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Reassertion of Gay Identity in Christopher Isherwood's *A Single Man*

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Reassertion of Gay Identity in Christopher Isherwood’s *A Single Man*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Mr. Mohan Dhital has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

This paper highlights the tension of competing forces of continuing repression and explore the richness and heterogeneity of the gay identity in Christopher Isherwood's A Single Man (1964). The protagonist is lonely and embarrassed regarding his temporary homosexual relationship with his roommate. He consciously presents contradictory ideas about his own sexual gay identity exploring heterogeneity by identifying the problems and feeling of isolated homosexuals. In response to his claim of reassertion regarding his identity, the present paper attempts the text from the perspective of Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner's Social Identity Theory and Judith Butler's Queer Theory based on Performativity. Social Identity Theory advocates a person's sense of who he or she is based on his or her group recognition and identity. Butler's Performativity states gender is socially constructed through common places, speech acts and non-verbal communication that are performative, in that they serve to define and maintain identities. The research discovers how protagonist is forced to come to terms with his identity, a process more complicated than simply coming out of the world. Through the reading of novel from above mentioned perspectives, the researcher concludes that homosexuals still lack conventional resolution to reveal their actual identity in society.

Keywords: *homosexual, contradictory, consciousness, performativity, identity*

The research paper explores gay identity and the struggle for social acceptability of homosexuals' oppression in Christopher Isherwood's *A Single Man*. In order to argue George's reassertion, the researcher discovers how homosexual people like George are aware of being oppressed if they are revealed about them in the society. He considers being homosexual is an act of making abnormal identity.

His own gayness behavior is considered in other assailed minority situations. He is facing darkness in his daily life for social adjustment and reputed professional life to survive in the society. However, he didn't dare to reveal his actual identity at the end of his life for comforting people like him in the future.

A Single Man is a novel of the homosexual subculture. It is told by the third-person narrator. The narrator sometimes sees George quite indisputably. Some other times seems to be identifying with him. The novel starts introducing main character George the protagonist of the novel. He had long living attachment to a man Jim, his room partner who will now never return in his life. George lived spending rest of his life in mourning the death of Jim. It is a story of a day which starts with the early morning in 1965 and closes with the sleep of the protagonist at night of the same day.

When the protagonist George wake up in the morning he continuously started thinking about Jim. He became aware and came to form a character George, which he then noticed that he is alone in the house, he did not have his best friend Jim who was also his male partner. He now realized that he has lost Jim forever. He left his bed and rushed towards the bathroom where he remembered the tortured given by the children of his neighbors and was immediately disturbed by a phone call from his one of a female friend Charlotte. Then he got ready for class dressing himself after shaving and taking shower. Now his daydreaming drove him on a free road and took him to the college. When he reached there he saw many students and his colleagues in their room. Some of the students were in the playground. He went to his classroom and started discussing on novels. He liberally discussed about novel with the students there. The topic of the day was '*Aldous Huxley's After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*'. Although he was in the class but his mind was in the time which he spent with

Jim. He was broken inside. He thought quite different in himself. He left the campus and rushed towards a hospital to meet Doris. She was a female who had sexual relationship by seducing Jim and now she was dying of disease.

Now, he returned from hospital and on his way home, he stopped at the gym to enjoy “physical democracy” (50). He was happy with other people in the gym because such place is regarded as “man” place where no one can doubt about his other identity. They talked and behaved properly with each other. George compared his body with others and found himself as old ass (49). He is a man but the way he compared with others depicts his different identity. After exercise he thought of buying food for dinner from supermarket but suddenly he remembered of a morning phone call and changed his mind. His friend Charlotte had invited him for dinner who came from England and she was now living alone in the house. Both of them drank excessively. George was not even able to walk properly. He somehow walked down to a nearby bar where he met Jim in 1946. After being drunk again, he now remembered his partner Jim. He unexpectedly found one of his male student of his class, Kenny in the bar and surprisingly both of them had drink. In the conversation Kenny challenged George to swim in the ocean together and they did. In the “baptism of the surf” (80), George nearly drown because he was totally intoxicated due to alcohol but Kenny helped him and they came home where George was living at that time there. All this he was doing to get closer with people like him.

After serious conversation between them, George fell asleep due to excessive alcohol. When he wake up from bed he did not find Kenny instead he found a letter for him written by Kenny. He masturbated, made a plan to go Mexico for celebrating Christmas and fell into a heavy sleep. It might imply his death but the part is narrated with a thoughtful meditation by the narrator that is quite apart from George. There is

no story between George and Kenny in the novel but it ends with George's deep eternal sleep, so the narrative of their relation is hidden in the novel. But the readers can explore their relation from the letter written by Kenny on his note that he left for George. "That was great, this evening. Let's do it again, shall we? Or don't you believe in repeating things?" (88). The author being diplomatic in the novel has not revealed George's actual identity.

Queer theory of Judith Butler based on performativity is used for analyzing Georg's consciousness of being homosexual. Through enlisting gender as the basis for her points, Butler puts mainly two ideas. First, the notion of "performativity" as it relates to the expression of identity and second, a radical critique of category generating terms that manage identity (519). First, Butler drew attention to social practices and rules involved with being and becoming an individual. Through these social practices and rules, difficulties arise for subjects trying to develop a sense of agency, resistance, and subjectivity around their gender identity. These rules decenter and dismiss individual autonomy and demand that they be adhered to. Butler states, "as performance which is performative, gender is an act, broadly constructed, which constructs the social fiction of its own psychological interiority (528).

Gender is performative is simply to say that how we understand gendered, and how we position ourselves as gendered sexual beings in relation to others is achieved through the repetition and enactment of the activities. Butler and others trouble the hegemonic nature of these social rules and practices by exposing them and interrogating the ways in which they construct and bind gender. For example, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) suggested the notion of "hegemonic masculinity," which asserts that male masculinity is constructed as dominant through social, institutional, and influential rules and that femininity and subordinated masculinity are inferior

(848). It is clear through this work that when people disturb such binding practices around gender identity, they then open up political possibilities that break from the constraints of social regulation.

The notions of heteronormativity and performativity as hallmarks of queer theory may be useful in interrogating power structures and the way that things are done in the workplace. Recently, queer theory has been critiqued as being too Western in scope, and, as a result, has evolved to include aspects of transnationalism in light of globalized societies. This critique has been useful in illustrating how queer theory can be employed as an analytic strategy to destabilize and deconstruct discourse, such as exploring how intersecting notions of race, citizenship, gender, class, and sexuality are constructed differently in various settings.

Secondly, identity theory and social identity theory are also used in the research for analyzing George's life as a common man, professional professor and a gay. Stryker says that an identity is a set of meanings, which are attached to roles individuals occupy in their social structure (34). Burke and Stets give their opinion that meanings are individuals' responses when they reflect upon themselves in a role, social or person identity (74). McCall and Simmons say that identities help to organize an individual's place in an interaction, guide behavior, facilitate the development of stable social relationships, and make interaction possible (68). This all happens within the context of social structure.

Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets argue that identity change occurs when the meanings of an identity shift over time (74). Burke discusses three ways in which identities may change: changes in the situation, which prompt changes in the identity meanings; multiple identities that conflict in a situation causing both identities to change; and identity meanings and behavior meanings that conflict causing a

modification in both meanings.

Isherwood's *A Single Man* both normalizes and exposes homosexuality by depicting an individual whose daily life is difficult, problematic and painstaking self-conscious and set apart of being a professor, expatriate status and most importantly, homosexuality. By going through George's everyday experiences in the post-war American suburban ideal of Los Angeles, one can explore how homosexual's loneliness struggles personally with anxieties surrounding his conscious understanding of something hiding and aware of his own insignificance shadowed by a society that is still homophobic at large. They are not accepted normally as others. They are discriminated and have no prestige in the society as a result they cannot be socialized. George's daily life problematized the idea of being single makes one mentally or physically vulnerable in response to provocation to particular things but also he travels across its boundaries every day. In order to handle such tensions, he participates in short experiences of homo-socialization that challenge his boring daily life and which equally as spontaneous moments of protest that he shares only with himself, the reader and other men that he connects in short moments like going to gym and dinner. George begins the novel by exposing a portrait of domestic Los Angeles into which he is suppressed hiding his identity.

His own home he describes as "the lair one would choose for a mean old storybook monster, a role that George has found himself playing, with increasing violence, since he started to live alone" (7). He further illustrates this defiance by noting the ways that he, aesthetically, differs from the domestic ideal. George's lack of children, not pursuing a white-collar job, and with the death of Jim, his lack of a domestic partner serves as identifiers which alienate him from his conventionally domestic counterparts. The ways that George differs outwardly seems to reflect

inwardly as his own mental isolation and internalized homophobia. This is reflected in the way that George imagines how his neighbors, like Mr. Strunk, think of him. For example, he narrates "Mr. Strunk, George supposes, tries to nail him down with a word, 'Queer'. But, since this is after all the year 1962, even he may be expected to add, I don't give a damn what he does just as long as he stays away from me" (10). Although this is purely speculation of George's behalf, this fantasy of Mr. Strunk's preconception of George sheds light on George's own inward-perception of his sexuality.

As a reaction to these forces, and in an attempt to maintain enough acceptable contradiction ability to blend into his domestic surroundings, George conceptualizes a set of layers behind which he hides. He puts on these layers as he dresses up in the morning, saying "it must be dressed up in clothes because it is going outside, into the world of the other people; and these others must be able to identify it" (3-4). Othering his externally-facing body as an 'it' in contrast to his internal narrating psyche. The contradiction and tension between George's internal consciousness and external body only widens as George enters deeper into society as the day goes on, and the divide between the narrative perspective provided to the reader and the everyday actions depicted alongside George's internal soliloquy is an understandable symptom of being alone that George continually crosses in his daily life. Although George, from the narrative perspective, is much more comfortable with his sexuality than the protagonists of the later novels, the barriers that he constructs to shield himself from examining by his peers, and the echoes of internalized homophobia and shame, are key in understanding the peculiarities of how George and the other protagonists navigate their daily lives.

In the article, "Word is Out and Gay U.S.A.", Lee Atwell states, "As minority

members who have never been in control of their public image, gays have witnessed in narrative fiction film an almost systematic attempt to devalue, while giving token recognition to, their lives and feelings” (50). George is the eponymous "Single Man" of the novel's title and rather a victim of being born in too early of a time. Place George in the present day and he would likely be happier, fulfilled and unlikely to be feeling suicidal. George's circumstances are that if a person forced to hide the most intrinsic thing about themselves for fear of retribution. George is a gay man at a time when being a gay man meant social death at best, and trial and imprisonment at worst. George is originally from England and has now relocated to California where he is a college professor. He has just lost the love of his life, Jim, suddenly, in a car accident. His heart is broken and he feels here is no point in living. When we meet him it is on the day of his planned suicide. He plans on going through the motions of the day but because of his decision to end his life discovers a heightened sense of awareness in everything and finds that people with whom he has contact who on any other day would not affect him much at all are suddenly instrumental in pointing out a purpose in life. George is essentially a very reliable man; he has dinner plans with his friend Charley, one of the few female lovers he has had in his lifetime, and keeps them, postponing his suicide until after the meal. George is the kind of man who has such a steady moral compass that he would return a library book before killing himself to avoid it becoming overdue. George's life is a life plagued with ironies, the biggest one of which is that after deciding he must live and abandoning his plan to commit suicide, he has a serious heart attack and dies in his bed, still so devoted to Jim that his lover comes to greet him as he crosses over.

They are afraid of what they know is somewhere in the darkness around them, of what many at any moment emerge into the undeniable light of their

flash-lamps, never more to be ignored, explained away. The fiend that won't fit into their statistics, the Gorgon that refuses their plastic surgery, the vampire drinking blood with tactless uncultured slurps, the bad-smelling beast that doesn't use their deodorants, the unspeakable that insists, despite all their shushing, on speaking its name. (10)

George a man born in the wrong era, forced to hide his true self for fear of arrest and incarceration. Growing up in 1930s Britain he was forced to live a double life, pretending to be a straight man when in fact he was living an underground life of illegal illicit relationships. Relocations to California, he finds his homosexuality less illegal but equally frowned upon and rejected by the majority of society. Throughout the book, we see that it was an everyday occurrence for gay men to be discriminated against and even despised. For example, Jim's parents don't care that he made their son happy. They only care that the appearance of their son being a straight man is upheld and don't recognize George as his partner, even choosing not to invite him to Jim's funeral. George is the single man, but is really the lonely man. Outside of Jim he had no real relationships that meant anything to him. He is isolated because of his sexuality and also because of the need to mask it with a veneer of acceptability. Because he has to constantly hide who he really is George is isolated from himself as well which just exacerbates his loneliness. Charley is also a lonely character as she is passionately in love with and apparently saving herself for a man for whom she can never be "the one" because she is a woman and therefore undesirable to him.

Butler claims that "gender is socially constructed through common speech acts and nonverbal communication that are performative, in that they serve to define and maintain identities" (154). The ideas and norms about which properties such as clothing, colours, sports etc. are part of a certain gender, change over time. What in a

certain period was seen as typical for one gender, can in a different period in time be seen as atypical for the same gender. For example, a few hundred years ago the colour pink was considered a typical colour for boys, while in recent years that same colour is seen as typical for girls. Also when looking at other cultures, we see differences between gender norms. For example, two men walking in public while holding hands is normal in Iran, while in Western Europe that is not common. Several authors write about how these gender roles are formed. The differences between genders are caused by social interventions in which people are told not to behave a certain way because it does not match their gender. Gender has a cultural character. For example, the expectations we as a society have of young women or of old men, we share them among ourselves and talk about them, and by doing that we are shaping those genders. The behavioral traits we associate with women and men are culturally learned. Gender is socially constructed in some contexts means the same as saying that the reason women are feminine and men are masculine is socially determined instead of biologically determined. That gender does not stay the same over time and varies with race, class and region is for Butler the reason that it is impossible to view gender separately from the cultural intersections that maintain gender. If gender is constructed it is not necessary constructed by people. It may even be the opposite, that people are being constructed. Butler views the agent as performativity constituted by their gendered behavior.

The opening scene of *A Single Man* gives a useful clue to consider the “unconscious.”

Waking up begins with saying am and now. That which has awoken then lies for a while staring up at the ceiling and down into itself until it has recognized I, and therefrom deduced I am, I am now. Here comes next, and is at least negatively reassuring; because here, this morning, is where it has expected to

find itself: what's called at home. But now isn't simply now. Now is also a cold reminder: one whole day later than yesterday, one year later than last year. Every now is labeled with its date, rendering all past now obsolete, until - later or sooner perhaps - no, not perhaps-- quite certainly: it will come. (3)

The passage describes the process of becoming conscious of oneself. It might be called the process of identification. The consciousness of "I" does not exist as an inferable; it is deduced by perceptions. It is formed by recognizing oneself in one's relationship with other people and the environment. The "I" goes to the mirror, "washes, shaves, brushes its hair" in order that the "I" "accepts its responsibilities to the others" (4); "these others must be able to identify it" (4). Then it identifies itself as what "is called George" (4). The first part of *A Single Man* is a visual explanation of the making of what is called one's identity. We might call it a "persona." Here the significance of the words "all past nows" emerges. In the mirror, George sees "many faces within its face the face of the child, the boy, the young man, the not-so-young man" (3). The faces "all present still, preserved like fossils on superimposed layers" (3). Each stage of the "past nows" makes each "face." We have in common the label of our name, and a continuity of consciousness; there has been no break in the sequence of daily statements that I am I. But what I am has refashioned itself throughout the days and years, until now almost all that remains constant is the mere awareness of being conscious. And that awareness belongs to everybody; it isn't a particular person.

In his class, he starts lecturing pedagogically on Aldous Huxley's *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* he gradually gets excited when the topic comes to "minorities" and hating, and he cannot stop himself. He finally finds no one listening because the time has already been up. After the class, he has a chat with colleagues.

When a female professor who has recently married a colleague provokes him, he in spite of himself makes a big speech on the difference in reality between the Europeans and the Americans. During the days when George lived with Jim, they used to be on good terms with their neighbors. However, after Jim died, George turns to a mean old storybook monster” to the neighboring children. He finds himself “playing, with increasing violence” the role, which “releases a part of his nature which he hated to let Jim see. That part might have existed in inside George. It is only that he has hidden it while he lives with Jim.

The discussion on “minorities” in his class is often mentioned by critics. When George starts asking questions about Huxley’s novel, a student asks whether Huxley is anti-Semitic (30). It triggers George’s argument and he starts lecturing on “minorities.” He does not say anything about his own sexuality but the implication is evident to readers that the type of minority to which he belongs is the homosexual. In order to experience his homosexuality and identity, George looks for "the other" in minority. Kenny, a student, to feel alive and secure, he transforms into "the other." Since he and Kenny have a dialogic relationship, George does not feel self-alienated. A conversation between two people being together in this particular connection is more important than what you talk about. They should have a dialogue because it allows them to express their sentiments and emotions without worrying about how society will react. This will allow them to recast or reinvent the terms of their sexualities and create a new discursive horizon and perspective on sexuality.

Through their dialogue, they are able to transcend their socially imposed heterosexual identities and forge their own unique sexual identities. George believes he could cuddle up in this spot and fall asleep right away, shrinking to kid size in Kenny's safety. George feels protected because of their profound and dialogical

relationship, and his desire to cuddle up and fall asleep like a baby indicates that he feels threatened by the heterosexual culture. He strives to overcome his feelings of isolation and hopelessness, and he metaphorically requires care and love. However, Gonzalez states “Isherwood’s novel identifies the thought of multiculturalism in Los Angeles and the relationship between minorities and the hegemony of liberal thought in the US during the Cold War” (765). He gives example of Mrs. Strunk who is trained in the new tolerance, the technique of annihilation by blandness and accuse Isherwood being too political.

An uncle of Jim’s gave a call to George to inform him of Jim’s funeral. George was invited to attend it, but refused the funeral invitation. Then he rushed to Charlotte’s place, “crying blubbering howling on her shoulder, in her lap, all over her” (59). After that, he thought he betrayed Jim: “I betrayed our life together; I made you into a sob story for a skirt.” However, he changes his mind and thinks now as follows: Oh yes indeed, he is glad that he ran to her that night. That night, in purest ignorance, she taught him a lesson he will never forget namely, that you can’t betray (that idiotic expression!) a Jim, or a life with a Jim, even if you try to (59). George now knows he is a homosexual and his life with another man is a life for him.

However, it also implies that he might have somehow denied his homosexuality and his life with another man before he lost Jim. Leaving Charlotte’s house, George says to himself, “You are drunk. . . . Well, now, listen: we are going to walk down those steps very slowly . . .” (70). This “we” might imply a kind of integration of various aspects or “faces” of George.

Butler states that gender is performative. Gender “is real only to the extent that it is performed” (Butler 1988). In the new preface of *Gender Trouble*, she explains her reasoning. The view that gender performativity gives an explanation of how gender

identity is formed through a set of acts. What does it mean for gender to be performative? Butler says that it means that nobody is a gender prior to doing gendered acts. Butler states that “identity is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality”. Which we might interpret as a reference to gender performativity. Butler writes that “gender proves to be performative- that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed”. That sentence sounds like an acknowledgement of gender as an identity, but with the important side note that there cannot be a gender identity before doing gendered acts.

As he gets out of his car, he feels an upsurge of energy, of eagerness for the play to begin. And he walks eagerly, with a springy step, along the gravel path past the Music Building towards the Department office. He is all actor now- an actor on his way up from the dressing room, hastening through the backstage world of props and lamps and stagehands to make his entrance. (18)

This is also reflected by Butler’s comment that “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performative constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (528). That may give the impression that the gender identity becomes a shell, since it does not exist before, but only during gendered acts. In Chapter two of *Undoing Gender*, Butler mentions that there are various ways in which gender is regulated. She raises the question whether a gender could exist prior to regulation or if a gendered subject arises from regulation. It seems fair to say that certain kinds of acts are usually interpreted as expressive of a gender core or identity, and that these acts either conform to an expected gender identity or contest that expectation in way. Butler states, “the certain acts of people are seen as an expression of a gender identity” (33) in *Gender Trouble*.

Further discussing, it is assumed that the term women for example, refers to a common identity, which Butler calls problematic. This is problematic because the group that consists of all women contains so many different people that it makes it impossible to find a common denominator. Butler calls “‘being a man’ and ‘being a woman’ internally unstable affairs”. She also writes that gender “ought not to be construed as a stable identity ... gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts (154).” Both of these sentences state clearly that to Butler gender identity is unstable. It is probably with that in mind that we should interpret Butler’s claim that it is impossible to be a sex or a gender. Since gender is performative, it only exists while it is being performed. Two possible misinterpretations of Butler’s view on gender are contemplated here. Butler’s view on gender should not be generalized to the claim that gender is equal to behavior. In that case, when a person goes into a men’s bathroom that would make that person a man and when the same person is wearing a skirt at that moment that person would be a woman. This would make gender completely fluid, which is a claim she does not make. Butler suggests that such a person would treat gender as a choice and “fails to realize that its existence is already decided by gender” (156). Butler is questioning if properties that precede gender exist, by doing that she is not suggesting that there is a loop between gender and gender identity. It is not the case that there are people of a certain gender, who behave in a certain way, which influences the norms of what is appropriate for that gender. Butler suggests that people can’t be of a certain gender beforehand. “I neither precede nor follows the process of this gendering, but emerges only within and as the matrix of gender relations themselves” (157).

Stanley states, “*A Single Man* albeit with great sensitivity details a day in the

increasingly pathetic life of a lonely homosexual” (351). George, in the novel, seems to be so highly aware of this sacrifice that he distinguishes his home, which he once has shared with his lover Jim, as a well-guarded shelter from the eyes of his neighbors. Description of his house by Isherwood as being “tightly planned little house. He often feels protected by its smallness; there is hardly room enough here to feel lonely.” (4) leads to contrasting ideas of George’s case. On the one hand, he feels secured ‘in the closet’ considering heteronormative hegemony. On the other hand, he is a lonely gay man as title of the novel suggests though George thinks that there is no room in the house to be lonely. Despite the implications of the opening pages of the fact that George is contented to be ‘in the closet’, ‘out of the closet’ still is an urge for George to achieve his identity on the grounds in the way the one cannot exist without the other.

Nevertheless, a question arises when George keeps his position ‘in the closet’ due to the fact that his security in his home as well makes him as an alien and monster to his own society. This question is asked by Isherwood as such: “... through glass, this figure George, who sits solitary at the small table in the narrow room, eating his poached eggs humbly and dully, a prisoner for life?” (6) George’s being prisoner seems to be one-sided. From outside point of view, no one can detect any sign of misery in George’s life; however, he seems to have a loss of identity after his lover’s death. The reason why he is viewed like without having any misery is that he has drawn a boundary between his life ‘in the closet’ and outsiders such as his neighbors. To give an example, it can be presented that “They can see his head and shoulders from across the street, but not what he is doing.” (6) while he is literally emptying his bowels. This concept of boundary gives a chance to George both to be free in whatever he does and be in a prison considering George and Jim’s first attempt to buy

this house for the sake of "...the surrounding trees and the steep bushy cliff behind shut it in like a house in a forest clearing. 'As good as being on our own island,' George said" (7). Island, as a symbol, may stand for introverted individual surrounded by the outside world. It is described as the synthesis of the consciousness and the will. Someone dreaming alone will make you like to rely on yourself and have the ability to fight and overcome unexpected challenges. George in a sense here is fighting closing himself in the house. It is possible that your dream symbolizes your desire to have more freedom and be independent of outside influences or opinions, especially if there is someone making you feel suffocated and restricted but George is lack of this desire because he is afraid of the society. This symbolism is George's position in his house.

On the one hand, it is his own decision to shut himself up in the house to protect himself from the society and on the other hand, being 'in the closet' carries loneliness and inevitable death in the end. As for the neighbors, George is pitied and seen as monster owing to his having been lived with another man, which is a sign for neighbors to George's being a homosexual. The reason why a homosexual is seen as a monster is that society believes that homosexuals spoil order of the society since they are different from so called normal people. Lee Atwell states, "historically the cinematic image of the homosexual, which has only come into focus within the last decade, has consistently suffered from stereotypical distortion, derision, and condescension" (50). As minority members who have never been in control of their public image, gays have witnessed in narrative fiction film an almost systematic attempt to devalue, while giving token recognition to, their lives and feelings. It was still unchanged till the time of *Ishwood*. "If television responds on occasion with a sympathetic episode, movies are largely content with liberal notions of obvious

"fairies" for humorous relief, or worse, unhappy psychopathic villains, reinforcing ignorance and prejudice among what Christopher Isherwood terms "the heterosexual dictatorship" (Atwell 50)

A local newspaper editor started a campaign against sex deviates (by which he means people like George). They are everywhere, he says; you can't go into a bar any more, or a men's room, or a public library, without seeing hideous sights. And they all, without exception, have syphilis. The existing laws against them, he says, are far too lenient. (15)

Homosexuals were constructed as a corruptive and infectious force, which threatened to contaminate the good of society through recruiting, perverting, and distorting the natural order. They are the cause of sexually transmitted disease AIDS. This kind of threat by homosexuals is alike threats by the monsters to well-built societies in the written books. For that sake, George thinks that he is described as "a mean old story-book monster" (7) by his neighbors. Mr. Strunk and Mr. Garfein believe that they live in a well-built kingdom, namely society, and they "are proud of their kingdom" (10).

According to Wennersten, "Isherwood was a stoic which means in the end bases his entire defense on sheer personal, agnostic courage, without the support of religious belief" (11). The unspeakable of George's being a homosexual is followed by "speaking its name". George's "being out" is achieved by his social ties such as being a professor in a university. Admitting his being a monster and "queer" in the eyes of others, "...that he can cope proves his claim to be a functioning member of society. He can still get by" (13). Even so, he never forgets and forgives heteronormative hegemony which he blames for Jim's death. "All are, in the last analysis, responsible for Jim's death; their words, their thoughts, their whole way of

life willed it, even though they never knew he existed” (16). His sadistic dreams of revenge on those just keeps its boundaries in his house, namely ‘in the closet’. In contrast to heteronormative hegemony, he creates his own one in his wishes in order to take revenge of Jim’s death. Yet, as a functioning member of the society, he should get some social roles and take aside his sadistic wishes and dreams only in his closet. “In ten minutes, George will have to be George; the George they have named and will recognize...With the skill of a veteran, he rapidly puts on the psychological makeup for this role he must play” (17).

Psychologist Henri Tajfel and John Turner who propounded the concept of social identity theory state as a person’s sense of who he or she is based on his or her group membership whereas identity theory historically has focused on role identities. It should be paid attention that existential case is minimized with some cards that the names of the individuals are written. To give an example, identity cards or parking cards are the symbols of the fact that individual is alive and an existential being. “George slips his parking-card into the slot thereby offering a piece of circumstantial evidence that he is George” (18) or “this card is his identity” (19) are such illustrations that existence is achieved through that kind of cards. Those cards are the tickets for the social members to take a place on life stage as a performer. Being on the stage is the last perform of George’s to gain an identity in society. Even if he knows how to perform all his roles in that stage, he cannot prevent his homosexual side by looking at young males with seducing eyes when he realizes two young men playing tennis.

As it is seen in the novel, there is a sharp line between old and young like homosexual and heterosexual. In queer theory, being an older gay male is a miserable situation because of both the future and relationship. As it has been expressed before,

future of a homosexual keeps its misery and inevitable death in itself. Moreover, there is no room for a new love and sexual relationship after a certain age. As an older gay male, it becomes a must for individual to find a partner in the same age despite of its infrequency. As a result, older gay male turns face to younger ones, which cannot be accepted surely and develops an obsession to youthful. This obsession is reflected even in his lectures he gives at university such as the myth of Eos and Tithonus. "But Eos was so stupid, she forgot to ask him to give Tithonus eternal youth, as well" (27). says George when he lectures on Aldous Huxley's novel titled as *After Many A Summer Dies*. George's seducing of younger males goes on even in a social institution like hospital.

On the way visiting Doris, a woman with whom George thinks that Jim once slept, he comes across with a young male nurse "who has very sexy muscular arms" (43). Visiting Doris in the hospital reminds George of the heteronormative hegemony which he blames for Jim's death and dreams of sadistic revenges on it. Lying on the bed without any performing action, Doris still is the trace of natural order that hegemony insists on: "I am Doris. I am Woman. I am Bitch-Mother Nature. The Church and the Law and the State exist to support me. I claim biological rights. I demand Jim" (44). George both hates Doris for he believes that she has once tried to take Jim from him and pities her for being in such a tragic situation in the hospital. In a way, Doris' situation may be a reflection of George's now that Jim is gone forever and both of them have lost him. The absurdity of life is visible when every choice comes across with the same end.

Ian S. Todd in the article "Christopher Isherwood's Bathroom", states "Isherwood uses associations of queerness with bathrooms and excremental in order to address his position as a gay British modernist writer living in postwar America"

(111). He uses *A Single Man* to elegize the queer attraction to dirt shown to have no place in the post war American culture that he characterizes as homophobic, heteronormative and contemptuous of all things thought to be out model or wasteful. On his way to work, he notes that "a local newspaper editor has started a campaign against sex deviates by which he means people like George, saying they are everywhere" (15). George remains powerless to fight back against this homophobia because he, like other homosexuals in the city, are not organized to make a stand against this systematic oppression. George is conscious of this fact, relating it when an argument about anti-Semitism in the 1930s arises in his classroom. He suggests that the class "leave the Jews out of this" and instead "think about prejudice in terms of some other minority, anyone you like, but a small one that is not organized, and does not have any committees to defend it"(30). Importantly, at this moment, "George looks at Wally Bryant" (30), who is a student of his that he assumes is also gay, "with a deep shining look that says, I am with you, little minority-sister" (30). At times like this, George demonstrates the fleeting moments of solidarity and unspoken identification with other homosexuals, resonating with Jim.

The democratizing and levelling force of the city helps conceal George's own culpability as a homosexual, but has a dual consequence of reminding George of his own insignificance in the way that he conforms to a society that still paints homosexuality in a negative light. However, George still feels abandoned as he recognizes that he and other homosexuals cannot defend themselves in a significant way when paled by the sheer size of the city that surrounds them, and it is not until the 1970s that homosexual communities are organized enough to make a stand against this oppression in large cities such as Los Angeles.

Stevens claims *A Single Man* is not just a story of someone, who happens to

gain knowledge in a day, a man who happens to decide not to kill himself before he dies” (120). In fact, the novel gives the message to the people like George who are struggling for living with their real identity like normal people in the society without hesitation. It is important to remember that, given that homosexuality is still outlawed in 1962, George is still a petty criminal. The city thus serves a backdrop into which George can blend and alleviate the anxieties of being detected, a fact which prides him: “Like everyone with an acute criminal complex, George is hyperconscious of all bylaws, city ordinances, rules and petty regulations. Never once has he seen his passport stamped or his driver’s license accepted without whispering gleefully to himself, Idiots—fooled them again” (13). Therefore, such people have to face alienation from society and homes because being powerless and ignorant, one cannot see a legitimate way out from the trap. By arriving at self-knowledge and acknowledging the claims made upon him by others, he has learned how to live and die well.

“Never use those words to George. He won’t listen. He daren’t listen. Damn the future. Let Kenny and the kids have it. Let Charley keep the past. George clings only to Now. It is Now that he must find another Jim. Now that he must love. Now that he must live....” (91). George has learned that when conditions are beyond his control, he is nonetheless accountable for his choices and the results of his choices. Only man has the power to use his actions to modify his fate. George prefers silence because it enables him to live a normal life in the community. George is reserved because he has experienced discrimination. George is a man who was born in the incorrect era and is compelled to hide his true identity out of fear of being detained and imprisoned. He was compelled to lead a double life while growing up in 1930s Britain, appearing to be a straight guy but actually leading a clandestine one. Moving

to California, he discovers that homosexuality is less the majority of society. We learn throughout the book that discrimination against and even hatred of gay men was commonplace. He is excluded due to his sexuality and the requirement to conceal it under a façade of acceptance.

Additionally, the novel demonstrates that love is love and that no one has the right to stand in the way of an adult with a sound mental condition finding happiness, starting a family, or simply enjoying their life as they see fit. George is a truly lonely person. The truth is that if one grows used to being alone, it doesn't seem as terrifying. Some of us are accustomed to living alone, can adapt to it, and may transform loneliness into isolation. However, a person must choose their life styles. George has never desired solitude. He and Jim used to construct their own loving and accepting universe. The only world that counted was the one inside their home, even though the world outside might be hazardous and people might think they were weird. How tough it must be to lose someone who was more significant than everyone else?

Those who advocate disregarding various sorts of discrimination generally do not comprehend the obvious truth that doing so will not benefit them in any way. George switches on the radio and hears a senator rant about the high number of gays in society. George was born in a time when being gay meant, at best, social death and, at worst, being tried and imprisoned. In general, George is a highly dependable person. He makes plans for dinner with his friend Charley, one of the few women he has ever loved, and keeps them, delaying his suicide until after the meal. In general, George is a highly dependable person. He makes plans for dinner with his friend Charley, one of the few women he has ever loved, and keeps them, delaying his suicide until after the meal. George is the kind of person who, in order to prevent a library book from going overdue, would return it before committing suicide. The

ultimate irony in George's life, which is rife with them, is that he has a fatal heart attack and passes away in his bed after realizing he must live and abandoning his suicide plot while still being so committed to Jim that his lover appears to him as he passes over.

In his book *A Single Man*, Christopher Isherwood describes how a homosexual man defines himself in relation to his stance toward the outside world and his peers. He also describes his ontological insecurity as a result of his homosexual partner's passing and the attitudes of the heterosexual society toward homosexuals. The book explores the disintegration, alienation, and lack of personal consistency and authenticity experienced by gays who are compelled to live in remote locations. These locations are represented in the book as a type of island, which symbolizes alienation and isolation. George is conscious of the heterosexual society's oppressive influence. He acts as though he adheres to the heter. He acts as though he adheres to the heterosexual worldview, but in reality, he does not conform to the values and expectations of the culture he was raised in.

Since existentialism, in our sense of the word, is a doctrine that does render human life possible; a doctrine also, which affirms that every truth and every action imply both a human environment and a human subjectivity, the real self-wishes to exist unencumbered by the arbitrary and artificial rules and norms of heterosexual culture. Heterosexual worldview, yet he does not actually conform to the values and expectations of the society. Because the existence of humans is tied to the possibilities that they make or select and because man is indeed a project which possess a subjective life rather than abstract rules and standards. The ability of people to be independent entities capable of existing and realizing their essence in the world is known as subjective life. According to George, heterosexual society and ideology

kills subjectivity and agency. Furthermore, because people are surrounded by social norms and values that are founded on heteronormative characteristics, the majority heterosexual culture renders it impossible for people to experience existential life. Because he does not view himself as an alive, whole, and authentic sovereign being, George feels alien to the majority. He is unable to experience himself "along with" others or "at home in" the world; instead, he is left feeling desolate and alone. In addition, he is unable to experience himself as a whole person.

In conclusion, being a homosexual person in a heterosexual culture is a difficult process that leads to identity uncertainty and existential problems. It demonstrates prejudice against gays and prevents them from expressing their essence and individuality on their own. Homosexuals are unable to overthrow heterosexual order due to their dominance caused by heteronormative traits that are considered as obligatory in terms of gender. Isherwood portrays homosexuals as being oppressed and alienated by highlighting the interaction between the majority and the minority. Since homosexuals are compelled to be pretenders in order to avoid being shunned, the heterosexual majority imperils the existence of the homosexual minority by condemning and eliminating autonomous individuality and subjectivity. In addition to this, gender issues alienate homosexuals from their own essence and limit their individual process. George understands that having a dual identity makes it challenging to integrate into society. According to the performativity theory, although he appears to be a man, he actually has a separate identity that he hides from society. As a single man, he has encountered numerous forms of social repression. Although at the end of the novel George reveals his real identity by making a wish to be with Jim, his beloved after his death as a result, George's identity depicts his fight to maintain his existence as a gay in society.

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