

Critique of Heterosexual Normativity in Truman Capote's *Other Voices, Other Rooms*

Heterosexual norms are flatly turned upside down in Truman Capote's popular work, Other Voices, Other Rooms. The then society embraced heterosexuality as the standard of judging anybody's sexual affinity. The society wherein Randolph and Joel have been living applies this criterion to assess the sort of sexual affinity and attraction they happened to cultivate. Within this framework of sexuality, the sexual bonding between Randolph and Joel is held as deviant. Treating their sexuality as deviant and anomalous act, the then society was to treat them as ostracized figures harmful to the integrity and harmony of society. At first, Randolph and Joel were optimistic that the then societies they have been living will consider the humane aspect of their sexuality. But as time passed by, they came to know that they were too naïve to believe in the so-called liberality of their society. Consequently, they felt embarrassed, disappointed and somewhat rebellious. To counter the restrictive nature of heterosexuality, they acted defiantly though they were excluded as ostracized beings. Homosexuality between Randolph and Joel is not merely a romantic and sexual but also political that questions the entire narrative of sexual orientation. In the text the analytical and historical limits of the critique of heterosexuality without abandoning a notion of the institutionalization of normative heterosexuality visible in pattern of sexual relation between Randolph and Joel is of paramount importance.

Key Words: Homosexuality, Heterosexuality, Identity, Subversion, Subculture, Silence, Agony

This study concentrates on the issue of heterosexual normativity which is called into question by Truman Capote in his novel, *Other Voices, Other Room*. The immature love of Randolph for Joel Harrison covers the majority of the narrative. Randolph is seriously committed to fulfilling his homosexual passion with Joel. Joel

is already disturbed by the untimely death of his mother. The passionate attraction between Randolph and Joel is not an individual case. It represents the emerging gay subculture. Like Randolph and Joel there were many youths who were homosexuals. The gradual decline of family structure and weak heterosexual norms contributed to the rise of gay subculture.

Homosexuals tend to feel alienated in a repressive society that treats homosexuals as deviants. They often feel lonely. In their opinions, heterosexuality is a serious blunder and bondage they want to be free from. The institutions, structures of understanding and practical orientations make heterosexuality incoherent. Everyone who knows Joel and Randolph are aware of the fact that they are close friends. They are aware of the fact that their friendship is selfless and reciprocal. But this apparent friendship happens to cross limit. It takes "the form of deep intimacy between two persons involved in the same passion for adventure, festivity and merrymaking. Joel and Randolph are friends" (Forde 34). But the reality is quite different. To the utter ignorance of Joel, Randolph is homosexually obsessed with him.

Hetero-normativity establishes a heterosexual/ homosexual hierarchy. Furthermore, it also creates hierarchies among heterosexuality resulting in hegemonic and subordinate forms of heterosexuality. If Randolph is not driven by the same sex attraction to Joel, he might not have been troubled by the memories of Joel's anonymity. Joel dies waiting for escape route in the midst of shock and memory loss. Randolph is obsessively attached to Joel. It is entirely problematical to what extent Randolph's attraction to Joel is friendship and to what extent it was homosexually tainted. In the midst of dramatic monologue, Randolph himself says, 'I have decade-long un-recruited love for Jackson'. This statement alone is enough to assert the claim that he was homosexually obsessed with Joel. The novel unfolds in short scenes that

showcase Randolph's relationship with Joel. Joel's psychic abnormality and Randolph's obsessive homosexual desire are enough proofs to strengthen the proposed claim.

The friendship between Joel and Randolph counters the norms of heterosexuality. Randolph goes on expressing same sex attraction to Joel. Joel does not widen the circle of friendship. Despite many ups and downs in his quest, Randolph is bent on developing homosexual urge. Under the banner of his friendship with Joel, he pursues his homosexual longing. In this connection, it would not be difficult to ask- why heterosexual society of Randolph's time was intolerant of homosexuality. Emerging gay subculture is capable of giving weakening heterosexuality. Homosexuality is an effective means of coping with alienation. Furthermore, it works as a tool to tackle ostracism by society against homosexuals. The heterosexual norms of the mid-twentieth century America made no room for homosexuality. Randolph longs for homosexual bonding. This gay inclination of Randolph is ridiculed. It is mocked and discouraged. He is ostracized from every section of society. The society he lived in targeted him mercilessly and pitilessly.

Capote's novel *Other Voices, Other Rooms* dramatizes much emotion appealing sensitive faculty of readers' mind. The leading ladies and their pathetic conditions are raised in this novella lucidly. Peter Greyer makes the following remarks:

The psychological struggle between the need for stability and the desire for freedom is perhaps the central concern of *Other Voices, Other Rooms*. The conflict structures the relationship between Joel and Randolph, who are opposing forces. While Joel is happy to have his first home, Randolph is consumed by her need to constantly escape from places, people and things.

(12)

It includes Joel strategy of avoiding stability. He does so by making a holiday out of life. With it he aims at abandoning relationships and responsibilities. According to his perception, those who are strongly opposed to incipient gay culture threaten to spoil his freedom.

Capote's protagonist shares some humor with urban men. He casts the two main characters on opposite sides of the stability/freedom divide. Capote suggests that each has something to learn from the other. Concentrating on the typical feature of the protagonist, Richard Preston makes the following observation:

The mutual influence of the two friends is demonstrated by their Christmas gift exchange, in which Randolph gives Joel a bird cage and he gives him a medal of St. Christopher. Each gift illustrates a median between stability and freedom: Randolph's gift is a cage, but it will never imprison a bird, and Joel's gift is a medal of the patron saint of travel, but it comes from Tiffany's, Joel's personal symbol of home. (45)

Randolph feels a constant outsider. Joel is convinced that he has wild passion weird things. He is unsuited to a proper place in society. Thus, Joel and Randolph are similar. Home has become a charged object of fantasy and longing.

Capote's style in *Other Voices, Other Room* is flawless and faultless. With this style, he strikes a note of intimacy with readers. Dwelling on this side of the narrative, Emily Cappel makes the following remarks:

Truman Capote's style is like the smooth flow of a river. Or like a sophisticated car gliding down the road, when one does not feel the friction of the road and the car seems to be floating-gliding on the surface. He strikes a note of great intimacy with the reader as if with a close personal friend, and a

sense of total honesty is sought. This style – witty, observant, nostalgic, and exact – was Isherwood's great contribution to modern literature. (24)

Capote's style highlights passages in nearly every page of the book. Capote explores the depths of the human soul. She wonders at its ability to gain control over loneliness, alienation and loss.

Octavio R. Gonzalez is of the opinion that *Other Voices, Other Rooms* highlights the importance of the exchange of gifts on Christmas. In this regard, Gonzalez makes the following revelation:

The motif of Christmas appears to be most linked to Joel, as his two pseudonyms are references to the idea of the abnormal and the traditional plant of Christmas, respectively. Within the Christian tradition, Christmas is a symbol of rebirth, as the birth of the Messiah enabled His followers to be "born again" through His teachings and the ritual of baptism. (13)

Christmas marks the beginning of the Western New Year. On this occasion, many people celebrate the possibility of new beginnings. Randolph's narrative presents her as re-born into different attitudes at several key points.

Although various critics examined *Other Voices, Other Room* from different perspectives and arrived at different conclusions and findings, none of them dwell upon the interrogation of heterosexual normativity. It is very difficult to locate the boundary between where Randolph's friendship with Joel ends and where his homosexuality begins. There is a thin boundary between Randolph's friendship and homosexuality with Joel. In light of friendship, Randolph's homosexual urge and inclination grows to the utter ignorance of Joel. Yet Randolph goes on nurturing his one-sided same sex attraction to Joel. Apparently it is friendly glitter but inwardly it is a homosexual eroticism that he inculcates with regard to Joel.

Michel Foucault's original idea regarding same sex attraction is very relevant in this study. From the perspective of Foucault on same sex attraction, it is useful to examine the idea the protagonist's homosexual quest. In addition to the theoretical insight of Foucault, the present researcher makes use of the insights and ideas of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick from her popular book *The Epistemology of the Closet*. Since gender and sexuality are culturally and historically specific, it would be anachronistic to use modern terms when discussing figures of the past.

In Sedgwick's words, "in a society intolerant of homosexuality, it can be treated as aberration or peripheral sexuality. But in a liberal society, it has been accepted as normal or natural part of sexual yearning" (26). To alienate from anyone on any theoretical ground is a terribly violent seizure. Sedgwick herself considers the questions of gender and sexuality to be inextricable.

Foucault's notion of normalcy as a construct is, doubtless, relevant in this study. The idea of normalcy as "a discursive construct of time and culture work" (87) is the theoretical fulcrum of this thesis. Similarly Foucault's idea of same sex attraction which was quite flourishing in ancient pagan society is crucial in this study. Foucault, in contrast, insisted that "the category of the homosexual grew out of a particular context in the 1870s and that, like sexuality generally; it must be viewed as a constructed category of knowledge rather than as a discovered identity" (*The History of Sexuality* 76).

Judith Butler argues for this instability and fragility of the category "homosexual" in her essay "Imitation and Gender Insubordination". Butler notes the impossibility of locating the common element among all homosexuals that determines them to be homosexual. On this subject, she asserts "It is impossible to determine whether it is a particular type of practice, desire, or identity that universally

distinguishes the gay from the not-gay" (16). Sexuality defies "categorical representation insofar as every attempt to categorize or represent (homo) sexuality in a universal manner will inevitably face contradiction because sexuality always surpasses and exceeds any presentation or definition of it" (Butler 16).

Joel Knox is a young boy. He finds out about the different forms that love can take. Joel has been raised by his aunt Ellen in New Orleans after the death of Joel's mother. Joel's life changes when he receives a mysterious letter inviting him to come to live with his long-forgotten father at a place called Skully's Landing. Joel finds the deteriorating mansion at the Landing. Joel remains and finds his place among the eccentric characters. Randolph had enlisted Amy's nursing help after Randolph accidentally shoots Edward. It paralyzes him for life. Amy marries Edward and the new couple along with Randolph.

Most puzzling to Joel is the reluctance of Amy and Randolph to introduce Joel to his father. This obscurity conjures up fantastic dreams in Joel. He has a very active imagination and dream life complete with characters with their own special skills and abilities. The looseness of heterosexual codes and norms is mentioned in the following extract:

Joel saw whom he meant all right. It was a girl with fiery Dutch boy hair. She was about his height, and wore a pair of brown shorts and a yellow polo shirt. She was prancing back and forth in front of the tall, curious old house, thumbing her nose at the barber and twisting her face into evil shapes.

"Listen," said the barber, "you go collar that nasty youngun for me and this nickel's yours for keeps. Oh-oh! Watch out, here she comes again. . ." (11)

Joel does meet his father. He is devastated to learn that his father is an invalid. He is incapable of communicating or bonding with Joel. Joel is forced to look for love

among the other people in his narrow world. Joel finds a surrogate mother figure in the black cook at the Landing named Missouri. Joel learns that Amy had only wanted Joel to live at the Landing. Joel could provide some relief for her in the unending care of Edward. Joel's refusal to care for Edward in the way Amy would like almost completely breaks any hope of a relationship between Amy and Joel.

Sex has been defined as the biological differentiation of male and female bodies. Gender categorization can be best described as a large machine. Gender has been noted as "the manifestations of socially inscribed meaning on those sexed bodies" (Butler 34). However, that presumes a pre-discursive body with "particular physical configurations, constituted as sex, upon which a socially defined gender imposes meaning. In this way, gender becomes situated as an active negotiator of culture, while sex remains a passive, indeterminate entity of nature" (23). This suggests and constitutes gender as metaphorically "a male agent acting and controlling a female landscape" (Butler 23).

Joel finds friends in the Thompkins twins, Idabel and Florabel. He finds himself more interested in the tomboy. Idabel rejects even the small romantic gestures offered by Joel. Both Idabel and Joel struggle with their emerging sexual identities. They are aware of preferences. They ultimately discover they are attracted to others of the same sex. Randolph has managed to create a world in which Joel is completely dependent upon him. He uses this bond to manipulate Joel to enter into a growing romantic relationship. Joel feels a new sense of maturity. He feels empowered by his experiences. Suddenly, he feels suffocated by the compulsion to live within heterosexuality; his discomfort to live within the boundary of heterosexuality is cited below from the text:

Joel shook his head and went on his way. The redheaded girl and her loud

gang were gone from sight, and the white afternoon was ripening towards the quiet time of day when the summer sky spills soft color over the drawn land. He smiled with chilly insolence at the interested stares of passersby, and when he reached the establishment known as R. V. Lacey's Princely Place, he stopped to read a list that was chalked on a tiny, battered blackboard which stood outside the entrance. (12)

Joel joins Zoo and Jesus Fever. He watches apprehensively as Zoo stomps the ground and plays the accordion all the while. He takes delight in shouting out praise and prayers to the Lord. Jesus Fever joins in on the singing and dancing. Joel gets puzzled in awe of the spectacle created by the man and his granddaughter. Before long, a thunderstorm approaches and Jesus Fever feels a deep chill. Yet Zoo will not end her prayer service.

Joel and Idabel decide to run away. They go to the fair. They meet a small woman named Miss Wisteria at the freak show. Idabel falls in love with her. Miss Wisteria has her eye on Joel though. A rainstorm is the only thing that saves him from sexual predator. After the storm Joel is sick for several weeks. When he comes out of his fever, he finds out that Idabel has run away or been sent away.

To probe the issue at hand, it sounds reasonable to bring into application some of the ideas of Butler. When Butler argues for discursively produced construct of "sex as well as gender, she is not arguing that "bodies are not imbued with distinguishing characteristics, genitalia, or even specific chromosomal matter. She is not even saying that sexed bodies are not real and actual" (87). Rather, like Foucault, she emphasizes "the social meanings ascribed to real objects, as dependent on discursive systems of power/knowledge-- not that they do not exist" (87). Joel is excited by a remark regarding anti-Semitism. He delivers an unprepared lecture on

minority politics to his literature class. There, he critiques the neoliberal misconception of the toothless minority.

Joel meets Randolph for the first time. Joel's attempts to identify the strange woman are met by confusing answers by both Randolph and Miss Amy. Randolph tries to tell Joel that he is undergoing hallucinatory experience. Randolph diverts the conversation by telling Joel about the Zoo's ill-fated marriage to Keg. Randolph and Aunt Amy's random conversation forces Joel to enter his own imaginary place in his head. He escapes to avoid uncomfortable circumstances. Joel is brought out of his daydreaming when Aunt Amy requests permission to play a musical instrument. While the music plays, Randolph moves closer to Joel on the sofa. He holds Joel's hand in his. Joel is even more uncomfortable when Randolph.

When mailing the letter, Joel runs into Zoo and a black man named Little Sunshine. Little Sunshine is known for being an eccentric hermit. He has come to deliver a strange necklace to Zoo. It is supposed to have magical powers. Joel proceeds to the Thompkins house and soon hears Little Sunshine calling his name. The two strike up a conversation with Little Sunshine. Zoo gives Joel a haircut using garden shears. He uses a bowl on his head for a guideline. Zoo reveals that it had been she who had shot the guns to scare away hawks.

They have been stealing chickens from the Landing's coops. Joel hates his haircut but hugs Zoo. He is busy imploring her to love him no matter what. Zoo leaves the house to tend to Jesus Fever. Joel is left alone again with his thoughts and the strange noises in the big house. The pang of being stuck to heterosexuality on the part of Joel is dramatized in the following extract:

Falling . . . falling . . . falling! A knifelike shaft, an underground corridor, and he were spinning like a fan blade through metal spirals; at the bottom a

yawning-jawed crocodile followed his downward whirl with hooded eyes: as always, rescue came with wakefulness. The crocodile exploded in sunshine. Joel blinked and tasted his bitter tongue and did not move; the bed, an immense four-poster with different rosewood fruits carved crudely on its high headboard, was suffocating soft and his body had sunk deep in its feathery center. (20)

Joel's hallucination is interrupted by the feel of a red ball hitting him. Randolph emerges from his room. He opens the door of another room. He makes some odd hand gestures. He turns to ask Joel to bring a glass of water. Randolph reaches out to his lost love. He does so in the hope of finding some form of connection. Summoning Joel to the Skulls was largely about finding companionship. Joel was a convenient target. While considerably older than him, Randolph does not embody a potential father figure for Joel. Randolph seems to appeal to Joel as a supportive figure.

In relation to the changing impulses of Randolph, it is reasonable to cite the view of Alfred Kinsey. Regarding the changing nature of sexuality, he argues:

The elusive nature of sexuality and sexual behaviors is of immense importance. Some men might engage in anonymous sex with another man. They may self-identify as heterosexual and maintain primary relationship(s) with women/ a woman. The shifting dynamics of homosexuality is properly seen in the choices and whims of characters like Idabel and Joel. (87)

It is important to deconstruct the binary sex/gender system. This system shapes the Western world. Randolph wears dress clothes. He hides from Randolph who is intent on painting Joel's portrait. Joel does not want to return to the house to change clothes though. Miss Amy will force Joel into sitting for hours with the unresponsive and immobile Mr. Sansom. On the walk to the creek, Idabel and Joel pass through "woods

where Joel inquires about a lone grave with a tombstone reading. Idabel explains that Toby had been the infant daughter of Jesus Fever" (34). Joel is in Randolph's room for the first time as Randolph paints Joel's portrait.

Randolph makes no apologies for the clutter. He dismisses the state of the room as a grave of his past. Amy knocks at the door asking for Joel to read to Mr. Sansom. Randolph sends her away so that he and Joel's time together can continue uninterrupted. For the first time Joel sees a photograph of what his father had looked like in his prime. The ideological constraints of a given culture teach us acceptable forms of behavior. It helps to constitute our identity. The external world and the language we are provided from childhood have enormous impacts on our understanding of the world. In *Undoing Gender* (2004) Butler extends her discussion of intelligibility by suggesting that:

When one fails to register within the parameters of what constitutes acceptable gender, sex or sexuality, one also fails to be counted as an acceptable human subject. The conditions through which one qualifies as 'human' are constantly being reconstituted by the social and economic policies of the state, state-related institutions such as the church, science, medicine, the family and through the day-to-day interactions that organize our daily lives. (77)

Human intelligibility is strictly linked to the norms that define and govern sex and gender. One's sex, gender and/or sexuality are so intimately bound to the processes of making and governing the human subject. It fails to fit within the appropriate gender/sex order is to disqualify as a human subject.

Joel soon finds that Skully's Landing is exclusively defined by the other. Its inhabitants include his father, paralyzed and bedridden, his cousin Randolph, and a dandy. They frequently cross-dress. It shifts into a more familiar coming-of-age

structure. Queer themes continually color the characters and story. One young friend of Joel's even complains that she wishes she were born a boy. Her characterization is more sympathetic. It is accurate to the trans-experience. This assumption highlights the anatomical and physical differences between men and women, but more importantly, points to the importance of the body in a social context. Defining identity in terms of the body has been shown to have certain weaknesses. The damaging effects of biological determinism have stimulated feminist activities to shift emphasis from biology and anatomy to sociology, culture and politics.

Joel accepts that this is the place he is meant to be. These "other" voices care for him. These other rooms are where he belongs. Through this acknowledgement of the importance of accepting one's queerness, he leaves the boy that he used to be behind. It's climax that seems to come from nowhere. Joel comes to truly accept his queerness. The growing proximity between Randolph and Joe over a time span of a year is implicitly hinted in the following extract:

Randolph inched nearer to Joel on the loveseat. Over his pajamas he wore a seersucker kimono with butterfly sleeves, and his plumpish feet were encased in a pair of tooled-leather sandals: his exposed toenails had a manicured gloss. Up close, he had a delicate lemon scent, and his hairless face looked not much older than Joel's. Staring straight ahead, he groped for Joel's hand, and hooked their fingers together. (39)

Miss Amy is angry with Joel for running away. She laments the fact that no one has remembered that it is her birthday. Joel manages to get through dinner knowing that he and Idabel have plans to run away for good tonight. Joel finds a private moment with his father to tell him that he is leaving the Landing. He then leaves Randolph's requested bottle of sherry in the hallway. Joel and Idabel run through the woods. They

encounter a Negro couple making love. This sight makes Idabel tighten with repulsion. Before long, Joel and Idabel reach Noon City. They find themselves in the middle of the traveling carnival.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick offers valuable insights on the issue of homosexuality in her famous work, *The Epistemology of the Closet*. She laments that still the world is not ready to accept the concerns of the gay in a positive light. The following extract encapsulates her concern as to the plight and predicament of gay:

The number of persons or institutions by whom the existence of gay people—never mind the existence of more gay people—is treated as a precious desideratum, a needed condition of life, is small, even compared to those who may wish for the dignified treatment of any gay people who happen already to exist. Advice on how to make sure your kids turn out gay, not to mention your students, your parishioners, your therapy clients, or your military subordinates, is less ubiquitous than you might think. (26)

Sedgwick implies that certain individuals are truly born gay. Only those born with the deviant traits share an interest in them. The universalizing view stresses that homosexuality is important. It is important to persons with a wide range of sexualities. There is no such thing as a stable erotic identity. Everyone is to some degree bisexual in their inherent qualities of mind and character.

Joel awakens from wild hallucinations to see a sequence of Miss Amy, Randolph, and Zoo. They rock in a chair beside his bed. After a few days of coming in and out of consciousness, Joel awakens relieved to see Randolph at his bedside. Randolph comforts Joel. He is worried that Randolph is mad at Joel for running away. This pattern of sleep and wakefulness continues for weeks as Joel recovers from the illness caught during the rainstorm at the carnival. Randolph remains

steadfastly by Joel's bed.

Joel first tries to account for the queer lady's appearance in the house. But he finds Amy and Randolph uncooperative. Joel finds Amy at the door. But Joel's preparation for his first impression on his father is not up to the expectation. At first Joel is "unsure of the level of formality he should take. Mr. Sansom is both his father and a stranger. This ambiguity extends to physicality. Joel is unclear on how to physically express himself "(77). He errs on the side of manly. He interprets to mean erect indicating that Joel has embedded notions of gender essentialism. He has to prepare himself to give the impression. This preparation suggests that Joel is performing an external impression.

Butler explains that to have the wrong body is to fail to have a human body. Humanness is thus always bound to normative models of sex and gender. It registers at the level of the flesh. As such, non-normative sexed/gendered bodies bring with them a great deal of anxiety. "Non-normative' bodies are pathologized, scrutinized, surveyed, managed and/or placed under professional care"(34). Butler's framing of sex/gender intelligibility returns us the argument that non-heterosexual and non-gender-normative bodies are often absent or marginalized.

Gender viability is defined as heterosexual. In their absence and marginalization queer bodies and lives are not only rendered 'non-normative'. They are positioned as outside the grid of human intelligibility. Falling outside the grid of intelligibility means that the violence engendered in being absent, silent, erased. It does not get noticed. It does not count. Instead, it leaves "a mark that is no mark" (Butler 25). It is a power effect that is as invisible as the normative regulatory practices that inflict it.

The word 'homosexuality' has acquired multiple meanings over time. In the

original sense, it describes a sexual orientation characterized by lasting aesthetic attraction, romantic love, or sexual desire. Homosexuality is usually "contrasted with heterosexuality and bisexuality. The word 'homosexual' is both an adjective and a noun. Homosexual has changed to gay and gay to gay and lesbian. Bisexuals have become more vocal" (Sedgwick 54). The recognition of varying sexual identities and practices has inspired a re-reading of not straight history or queer but the history of sexuality itself.

Mr. Sansom is revealed over a long period of time. However, it becomes clear that the hegemonic controls Joel had imagined his father was enforcing were imagined. Mr. Sansom is bedridden. He is permanently scarred and paralyzed after being accidentally shot by Randolph. Randolph is troubled by a complicated lovers' quarrel that involve boxing promoter Mr. Sansom, his boxer-client Pepe Alvarez, and a woman named Dolores. They are involved with both Pepe and Randolph.

The unusual group forms a sort of curated family group. But it is a self-destructive group that lies to and hurt one another. Randolph relates: "... we were together, Dolores, Pepe, Ed and I, Ed and his jokes, we other three and our silences. Grotesque quadruplets, we fed upon one another, as cancer feeds upon itself" (108). The amalgamated group allows Randolph to explore his homosexual desires for Pepe under the guise of the group dynamic and with Dolores as a hetero-normalizing presence.

The society Joel and Randolph live in is hateful to homosexuality. So, they find themselves in dilemma-either to come out of closet or simply involve in debauchery. They are a part of a minority which is under the grip of exclusion, excommunication, rejection and dehumanization. In the early twentieth century, Sigmund Freud helped bring into light the negative constructions of homosexuality.

He depicts homosexuals as those who lacked proper socialization. According to Freud, they remain "fixed at an immutable stage of development, while intimating that proper socialization evinces normalized heterosexuality. Furthermore, Freud believed that environment determined sexual orientation, not genetics" (64). With appropriate psychiatric treatment, sexual deviants could be made sexually appropriate gender. Conventional ideas about gender and sexuality dictate that people born with male bodies naturally possess both a man's identity and a man's right to authority.

The construction of gender was thrown into crisis during the twentieth century. Masculinity became an unstable category. It alters across time, region, social class, and ethnicity. This groundbreaking study maps historical similarities in fictional, cultural, and representational practices between the periods of modernism and postmodernism. Joel could not help longing for his past. Nostalgia and flashback give him soothing balm. The present tends to expose him. It cripples him. He feels suffocated in the narrow confinement of present. The gradual decline in his inner power to handle frustration pushes him to the world of fantasy. The shyness of being homosexually is typically treated as an expressive object. The following extract is illustrative of the case in point:

Sheepishly Joel stepped into the daylight. "Hello, Idabel," he said, and Idabel laughed, and this laugh of hers was rougher than barbed wire. "Look here, son," she said, "the last boy that tried pulling tricks on Idabel is still picking up the pieces." She put back on her dark glasses, and gave her shorts a snappy hitch. "Henry and me, we're going down to catch us a mess of catfish: if you can make yourself helpful you're welcome to come. (53)

Randolph inched nearer to Joel on the loveseat. Over his pajamas he wore a

seersucker kimono with butterfly sleeves. His plumpish feet were encased in a pair of tooled-leather sandals. His exposed toenails had a manicured gloss. He had a delicate lemon scent. His hairless face looked not much older than Joel's. Staring straight ahead, he groped for Joel's hand. He hooked their fingers together. Joel is funny, pleasing and affectionate. He used to pass a good deal of time in the groups of kids playacting with them. He has derived lots of pleasure from his pleasant association with them.

It is the troubled management of sexuality and gender in the late 20th century which prompts Judith Butler's investigations in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. She argues most powerfully that "identities figured as feminine or masculine do not axiomatically require the anatomical grounding which has traditionally differentiated sex and gender identities" (46). Butler's investigation also displays a similar indebtedness to the work of Foucault. Butler in *Gender Trouble* interrogates the seemingly inevitable contradictions between sameness and difference "which mark identity formulations based around gender and sexuality" (77). Butler explicitly challenges biological accounts of binary sex. She reconceives the sexed body as itself culturally constructed by regulative discourse.

Joel follows his example and suddenly feels an empathy growing between them. He positions himself in a place which is ruthlessly ranked. He adjusts sociability with the others. He chooses to follow the young man's sit-ups rather than possess his golden beauty. This choice exemplifies a mode of being that doesn't rely on the logic of conquering and being conquered. The hostile social ailment that aggravates the psychic troubles of Joel is manifested in the following extract:

But we are alone, darling child, terribly, isolated each from the other; so fierce is the world's ridicule we cannot speak or show our tenderness; for us, death is

stronger than life, it pulls like a wind through the dark, all our cries burlesqued in joyless laughter; and with the garbage of loneliness stuffed down us until our guts burst bleeding green, we go screaming round the world, dying in our rented rooms, nightmare hotels, eternal homes of the transient heart. (63)

Joel is connected to the ambiance by simply becoming part of it. He is devoid of a desire to know and trust other men. This directionless and mindless motion is the way of resting and spreading out. It overcomes the anxiety of old age, loss and death. Following Randolph's death, Joel develops eccentricities and anomalies by leaps and bounds. His college students are all increasingly surprised by the rapidity in which his anomalous behaviors increase.

Eve Sedgwick argues that same-sex relations may vary so much throughout the course of history that “there may be no continuous, defining essence of ‘homosexuality’ to be known” (44). Butler reiterates this notion, but in relation to gender:

Gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. It becomes impossible to separate out 'gender' from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained. (21)

Since gender and sexuality are culturally and historically specific, it would be anachronistic to use modern terms when discussing figures of the past. Sedgwick explains "To alienate conclusively from anyone on any theoretical ground the authority to describe and name their own sexual desire is a terribly consequential seizure" (26). Sedgwick herself considers the questions of gender and sexuality to be inextricable.

Joel's day is pervasively bland. He feels difficult in "waking up, taking a shower, going to school, lecturing, eating lunch, working out, and going to a supermarket, dining and drinking. Yet to say this sensationalized mode of being is a sign of loneliness seems to assume" (76). He yearns to become not lonely. Not being attached is not the same thing as being lonely. Joel develops claustrophobic sense of fear. He, at times, demands the company of a friend while he announces that he is terribly fond of seclusion. Joel's indifference to heterosexual marriage is flatly reflected in the following extract:

She looked at him, but her eyes appeared not to make a connection with what they saw; in fact, there was about them a cross-eyed effect, as though they fixed on a solacing inner vision. "Did I see snow?" she repeated, trying hard, it seemed, to understand. "Did I see snow!" and she broke into a kind of scary giggle, and threw back her head, lips apart, like an open-mouthed child hoping to catch rain. (86)

Joel suspects Randolph of understanding the in-innermost meaning of life. Joel is turned into a depersonalized entity "it" at the opening. It is emphasized in return as a being deeply anxious about its own aging. As it stares into the mirror, it sees many faces within its face. It seems as though its anxiety of aging betrays its depersonalized existence.

Joel begins the "everyday tasks of getting dressed and cooking in the kitchen. His domestic moments with Jim are of huge importance. Spaces that Joel passes by daily are that which must inevitably evoke his memories with Randolph" (67). These ordinary spaces can be more aptly described as the site of loss. The fact of Jim's death is refreshed every day by the encasing familiarity of George's ordinary surroundings. Joel could not help developing minority consciousness.

Randolph's partnership here is shown as companionable and respectful. The homoerotic undertones are evident. He falls asleep without separating himself from his friend. He is known for the blatant expression of his opinions concerning the negative influence women have on men. It is to be assumed that he only discusses this intensely personal and erotic occasion. The intruder severed the social and physical bond between Randolph and Joel. The awareness of being a member of the minority of homosexual drives him subconsciously. Minor biological abnormalities of Joel and Randolph are indicative of how hostile their sexual choices are towards the established heterosexual norms:

Some while later, Joel, his stomach still jittery from having fed Mr. Sansom's breakfast to him mouthful by mouthful, sat reading aloud in rapid flat tones.

The story, such as it was, involved a blonde lady and a brunette man who lived in a house sixteen floors high; most of the stuff the lady said was embarrassing to repeat: "Darling," he read, "I love you as no woman ever loved, but Lance, my dearest, leave me now while our love is still a shining thing. (71)

The most common and simplest understanding of what a woman is comes out of the assertion that she is a person with a female body. This assumption highlights the anatomical and physical differences between men and women. But more importantly, it points to the importance of the body in a social context.

Defining identity in terms of the body has been shown to have certain weaknesses. The problem of locating right homosexual partner is reflected in the following extract:

Presently only the hatless man stood there in the emptiness below. Joel, his eyes searching so frenziedly for Idabel, did not at first altogether see him. But the carnival lights short-circuited with a crackling flare, and when this

happened it was suddenly as though the man turned phosphorescent: he seemed to Joel no more than a hand's space away. "Randolph," he whispered, and the name gripped him at the root of his throat. (80)

Joel attempts to expand on this alienation by the oblique use of implicit reference. He highlights "the increasing elusiveness of safe hiding places in the wake of the intervention of psychotherapists, psychiatrists and sexologists into the field of male homosexuality" (87). Such inquiries became a double-edged sword. It could be manipulated for both liberal and reactionary opinions. He is so critical of any outer attempt to inquire into his withdrawn life. Though his affirmation of distorted and anomalous self faces setbacks, he does not feel disappointed.

The word "homosexual" entered Euro-American discourse during the last third of the nineteenth century. It seems clear that "the sexual behaviors, and even for some people the conscious identities, denoted by the new term 'homosexual' and its contemporary variants already had a long, rich history" (Sedgwick 77). So, indeed, a wide range of other sexual behavioral clusters play crucial role in the formation of the politically heightened identity of excluded community of gay and lesbians. He or she is necessarily assignable to a male or a female gender. It is now considered necessarily assignable as well to a homo- or a hetero-sexuality. It is inclusive of binary identity that is full of implications.

Institutionalized discourses center on homo/heterosexual definition. These definitions proliferate and create with exceptional rapidity in the decades around the turn of the century. In Monique Wittig's words, "Both the power relations between the genders and the relations of nationalism and imperialism, for instance, were in highly visible crisis. For this reason, and because the structuring of same-sex bonds can't, in any historical situation marked by inequality and contest between genders"

(87). Modern Western culture has placed sexuality in a more and more distinctively privileged relation to our most prized constructs of individual identity, truth, and knowledge. It becomes truer and truer that the language of sexuality not only intersects with but transforms the other languages and relations.

Michel Foucault's understanding of silences as an integral part of the communicative process can be utilized as a tool in this research. Foucault stresses the necessity of an astute awareness of the power structures intrinsic to the workings of language:

There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying things. . . . There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses. The silence can convey many things. Silence can contain repressed rebellious sense. Or it can contain weapon against the rhetoric of fruitless engagement in debate. (60)

Truth is the property of silence. The silences fill the space between words. Sedgwick argues that what can be said to masquerade as ignorance play a part in "the creation of knowledge and uphold specific regimes of truth, one of those 'truths' being the implicit assumption or assertion that a writer's homosexuality does not have interpretative consequences" (61).

Randolph's own homosexuality is representative of the situations of other fellows. They are prone to the same fate and future. He tells his students that "a minority is only thought of as a minority when it constitutes some kind of threat to the majority, real or imaginary. And no threat is ever quite imaginary... minorities are people; people, not angels" (12). But he seems a threat to nobody. People prone to the situations similar to that of the protagonist cannot pose to the integrity and structure of

society. On the contrary, Joel is a representative of homosexual subculture. He appears to be prophet of homosexual history. He aims at enlightening other gays who are afflicted with the threat of shame and oppression.

This knowledge causes Joel to become the subject of his college's homophobic culture and collective hatred. When Joel's peers refer to him as an oddball fond of seclusion, they are demoralizing him. Lots of other labels are added to him. Joel's hatred towards heterosexual marriage is described below:

And do you know a man came to marry me: he was much too big, though, and much too ugly, and he was seventy-seven years old; well, even so, I might have married him except when he saw how little I was he said bye-bye and took the train back to from whence he'd come. I never have found a sweet little person. There are children; but I cry sometimes to think little boys must grow tall. (80)

Joel has established a new stereotype that Randolph easily fits into. He has shown that a homosexual community is large enough to establish its own ways of describing one another. The problem exists with this stereotyping. This problem is that the gay community has its own internal prejudices and hierarchies.

Joel's initial confusion is meaningful. Gradually, he comes to terms with his own understanding of how a homosexual can look and act. At first, he assumes that all homosexual men are as hyper-feminized. He alienates himself here by positioning as a caricature of homosexual figure of fun. The following extract addresses the agony of being ostracized as a homosexual outsider:

Deep in the hollow, dark syrup crusted the bark of vine-rope sweet gums:
like pale apple leaves green witch butterflies sank and rose there and there; a breezy lane of trumpet lilies beckoned like hands lace-gloved and ghostly.

Idabel kept waving her arms, for the mosquitoes were fierce: everywhere, like scraps of a huge shattered mirror, mosquito pools of marsh water gleamed and broke in Henry's jogging path. (73)

This behavior raises doubts as to who he is and what is to become of his. When Joel is called a faggot by his father, it is a continuation of constant attacks on his masculinity. Despite being seen as a masculine jock by his peers, Joel does not give liberal space to his son. Randolph grins at Joel embarrassingly adding fuel to the already agonized heart of Joel.

To conclude, we know heteronormative discourse and patriarchy are deep-rooted in any society. Homosexual people face prejudices throughout their life. They receive little support from their families- most are essentially thrown out or run away from oppression. The ridicule for not belonging to the binary classification of gender lasts the entire lifetime. Joel is deeply engrossed in homosexuality. The death of Randolph pushes him to the corner. He degrades himself to the pit of self-destructive acts. Despite his friends' efforts to take him away from the bottom of alienation and self-destruction, he takes no initiative. Even his desire to be an activist of alienated gay does not produce result. His radical departure from heterosexuality risks simplifying the meaning of being a secluded gay. When he goes to join the queer lady in the window, Joel accepts his destiny, which is to be homosexual, to always hear other voices and live in other rooms.

However, the marginalization and discrimination are still norm; the fight for equal rights goes on. Therefore, in the light of above discussion it can be said that homosexual will slowly get their status and completely freedom in future. In the end, nothing could be done for the third gender unless the narrow mindsets of people change. Families need to understand that having gender non-conforming behavior is

not abnormal. Engaging the homosexual people in the formulation and implementation of policies directly impacting them is necessary.

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