosexuality and thus she deconstructed the gender normative models and she also legitimized same-sex sex acts. Butler instead of normalizing the same-sex desire of homosexuality that is used as a common scheme by the gay and lesbian activists, she contests the truth of gender itself. She argues that any obligation to gender identity in terms work against the legitimation of homosexual subjects. She thinks that gender is a cultural construct. We are not born with any gender, our gender or sex is culturally built. She rather thinks that our gender identity depends on how we express ourselves. She further adds that heterosexuality is also the result of what our culture has passed upon us. She thinks that gender is "an ongoing discursive practice...open to intervention and re-signification." She thinks a person can always add new meaning to their identities. Butler suggests that heterosexuality is considered legal and normal as it was made compulsory by the ancestors and so does the idea of gender identity. The efforts of 'exploring' one's gender or sexuality is tabooed in the society thus heterosexuality remained monopolistic over thousands of years. She also refers to Foucault's idea that how the people in power made 'heterosexuality' a normal phenomenon and 'homosexuality' an abnormal ones. Butler thus continues her discussion on how our identity and sexual behavior is dependent on our performativity, how we choose to act, whom we choose to make love with. She says that 'heterosexuality' is

legalized by its repetitive practice over the centuries. She also implies that same thing can happen with 'homosexuality'. (Butler, 1990)

Secondly, some scholarly articles on Anne of Green Gables will be reviewed. The first article I am reviewing in this section is written by Laura Robinson titled "Bosom Friends: Lesbian Desire in L.M. Montgomery's Anne Books". The seven novels of Anne series were published under the genre of children literature and for this reason critics for many years have not used the 'queer' lens to analyze the novels. With recent advancement some researchers claimed that the protagonist Anne might be a 'bisexual' person. In this article she at first shares her research made on the personal life of L. M. Montgomery. She writes about her interview where the author has declined of being a lesbian. Montgomery was always being asked to justify her relationship with a female school teacher named Isobel. They have exchanged letters with each other for years and from the letters they vowed of loving each other. For this reason she always faced criticism of having a same-sex relationship with Isobel. To answer this comments made on her sexuality and relationship with Isobel she wrote in a journal. She mentioned of having a good friendship with Isobel and nothing beyond that. She also mentions how Isobel confessed her love for the author and also threatened to commit suicide for her unrequited love towards the author. Robinson's quotes from Isobel's letter, "I'll die without you. You've always shone like a golden star in my life ..." Montgomery considers Isobel as unconscious lesbian and she also feel fascinated about Isobel's emotions towards her but she never agreed on having feelings towards her. In this article Robinson tries to imply that Montgomery's portrayal of Anne's relationship with her bosom friends is the reflection of her own life. There are total seven novels in the Anne series and in different novels Anne is shown to have some 'bosom' friends. Montgomery's portrayal of Anne's relationship with her friends has left people wondering if the character of Anne is a 'bisexual' one. Anne like Isobel vows of loving her first bosom friend Diana and

they promise to each other saying that they will be bosom friends ‘till death do them apart.’” (Montgomery, 1908) Robinson gives examples of Anne’s attitude towards her bosom friends and thus claims that Anne is ‘bisexual’ as she also was in a relationship with Gilbert Blythe and later on gets married to him. Even after Anne’s marriage with Gilbert she is seen to have ‘bosom’ friends and her emotions towards them were stronger than the emotions she had for Gilbert. (Robinson, 2004)

Later on, she gives reference to *Anne of Windy Poplars*, a novel published four years after the accusation of Montgomery being a lesbian was made. In the novel Anne is friends with unhappy spinster schoolteacher Katherine Brooke. In the novel Katherine shares her feelings towards Anne Cuthbert that resembles the confession of Isobel made for the author. Katherine says the following to Anne, "I acknowledged to myself that you might just have come from some far-off star." (Montgomery, 1936) Robinson wants to prove that Montgomery reflected her personal life through the characters of her novel and reflected herself through character of Anne. The author never admitted of being lesbian or bisexual. Similarly, she never clearly portrayed Anne’s character as lesbian or bisexual. She argues that Anne’s intense friendship with her females friends are a major part of the novel and the conversation between them often indicates that the protagonist Anne Shirley Cuthbert is perhaps a bisexual in denial. (Robinson, 2004)

Now, a paper by Catherine R. Stimpson titled, “The Beat Generation And The Trials Of Homosexual Liberation” will be reviewed. In this paper the author has discussed the influence of the protests of ‘beat generation’ in homosexual movement. The author starts her article referring to a book written by a homosexual married person. The homosexual person published the book *The Homosexual in America* under the pseudonym Donald Webster Cory and shared his struggle in the society as a homosexual. In the book he shares his struggles of being marginalized. He writes, “... until we are willing to speak out openly and frankly in

defense of our activities, and to identify ourselves with the millions pursuing those activities, we are unlikely to find the attitudes of the world undergoing any significant change.” (Cory, 1963) Cory knew that a group of likeminded people were coming together to raise their voice. Later on, we get know that the groups of people were the Beats, Jazz and beatnik. The author then continues to discuss the contributions of beat generation in homosexual movements and in literature. She says that beat generation confronted inner conflicts and combatted against the external boundaries and authorities. She then names few intellectuals who made the greater influence in ‘homosexual’ movements, they are: Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs, Neal Cassady, Jack Kerouac, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and so on. They wrote about sex as an inevitable part of their lives and they also confessed about their sexual orientation. Most of them had wives and also an affair with men out of marriage. Ginsberg openly confessed of him sleeping with Cassady, Kerouac. The writings containing such vulgar elements at times were banned by the government but that did not stop them from writing. How they continued to write promoting homosexuality has contributed in normalizing ‘homosexuality’ in the American society and later on, its impact on literature was also visible. The Beats were the main advocates of homosexual movements in 1960s America. They rebelled against the stigma and marginalization they always encountered. When they were being vilified by the government they preached the message that men can take care of each other’s loneliness and this way they promoted ‘gay’ relationships even when they were facing the turmoil of the society. The author then gives more references to Ginsberg and Cassady’s relationship. Ferlinghetti was arrested for publishing Ginsberg’s poem “Howl”. In the poem he rebels against the authority by saying that they are losing the best minds of the generation by marginalizing them. (Stimpson, 1982)

In *Nightwood* the author did not only portray homosexual romance but also has shown the hidden desire to become a woman from man through the character of Dr. Mathew

O'Connor. His character in the novel is rather a controversial one and Nicholas Becht in his article "Trans-identity in Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood*" talks about it. He argues that Dr. Mathew has no rigid or authentic identity of his own. The author then mentions how Dr. Mathew cross dresses and sometimes also claims himself as woman saying "the girl that God forgot". To analyze Dr. Mathew's condition Becht then uses Neil Miller's chapter "Pioneering Sexology". In the chapter Miller discussed the non-normative gender identities and sexualities of around the time 1920s to 1930s and *Nightwood* was set on 1936. The prevailing belief on homosexuality during that time was that sexual inversion can be occurred as a result of soul being in the wrong body. Miller in influence of Foucault's also observes the then trend of categorizing of gender identities based on the acts or gender performances. He also explains the medical criterion of homosexuality and feminine identity. He explains that the Germans thought of male homosexual's feminine soul was trapped in their male body and thus they had the traits of a female person. Miller thinks that homosexuality is not just the transformation in one's choice of sexual object but in the transgression of the broader gender traits. His theory of 'third sex' has challenged these gender stereotypes with a seemingly scientific basis. Becht then elaborates how Barnes has always shown a reflection of femininity in Dr. Mathew's character without making the character directly involved in homosexual acts. Even after a repeated portrayal of feminine characteristics Barnes has always used the masculine pronouns to identify him. Dr. Mathew has identified him as 'the bearded lady', "the Old woman who lives in the closet' and so forth. Becht thinks that these kinds of notions of Dr. Mathew leaves the readers with wonder if he is using the pre-existing medical beliefs of that time on homosexuality being an inversion and conflicting sexual feeling. There are scenes in the novel where he wants to become a woman through cross-dressing. Becht then goes on discussing Dr. Mathew's feminine traits through the characters of Felix and Nora and through their desire and discomfort regarding Dr. Mathew. Becht

describes Dr. Mathew's cross-dressing as both "terrifying and seductive". He referred to Marjorie Garbar's writing "Dress Codes, or The Theatricality of Difference" in this regard as she mentioned cross-dressing has an attractive side too. She also states that transvestite is "a crisis of category' itself." (Garbar, 1992)

Becht then refers to the novel where Felix observes Dr. Mathew's feminine attributes, cross-dressing, even stealing a hundred franc note in the hotel room. Felix seems to be both petrified and enticed. In the novel Dr. Mathew does not wear feminine clothes rather he uses the make-up and perfume of Robin Vote who is Felix's fiancée. Becht thinks that the use of Robin's things by Dr. Mathew worked in evoking Felix's desire towards him. In contrast Barnes has portrayed Robin's character with more masculine characteristics as well as a bisexual. Becht thinks that Dr. Mathew's transvestite is rather an appropriation of Robin's character. In the novel the Barnes has shown Felix's reaction to Dr. Mathew's cross-dressing as an image of oyster discharging its fluids to form a pearl which is metaphorical to having orgasm. Becht thinks that Dr. Mathew was made into a woman in the novel both through his sexual inversion and cross-dressing. He then discusses how Nora has come across Dr. Mathew's transvestism. Nora finds Dr. Mathew in a female nightgown, rouged cheeks, painted lashes and in curled wig. She comments on Dr. Mathew as if he was 'red riding hood' or 'the wolf in bed'. Through her reaction the dual state of Nora's mind is reflected, she like Felix is both seduced and horrified by Dr. Mathew's cross-dressing. Nora is uncomfortable seeing Dr. Mathew like this on the other hand it is also pleasurable to see him this way. Nora is bisexual and seeing cross-dressed Dr. Mathew she feels tempted to the feminine self of Dr. Mathew on the other hand she is scared of the masculine identity of Dr. Mathew. The transvestism of Dr. Mathew is not rigid it is portrayed in two ways. One to Felix in which his cross-dressing undermines femininity other hand in front of Nora his transvestism

undermines masculinity. The character of Dr. Mathew is thus not a stable one, it has no fixed identity. (Becht, 2012)

Susana S. Martins in her article “Gender Trouble and Lesbian Desire in *Nightwood*” has at first gave her readers an insight into Djuna Barnes personal life and discussed about the troubled gender representation and lesbian desire in the novel *Nightwood*. In the article she mentions of Karen Kaivola’s statement on Barnes’ *Nightwood* she thinks that in reality Barnes perhaps is in opposition of what she seemingly trying to portray in the novel. *Nightwood* is often regarded as a celebration of homosexual relationship and Barnes in her personal life was engaged in a lesbian relationship for 10 years with Thelma Woods. In some of her interviews she did not only deny of being homosexual but also has said “I don’t want to make a lot of lesbians”. The novel is a revolutionary work of that time for portraying homosexual relationships openly whereas her statements seem to contradict what she tried to advocate and establish. Susan then refers to Mary Lynn Broe and Carolyn Allen’s essay “Writing toward *Nightwood*” where they mention that regardless of Barnes’ denial of being lesbian they are going to use queer and feminist theory to her work. Susan then states that how Barnes’ choice of words like ‘pansies’, ‘foolish’, ‘mawkish’ and so on regarding homosexuals is troublesome. Similarly, her denial of being lesbian even after admitting having same-sex relationship is also unsettling and Susan thinks that keeping these matters while reading the works of Barnes’ will help us to understand how she perceives the ‘gender categories’. Susan then discusses that for Barnes the term ‘lesbian’ is more than just women loving women. She explains how Barnes did not like the idea of the discourse the word ‘lesbian’ has. She did not want to confine herself in the particular gender identity set by the society. Later on, Susan criticizes this notion of Barnes as in later years Barnes has used words like ‘pansies’, ‘foolish’ and so forth regarding homosexuals. Susan thinks that these expressions are homophobic but in Barnes case it might be her outrage against the people

who accepts the identities set by patriarchal standards. Susan argues that Barnes despised the idea of the term 'lesbian' in Freudian terms, which refers homosexuality as illness. Instead of accepting the patriarchal standards of female sexuality Barnes portrays her own way of female sexuality and desire as De Lauretis terms it "recasting the primal scene". By the aforementioned term Lauretis means creating a fantasy scenario that itself is a representation of desire. (Lauretis, 1994) Throughout *Nightwood* Barnes has shown her disgust against Freudian theories regarding homosexuality by problematizing the character of Dr. Mathew O'Connor. Barnes think that soul and body cannot be differentiated from one another and thus she does not believe in the idea of defining one's psychological intricacy by their genitals. Susan then discusses that Barnes' depiction of Nora Flood is more on the masculine side and Robin Vote is more feminine. Nora's character was portrayed as a dominating person and her manipulative characteristics eventually drive Robin away from her. Through this novel Barnes has contested the heterosexist identity categories such as 'lesbian', 'homosexual' and even 'woman'. She presented Nora as male lover and Robin as beloved female and tried categorize their relationship under heterosexual paradigm. On the other hand, towards the end of the novel she represented Robin in men's clothing and thus she again tried to depict their relationship as a heterosexual act. Similarly, she has problematized Dr. Mathew's identity by his act of cross-dressing. Barnes did not really confined the identities of Robin, Nora and Dr. Mathew in any particular gender or sexual defining terms. She has kept the identity of characters fluid and variable. (Martins, 1999)

In the thesis titled "In Between Closets: An Analysis of Identity and Space in Andre Aciman's *Call Me By Your Name*" the author Diego Feijoo Farina links the setting where the romance between the protagonists take place and also how their circumstances shape their identity as a queer person. She divides the thesis in three major chapters. The first chapter concerns the relation between the novel's setting and Greek homosexuality. In second chapter

she analyzes the identity of Elio and Oliver through Aristophane's speech and Edward Carpenter's study on homosexuality. In the third chapter she inspects the identity of Elio, his father as well as Oliver. She also considers the novel as a bildungsroman one and also discusses the matter of religion in the novel. (Farina, 2019)

Farina, at first talks about the place where the novel is set and discusses how the nature has influenced Elio and Oliver to grow fond of each other as the nature of the Italian village gives them the space to know each other better. She then gives reference to the intertextual elements the novel have. Aciman alludes to Greek mythology in a number of ways in the novel and Farina also mentions that the love between men to men is also noticeable in Greek mythology. Farina with reference to Greek mythology explains that Elio has found his other half in Oliver and Oliver is also responsible for Elio's sexual awakening or coming out as 'homosexual'. Elio and Oliver regardless of their feelings had to part from each other. Oliver got married to a woman had children but he could never let go of his feelings for Elio. Farina with reference to Carpenter argues that often times gay men builds a heterosexual relationship as it is socially accepted but they can hardly forget their love and affection they had in same-sex relationship. Farina ends her thesis by showing the growth of the character Elio. The novel is a flashback of Elio's memory and in present day he is a grown up man who is well aware of his sexuality and feelings. (Farina, 2019)

In the article "Of Statues and Peaches: *Call Me BY Your Name's* Hidden Greek Myths (with paintings)" by Naoreet Khondekar he mentions that the novel's narrative is based on Greek model of *Pederasty*. He then explains the term *Pederasty* is derived from *Paidierastia* which translates "the love of boys". The Greek practice of *Pederasty* was a romantic and erotic relationship between older and younger men. In the novel Oliver is older than Elio and they had both loving and homoerotic relationship. In the novel Elio and Oliver call each other by their own names and Khondekar refers this to the act of Narcissus's falling love with

himself. Elio and Oliver could see their reflections in each other that they chose to call themselves as their own names this indicate the similarity of their love to that of Narcissus's. (Khondekar, 2020)

Chapter: 3

Representation of Queer characters in 20th Century Novels

The representation of queer characters in 20th century novel is quite rare. Few of the notable novels that contain queer characters or the portrayal of queer relationships are the novels of *Anne* series Lucy M. Montgomery, *Rubyfruit Jungle* by Rita May Brown, *Nightwood* by Djuna Barnes, *Giovanni's Room* by James Baldwin and so forth. From the aforementioned novels *Anne of Green Gables* is the oldest one and the depiction of LGBTQ relationship in the novel is done loosely. With the progress of time and emergence of LGBTQ movements the portrayal of LGBTQ relationships became more prominent and explicit in the latter novels mentioned above. However, the novels lack self-acceptance, dilemma, and fear of social stigma and so on. The transformation of indefinite to prominent representation of 'queer' relationship began in 20th century but it achieved its resolution in 21st century by taking 'pride' in one's sexual orientation.

Chapter 3.1

Indistinct Representation of LGBTQ Relationship in *Anne of Green Gables*

From the book *Queer Theory: An Introduction* by Annamarie Jagose we get a detailed idea about the evolution of queer existence in the world. Even though homosexuality was a natural phenomenon it was banned in many parts of the world. The normalization of 'homosexuality' is a late 20th and early 21st century construct. The first novel of Anne series

Anne of Green Gables was published in 1908 and during that time ‘homosexuality’ was considered punishable offense by civil law and also prohibited in religion. On the other hand, ‘homosexuality’ was also considered psychological disorder till 1970s. (Jagose, 1994) These are some of the reasons why the author L. M. Montgomery did not directly portray LGBTQIA characters in her novels. Many people and critics accused the author as lesbian but she never admitted it. On the other hand, some claim that the protagonist of her novel Anne Shirley Cuthbert was a bisexual due to the portrayal of intense friendship with her bosom friends. The author has also declined this claim but Professor Robinson in her article “Bosom Friends Lesbian Desire in L.M. Montgomery's Anne Books” has claimed that Anne was a bisexual character and her character was highly influenced by the author’s character. On the other hand, she further gives reference to the letters of the author’s friend Isobel and writes that Montgomery has portrayed the friendship Isobel and she had through the characters of Anne and Katherine. Their friendship was depicted in a much latter series of the novel named *Anne of Windy Poplars*, published in 1936. In this novel the ‘bisexual’ side of Anne is shown little explicitly compared to the first novel of the series. For example, in the novel Katherine like Isobel expresses her love towards Anne and Anne even says of ‘spanking’ her for some reasons. Anne was married to Gilbert Blythe but her romantic relationship with her female friends is more intense compared to her husband. From these references we can assume that the character of Anne have a bisexual appeal. (Robinson, 2004) Now the reason of portraying bisexuality so faintly in the novel is I think the social construct. The society of 20th century was not queer friendly and the writer would have faced serious criticism if she had openly portrayed homosexuality in her novels. Several adaptation of the book has been made after its publication and the recent adaptation was a Netflix series *Anne with an E* and this series have three seasons. The directors, producers of the series have said that they incorporated ‘queer’ characters because the novels had a ‘homosexual’ appeal

and they brought that in front the 21st century audience as they think the audience are now 'queer' friendly. (Paskin, 2017)

Chapter 3.2

Gender Binary and Denial in *Nightwood*

In *Nightwood* Djuna Barnes has problematized identity from two dimensions, those are; social class and gender identity. Apart from the Character of Felix other central characters of the novel are mostly on their quest of gender or sexual identity. Felix in the novel pretends to belong to the Italian aristocracy and hides his true societal identity. This novel largely deals with Robin and Nora's same-sex unnamed relationship. In addition, it also portrays the hidden desire of Dr. Mathew O'Connor's wanting to become a person from other gender. This novel is set in 1920 Paris. This is one of the first novels to portray LGBTQ relationship in 20th century. Even after showing lesbian relationship between Robin and Nora, Jenny and Robin the author did not identified it as lesbian relationship. Similarly, Barnes showed cross dressing and the desire of becoming a woman through the character of Dr. Mathew she used the pronouns he/him for Dr. Mathew. While some debate that Djuna did not want to conform to the gender or sexual identifiers I find her approach as living in denial.

Robin was at first in a heterosexual relationship with Felix and also gave birth to a son. She soon realizes that she does not want a relationship as such and flees to America. Soon after going to America she involves in a same-sex relationship with Nora. Djuna portray their homoerotic love but do not want to label it as lesbian relationship. Barnes interviews claim to do this because she does not want to accept the patriarchal terms. (Martins, 1999) If this was the only case then she could have suggested some other terms in addressing same-sex lesbian relationship but she did not. In addition, she used words like 'pansies', foolish and 'mawkish' and so forth while talking about homosexuals. Such attitude

of her towards homosexuals is disrespectful and seems that she is in denial. In her personal life she was in same-sex relationship with her friend Thelma Woods and like Robin and Nora's relation Barnes never agreed to have a lesbian relationship with her. She used to say that "I'm not a lesbian. I just loved Thelma." Her denial in personal life and in the novel shows her disability to accept her homosexual identity. In early 20th century it was tabooed to write about queer relationships but she did it and she portrayed it quite boldly but in terms of embracing the homosexual identity she failed. Since, if she had not showed Robin and Nora's relation openly then it could have been said that she is hiding the lesbian relationship because of the societal condition of that time but this was not the case in terms of *Nightwood*. Robin's heterosexual relationship with Felix had the name of wife and husband then not accepting the label of 'lesbian' seems irrational. Barnes portrayed Robin's character as someone who seeks stability in relationship and also in quest for creating her identity but her commitment issues do not only keep her away from stability but also deprives her of finding an identity. When Robin herself is in denial of her sexuality it is less likely for her to get an identity as she is on the run from her true self.

Later on, we can see that Barnes tries to create a gender binary within the same gender of Robin and Nora. She places Nora as the masculine one and Robin as the feminine one. (Martins, 1999) Barnes' attempt of creating such binary proves that she is actually believes in heterosexual relationship but as she was already involved in a same-sex relationship that was known by all she needed another way to escape from that truth. Thus she created the character of Robin and Nora who loved each other and was involved in physically intimate relationship but was out of the tag of 'lesbian love'. Barnes depicted Nora's character as a rather manipulative one and also showed that her dominating nature drove Robin away from her. Towards the end of the novel Barnes shows Robin lying in a church with Nora's dog by her side. This scenario represents Robin's submission towards

Nora. Previously, Barnes showed as a masculine character and the ending scene makes this matter even more problematic as it seems that in the end Robin is submitting herself or getting defeated in front of the patriarchal authority. (Martins, 1999)

Lastly, the character of Dr. Mathew is also a troubled one. Barnes has shown cross-dressing through his character and throughout the novel he laments of becoming a woman. He repeatedly claims himself to be a woman and says the following “the girl that God forgot”. (Barnes, 1936) Barnes represents the feminine side of Dr. Mathew but uses the pronoun he/him throughout the novel. If she wanted to portray his character as a fluid one then when he cross-dresses as woman she could change the pronouns as she/her and in men’s clothing as he/him. This kind of portrayal indirectly supports the heteronormative ideology that believes in carrying out the gender identity a person is born with. Dr. Mathew in the novel says, “I talk too much because I have been made so miserable by what you are keeping hushed.” From this line we understand that Dr. Mathew is not being able to live as a woman because of the societal norms. This is understandable considering the 1920s period the novel was set in but the thing I find it paradoxical is Barnes is also doing what the society believes in. Felix and Nora have encountered Dr. Mathew’s cross-dressing a number of times and Dr. Mathew also has stated about his desire of becoming a woman numerous times to them. Even after that Barnes did not use feminine pronouns Dr. Mathew. Barnes way of presenting Dr. Mathew’s character leaves the readers to wonder if Barnes is using the pre-existing medical beliefs of that time on homosexuality being an inversion and conflicting sexual feeling. Marjorie Garbar thinks cross-dressing has both a terrifying and an attractive side too. She also states that transvestite is ‘a crisis of category’ itself. (Garbar, 1992) In the novel Dr. Mathew was seen to cross-dress in front of both Felix and Nora at different times. The common thing between Felix and Nora is both of their love interest is Robin. Dr. Mathew’s cross-dressing in one way or the other signifies their relationship with Robin. Felix is a

heterosexual man and when Dr. Mathew uses the perfume, blusher, powder etcetera it reminds Felix of Robin and this arouses him. In Felix's instance feeling sexual tension upon seeing Dr. Mathew's cross-dressing is terrifying as he is a heterosexual person. (Becht, 2012)

On another note, Barnes again is creating a man-woman binary within the same gender to show a heterosexual romance. Similarly, Nora finds Dr. Mathew in silk night robe, painted lashes, curled wig and make up. She is also both seduced and afraid of the cross-dressed Dr. Mathew. Nora is bisexual and after seeing cross-dressed Dr. Mathew she feels tempted to the feminine self of Dr. Mathew on the other hand she is scared of the masculine identity of Dr. Mathew. (Becht, 2012) Nora previously has been portrayed having masculinity in her. Thus, Nora's masculine self's attraction towards the feminine side of Dr. Mathew is again an example of how Barnes has depicted heterosexual association yet another time. All the instances mentioned above clearly states that Barnes herself could not get out of the standardized concept of heterosexual relationship of the society and thus failed to portray lesbian love in *Nightwood*.

Chapter: 4

Beat Generation's Role in Normalizing Same-sex Relationship in Literature

In this part of the paper inspects how LGBTQIA movements and the writings of "beat generation" have contributed in normalizing the portrayal of 'queer' characters in literature. From Jagose's book *Queer Theory: An Introduction* we have seen how the queer existence came into being. From social movements of 1890s in Germany to the literary movements of "beat generation" in 1960s in America people's perception has changed a lot regarding queer people. The movements at first made it easier for the queer people to come out with their authentic sexual orientation as being 'homosexuals' are not a punishable offense now. The homophile movements of early 20th century were able to make people understand that having

different sexual orientation is not harmful and they are ordinary people. The mindset of people has evolved a lot over the past century and now we can see more people to take 'pride' in their queer identity. On the other hand, the writers and artists of "beat generation" have opened a path for a 'queer' literature. Allen Ginsberg is one of the few pioneers who established his bisexual identity as a poet and following his footsteps many American authors started incorporating 'queer' characters in their literary works. With the societal transformation people are now more or less welcoming towards queer community and these movements not only created a 'queer' friendly reader in America and Europe but also all over the world. (Stimpson, 1982)

Chapter: 5

Representation of Queer character in 21st Century Novels

In early 21st century the world literature has bloomed with 'queer' texts. Writers like Andre Aciman, Julia Quinn, Bernardine Evaristo, Pajtim Statovci and so forth are some renowned award winning writers who have written texts centering on 'queer' characters. The primary 20th century texts of this paper *Anne of Green Gables* and *Nightwood* and 21st century novels *Call Me By Your Name* and *Crossing* the former two and latter two novels almost 100 years apart and thus the representation of 'queer' is on the polar opposite. In previous chapters I have already discussed how LGBTQIA movements and the movements of beat generation have influenced the world and literature, now I will analyze the novel *Call Me By Your Name* and *Crossing* with 'queer' lens keeping the changed world in mind.

Chapter 5.1

Nonconforming Identity in *Crossing*

Pajtim Statovci's *Crossing* gives voice to the people who do not prefer to be defined or labeled by others in any way. In the novel he problematizes the concept of identity from several perspectives such as gender identity, nationality, religion and so on. The story of the novel revolves around the protagonist Bujar and his constant changing identities. In the novel we can see Bujar is a 22 years old man who at times dresses as woman. He says, "I am a man who cannot be a woman but who can sometimes look like a woman." (Statovci, 2019)

Statovci through different characters in the novel has shown that identity is fluid and performative. Bujar not only cross dresses but also moves from country to country and weaves a new story to tell about his ethnicity and past. He is originally from Tirana, Albania and moves to Rome, Germany, United States, Helsinki and so on. In every city he comes up with a new identity, a new name, nationality and past. His mother was a Christian and his father was a Muslim and his religion is not defined in the novel. Perhaps, his religious identity is also fluid. Amongst all the identities Statovci mostly problematizes Bujar's gender identity and his performative fluid sexuality. In the novel through Bujar's constant change of his gender identities he shows that a person's identity cannot be defined by the societal standards rather by the choices one makes and also advocates of queer theory through Bujar's actions. His answer to his own question is, "Nobody has to remain the person they were born; we can put ourselves together like a jigsaw." (Statovci, 2019)

Statovci, like Judith Butler, questions about the validity of identities through the spectacles of queer theory. At first we need to know the basics of queer theory "queer theory describes those gestures or analytical models which dramatize incoherencies in the apparently stable relations between sex, gender and sexual desire. Queer focuses on mismatches between

sex, gender and desire. The analytical framework of queer theory includes topics as cross-dressing, hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery.” (Jagose, 1996) In the novel, we can find the reference of cross dressing prominently from Bujar, Agim and Tanja. In addition, we can see that Tanja is a transwoman who has undergone gender-corrective surgery.

Agim is Bujar’s best friend and he is into cross-dressing since his adolescent days. He used to role play as Bujar’s wife during their teen years. After Bujar’s fathers’ death his mother becomes mentally unstable and his elder sister Ana also elopes from home. After all these tragic events the only person Bujar could rely on emotionally was Agim. They flee from Tirana together to be refugee in Italy. In the meantime, Agim wants to have sexual intercourse with Bujar but he denies saying that he is not a gay. In contrast, while asking for shelter in Italy as a refugee he mentions homosexuality for his reason of migration. Here the matter of ‘gay for stay’ takes place. Many homosexual people do not want to address themselves as gay or lesbian as Bujar did on the first place. On the other hand, some people use the identity of being homosexual to attain certain advantages. Statovci has amazingly portrayed the both side of a coin by one single character Bujar. The initial denial of Bujar’s being gay was also a journey towards understanding his own identity. He later on had bisexual relationships with people from different cities. In different places Bujar created different identities. His identities were never constant rather they were always evolving and fluid. In terms of defining one’s identity there are two approaches, one is essentialist and another is constructionist. The former one defines identity as something natural, fixed and innate; and the latter one defines identity as something fluid, conditioned and constructed. (Jagose, 1996) In the novel the author has projected this constructionist view of identity. The identity of Bujar, Agim and Tanja are not fixed or innate rather their identity is fluid and constructed. Bujar dresses like both man and woman depending on his mental state and his

surroundings. Someday he chooses to be identified as man and in some other days a woman. In doing so he also experiences how these two different gender identities are perceived differently by the people. On the other hand, Tanja was born as a 'male' person but he constructed his identity as a woman by doing gender-corrective surgery. During our birth we do not have the liberty of choosing our gender, religion, nationality, family and so on. As we grow up and develop conscience we also achieve the capability of going beyond the innateness and change our identity. In doing so, one might face obstacles and social stigma. Agim faced violence from his own parents for cross-dressing. The author here gives us a subtle hint that where homosexuality, cross-dressing etcetera are not accepted one might need to create a new identity as Bujar did in the novel.

According to Judith Butler, the truth of human identities relies on gender performativity. She thinks that repetitive gender performance naturalizes the 'common' gender identities. She says,

“Heterosexuality is naturalized by the performative repetition of normative gender identities. Similarly, to her gender is not only about clothing that can be put on and off. Rather it is constrained—not simply in the sense of being structured by limitations but because (given the regulatory frameworks in which performativity is meaningful) constraint is the prerequisite of performativity. Performativity is not something a subject does, but a process through which that subject is constituted—the theoretical significance of Butler's performativity is that all gender—and not simply that which self-consciously dramatizes its theatricality—is performative.” (Butler, 1990)

She thinks that a person does not necessarily perform different gender roles consciously to form a new identity rather s/he goes through a process of change that can be subconscious.

Bujar perhaps had same sex desire towards Agim but he was in denial. Later on, we can see how he creates an identity that is borrowed from Agim. Agim was a brilliant student his father was violent towards him, whereas, Bujar's father was affectionate towards Bujar. For inventing different identities Bujar made up false stories of past and among those stories he presented Agim's past as his own. On the other hand, when he starts living with Tanja as husband and wife he shares the truth about his past with her and so does Tanja. Their relationship was not only based on sexual urges but also of passionate love. When Bujar loves someone he starts considering his partner and him to be the same person and thus he does not feel hesitant to use their identity as his own. He also cross-dresses by wearing Tanja's clothes. He once auditioned for an American reality show for singing where either one have to have exceptional singing capability or an interesting story. He did not have either of these and when he was being eliminated he used the 'trans-gender' identity of Tanja for his own benefit. This is when he got applauded as 'unique'. Bujar considered himself as unique and special but after getting maltreatment from Italian bureaucracy he started to decide define his identity as he please. "I can choose what I am, I can choose my gender, choose my nationality and my name, my place of birth, all simply by opening my mouth." Bujar, later in the novel realizes that his act of refusing his own past is pushing him towards loneliness and refrain him from having a meaningful relationship. (Greenwell, 2019) Bujar's reason of creating multiple identities is to escape from stereotyping. He is ashamed of his past, to where he belongs. He is tired of getting tagged as 'barbaric' just because he is from Albania. The author goes beyond stereotyping by creating Bujar's identity as something different, as someone he does not let others define him. (Vitcavage, 2019)

With this novel Statovci boldly speaks of not confining oneself in the societal standard. The way he has problematized identity novel highly reflects of the quote "Man is born free but everywhere is in chains" by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. No one is bound to accept

how the society labels their sexual or gender identity. They can surely define themselves as they want but this path of creating a new identity is not an easy one. Statovci portrayed how a person can go beyond the obstacles in redefining themselves.

Chapter 5.2

Manifesting homosexuality as a natural and ancient phenomenon in *Call Me By Your Name*

Andre Aciman in *Call Me By Your Name* has portrayed the relationship between two young men and also has depicted their sexual encounters. The protagonist Elio is a seventeen years old man who is going through his puberty and in his quest of understanding his sexuality. His first erotic experience was the traditional heterosexual one with his friend Marzia. Later on, when his father's student Oliver comes for the summer to spend in their home and Elio feels attracted to him on his first glance. This attraction puts him in a dilemma and this is when he questions his sexuality. In the novel at first Elio tries to show that he does not like Oliver but his inner-self keeps longing for him. At one point he masturbates while fantasizing about him. This feeling towards the same-sex person was new for him and it was also something that was not what their society and Jewish religion considers as normal. Puberty is the time when people in general starts developing their sexual desires and as a teenager Elio just started to have intimate experiences and this is when he finds himself more enchanted towards his same gender. He realizes he wants to be with Oliver than Marzia. The way he at the beginning of the novel behaves rudely with Oliver represents his denial towards his newly formed attraction. He at first tried to practice what is commonly accepted in the society that is 'heterosexuality'. Regardless of his feelings towards Oliver he again gets intimate with Marzia but realizes that his heart does not want this relationship rather wants to be with Oliver. In contrast, Oliver is a twenty four year old man who practices heterosexual

relationship but deep inside he also has feelings for Elio. As a young adult he was aware of his emotions and sexual desires. Thus, he tried to seduce Elio by massaging his back as he felt that perhaps Elio feels the same but Elio avoids him as he till that point was reluctant of his desire towards him. Farina in her thesis “In Between Closets: An Analysis of Identity and Space in Andre Aciman’s Call Me By Your Name” identified this denial of Elio as a closeted condition. (Farina, 2019) Aciman beautifully portrays how Elio’s love towards Oliver makes him overcome this ‘closeted condition’. Elio was not only attracted to Oliver physically but also intellectually. Both Oliver and Elio were avid readers and also shared common interests like arts, sculpture, music and so forth. Their similarities brought them closer, Elio was even happy to share the common religion. Aciman set the novel in Italian village which is similar to the *arcadia* (natural landscape) of Greek mythology. Aciman set the novel in open country side where there was enough room for their fondness to grow. (Farina, 2019)

Aciman’s allusion to Greek mythology is highly noticeable in the novel. The most significant instance in the novel is the portrayal of *Pederasty*. The term ‘*pederasty*’ is derived from *Paidierastia* which translates “the love of boys”. The Greek practice of *Pederasty* was a romantic and erotic relationship between older and younger men. In the novel Oliver is older than Elio and they had both loving and homoerotic relationship. (Khondekar, 2020) From the aforementioned allusion Aciman perhaps tried to assert that homosexuality is as old as mankind and it is a natural human condition. Jagose in her book *Queer Theory: An Introduction* has shared what the essentialists think about the nature of homosexuality and I agree to that. The essentialists think that homosexuality is a universal scenario and it has been marginalized and yet is prevalent in the history. (Jagose, 1996) Greek mythology is around three thousand years old and even that has the instances of homosexual relationship; this definitely shows that homosexual is not a new construct. On the other hand, in the novel when Elio is broken hearted after knowing that Oliver and him can never be together. Oliver

chose the path that has more social acceptance and thus he married a woman. To console Elio and also to validate Elio's sexuality his father says to him that "You had a beautiful friendship. Maybe more than a friendship and I envy you... I'll say one more thing. It'll clear the air: I may have come close, but I never had what you two have. Something always held me back, or stood in the way. How you live your life is your business." (Aciman, 2007)

Aciman uses Elio's father's voice to show that there is nothing wrong in having emotions for same-sex person. How Mr. Perlman mentioned that he had similar sort of feelings but something always held him back. The things that held him back are perhaps the stigma against homosexuality. As Mr. Perlman has himself experienced same situation this is why he knew to acknowledge what Elio feels. When a person's sexuality is an unconventional one s/he needs support and assurance from their family first. Oliver did not get this support from his family but Elio was lucky to have understanding parents who encourage living his life on his own way rather than questioning his sexual orientation. Mr. Perlman does not only validate Elio's sexuality he also knows to recognize his pain and knows the consequences of not addressing one's sufferings. In this regard Mr. Perlman says,

"In your place, if there is pain, nurse it, and if there is a flame, don't snuff it out, don't be brutal with it. Withdrawal can be a terrible thing when it keeps us awake at night, and watching others forget us sooner than we'd want to be forgotten is no better. We rip out so much of ourselves to be cured of things faster than we should that we go bankrupt by the age of 30 and have less to offer each time we start with someone new. But to feel nothing so as not to feel anything—what a waste!"

Mr. Perlman's character was full of wisdom and he was a farsighted person. He tells Elio that if he does not express his agony then it will later make him hollow from inside and he would not be able to love again. Aciman wonderfully has conveyed a message to the parents through the character of Mr. Perlman. When a person does not receive any support from their family

upon coming out as a homosexual or bisexual person they become more vulnerable and through Mr. Perlman's character people can learn to affirm their near one's sexuality as well as their own.

In the novel Elio and Oliver call each other by their own names and this is the allusion to Narcissus's falling love with himself from Greek mythology. (Khondekar, 2020) Elio and Oliver could see their reflections in each other that they chose to call themselves as their own names this indicate the similarity of their love to that of Narcissus's. On a greater note, I found this act of calling each other by their own names represents the unification of two individuals as one. Aciman elevated Elio and Oliver's love to spirituality by his simple words "call me by your name and I will call you by mine." (Aciman, 2007)

Chapter: 6

Conclusion

At the onset, this thesis addresses the transition in representing 'queer' characters between 20th century and 21st century novels. In doing so it acknowledges the movements of LGBTQIA community as well as addresses the literary movement of 'Beat Generation'. The homophile movement started towards the end of 19th century in Europe but homosexuality was still tabooed and was considered as illness, sin even crime. (Jagose, 1992) The protests of 19th century did not bring much change in literature, specifically in novels. The writers were still chained to move their pen freely and write about a homosexual relationship. During the early 1900s to 1960s writers who tried to portray homosexual or bisexual relationship in their novels were highly criticized and their sexuality was also questioned. 1950s is the time when the writers, poets, artists, musicians started to protest against the unjust treatment homosexuals receive. Through their writing, arts and music they were able to reach the mass

and also started the trend of writing about homosexuality fearlessly. The confiscation of writers and publishers could not stop the movement rather it increased the number of writings, arts and music where they spoke of homosexuality. (Stimpson, 1982) In early 1900s novelist like Lucy M. Montgomery published her first novel of the novel series *Anne* and in the first book *Anne of Green Gables* she portrayed the intimate friendship between the protagonist Anne and Diana. This novel was questioned even though it did not have any portrayal of homoerotic affair. The author was questioned regarding her depiction of homosexuality in the novel but she stayed on the safe side by denying it. By the time the seventh and last book of the series came out it became more prominent that the protagonist Anne was perhaps a bisexual who has had intimate relationship with multiple female friends she had over the course of her life. On the other hand, Djuna Barnes' novel *Nightwood* was published in 1936 and it portrayed homoerotic relation between Robin and Nora. Barnes received backlash for writing the book. In the novel she did portray same-sex relationship but she denied labeling this as 'lesbian' relationship. At the surface of the novel it might seem that Barnes is courageously showing homosexual love in her writings but her denial of terming the homosexual relation between two women as lesbian was more of an act of self-denial. Furthermore, she also created gender binary between same gender and that made the homosexual relationship heterosexual. In the context of Barnes and her novel the influence of heteronormative ideals are noticeable. The writer herself could not go beyond the stereotypes of heterosexual relationship and thus her effort of writing a novel on homosexual relation went in vain.

In 1963 a homosexual person under the pseudonym Donald Webster Cory published a book named *The Homosexual in America* and portrayed struggle in the society as a homosexual and he urged for likeminded people's help who would help in establishing LGBTQ rights. Beat Generation was also a part of this event and after their advocacy in the

homosexual movements it paved the way for writers to write about homosexuality freely.

(Stimpson, 1982)

To conclude, the author tried to recognize the role of 'queer' movements in changing the world and literature over the 20th to 21st century. The primary texts of the paper are around hundred years apart. In different time and the representations of the 'queer' characters in the selected texts are apparently diverse. While Montgomery tries to hide the 'bisexuality' of her protagonist Statovci writes about dislocation, loneliness, racism, gender stereotyping, people that are in between places and beliefs. On the other hand, in *Nightwood* Barnes problematizes identities and in *Call Me By Your Name* Aciman though Mr. Perlman validates the protagonist's sexuality. This stark contrast between the novels highly speaks of the changed world we are now inhabiting in.

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