

Chapter One

Introduction

Tennessee Williams and Tony Kushner are gay dramatists who have tried to reach out to the wider mainstream society through their plays. Though *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and *Angels in America* are written within a gap of around four decades, the above two playwrights have been able to highlight the issue of homosexuality in their works as it was prevalent in their contemporary times.

Tennessee Williams was a well renowned playwright, who highlighted his personal experiences in his plays and stories. He enjoyed writing about what was considered taboo subjects like homosexuality. In his memoirs, he claims he became sexually active as a teenager. Williams was the victim of a gay bashing in January 1979 in Key West. He was beaten by five teenage boys during anti-gay violence, but not seriously injured. Some of his literary critics believe that these were attacks on Williams' homosexuality. Gay critics have debated in recent years whether Williams' work is marked by 'internalized homophobia' or whether he is a subversive artist whose work can be best interpreted through the lens of leftist French theorist like Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault. Later he changed his name to Tennessee and began to explore who he was as well as his sexuality. But Kushner's celebration of homosexuality in *Angels in America* was widely accepted by critics and audiences alike when it premiered in May 1991, at the Eureka Theater Company of San Francisco. While Williams was not so open about homosexuality in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Tony Kushner was able to celebrate gay eroticism and gay sex in the last decade of the past millennium. Contrary to most popular representations of gay sexuality, sex in *Angels in America* is not air-brushed to avoid offending the mainstream audience. *Angels in America* is the first major work of playwright Tony Kushner and

its astounding success has turned him and his writing into cultural icons of the late-twentieth century. Referred to by many critics, this modern drama is a turning point in the history of gay-drama, the history of American drama, and of American literary culture. *Angels in America* has received numerous awards and critical accolades for being a ground breaking drama about male homosexuality. In April 2003, Tony Kushner and his long time partner, Entertainment Weekly editor Mark Harris, had a wedding ceremony in New York. Theirs was the first same sex marriage ever covered by New York Times.

Tennessee Williams

Born to Cornelius and Edwina Dakin Williams on March 26, 1911, in Columbus Mississippi, Thomas Lanier "Tennessee" Williams was amply prepared for writing about societies outcasts. His mother was an aggressive woman, obsessed by her fantasies of genteel Southern living. His father, a traveling salesman for a large shoe manufacturer, was at turns distant and abusive. His elder sister, Rose was emotionally disturbed and destined to spend most of her life in mental institutions. He remained aloof from his younger brother, Dakin, whom his father repeatedly favored over both of the older children. In 1918 the family moved to St. Louis. Tennessee had a very difficult childhood in St. Louis and was the butt of classmates' jokes because of his short height and lack of athletic ability.

He is a major figure of theater in America. His major contribution as a dramatist was his creation of characters, situation, dialogue form and scenic environment. He wrote with deep insight into human passion and its perversion. He broke the rigid convention of drama. His theater is mostly extra-verbal and the dramatic form which seeks to explore not only rational, but irrational sides of human experience too. He also broke away from the language bound realistic drama of the

nineteenth and early twentieth century and produced drama in which language, symbols, and scenic images speak simultaneously and as powerfully as what issues from the mouth of the characters. It represents the conscious effort to mirror new perceptions of reality.

In terms of theme too, Williams rebels against genteel tradition of the American society. But he is an uneasy rebel, since he alternately condemns and worships the life and the body. The body and soul comprise one of the great dualities, which provide conflict in both his place and his own life. Discomfort with sex underlies most of his plays and many of his characters are perfections of varying parts of his own complicated sexuality. A character like Alma Wine Miller, the divided heroine of *Summer and Smoke* is represented with almost diagrammatic simplicity, Williams' own split between refinement and rapacity. Characters like Seratina of the *Rose Tattoo* and Maggie Pollitt and Big Daddy of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* celebrates Williams' worship of sex, while a character like Blanche Dubois in *A Street Car Named Desire* indicates his fear of it. A character like Brick Pollitt in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* has an ambiguous sexual nature because Williams never shakes off the notion that sex is at least partly sinful. All of his sexually troubled characters are held to a moral reckoning and their histories are designed as warnings. Brick's present state, death in life is closely related with that history. This has a direct relationship with his isolated and frustrated life as well.

More than a half century has passed since critics and theater-goers recognized Williams as an important American playwright, whose plays fellow dramaturge David Mamet calls "the greatest dramatic poetry in the American language." Williams' repertoire includes some thirty full-length plays, numerous short plays, two volumes of poetry, and five volumes of essays and short stories. He won two Pulitzer Prizes

(for *A Street Car Named Desire* in 1947 and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* in 1955), and was the first playwright to receive, in 1947, the Pulitzer Prize for drama, the Donaldson Award, and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award in the same year.

A Street Car Named Desire is considered in modern society as an icon of its era, as it deals with a culture clash between two symbolic characters, Blanche Dubois—a pretentious, fading relic of the Old South—and Stanley Kowalski, a rising member of the industrial, inner-city immigrant class. The play presents Blanche Dubois, a fading Southern belle whose pretensions to virtue and culture only thinly mask delusions of grandeur and alcoholism. Her poise is an illusion she pretends, to shield others, but most of all, herself from reality. Blanche arrives at the house of her sister Stella Kowalski in the French Quarter of New Orleans, where she is welcomed to stay by a trepidant Stella, who fears the reaction of her husband Stanley. Stanley is a force of nature; primal, rough-hewn, brutish and sensual. He dominates Stella in every way, physically and emotionally abusive, and she tolerates his offensive crudeness and lack of gentility largely because of her self-deceptive love for him. Later Stella is swept aside as the attraction between the oppositely-charged Stanley and Blanche overwhelms the household. Their inevitable confrontation—a rape—results in Blanche's nervous breakdown. Blanche and Stanley are among the most recognizable characters in American drama.

Although Williams' first professionally produced play, *Battle of Angels*, closed in 1940 because of poor reviews and a censorship controversy, his early amateur productions *Candles to the Sun* and *Fugitive Kind* were well-received by audiences in St. Louis. By 1945 he had completed and opened on Broadway *The Glass Menagerie*, perhaps his best-known play, which won that year's New York Critics Circle, Donaldson, and Sidney Howard Memorial awards. He was honored by

President Carter at Kennedy Center in 1979, and named Distinguished Writer in Residence at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, in 1981.

The conflicts between sexuality, society and Christianity, so much a part of Williams' drama, played themselves out in life as well. Tennessee Williams claimed that all of his major plays fit into the "memory play" format he described in his production notes for *The Glass Menagerie*. The memory play is a three-part structure: (1) a character experiences something profound, (2) that experience causes what Williams terms an "arrest of time," a situation in which time literally loops upon itself, and (3) the character must re-live that profound experience until she or he makes sense of it. The over arching theme for his plays, he claimed, is the negative impact that conventional society has upon the "sensitive non-conformist individual."

With their emphasis on the irrational, the desperation on humanity in a universe in which cosmic laws do not work, and their tragic-comic examination of the conflicts between the gentility of old Southern values and the brute force of new, Northern values, Williams' plays fit nicely into a genre critics call "Southern Gothic." He shares this field with such literary lights as Flannery O'Connor and William Faulkner, who, like Williams, struggled with the macabre and eccentric natures of individuals in America's South. Although, like Faulkner, Williams spent much of his adult life in New York, his work focuses on the Southern experience.

Why has so little been written about Tennessee Williams, compared to other important American playwrights such as O'Neill? Perhaps, the most common theory is that Williams' work is considered "popular", academicians have ignored his work for the same reasons contemporary scholars avoid Tom Clancy and Stephen King. The second most frequently iterated theory as to why Williams has been relatively neglected involves sexual prejudices- some scholars believe that the playwright's

homosexuality makes him unfit as a critical subject. Such prejudice appears to be common, particularly from some scholars in the new critical movement. Regardless of the reasons for the relative neglect of Williams and his work, the fact is that his plays and other writings are pregnant with possibilities for scholarly research.

Enough new information is available to afford a closer examination of Williams' work. For example, a considerable amount of biographical information concerning Williams can be found in accounts from family, friends, and professional acquaintances. Considering what critics and researchers know about his life, they argue that the outcast character examined in this dissertation seem central to Williams' poetics. The outcast characters in Tennessee Williams' major plays do not suffer because of the actions or circumstances that make them outcast but because of the destructive impact of conventional morality forced upon them. They are driven, in the conflict between their values and those of conventional morality, to confess their transgressions against humanity and to suffer, at their own hands or by placing themselves in dangerous situations, in atonement for their violations of conventional morality.

Williams' outcasts can be placed, first are sexual outcasts who, like the playwright, offer insight into Williams' feelings about his own sexuality; second are religious outcasts, who are vehicles for the playwright's commentary on contemporary Christianity; and third, fugitive outcasts, whose flight reflect Williams' own insecurity and alienation. These categories loosely reflect those noted by T. E. Kalem, in his examination of Williams' work: "the odd, the lonely, and the emotionally violated" (88). Such a threefold distinction serves as a useful way to group Williams' outcasts. The conflict between these outcast characters and conventional morality is tied to the myriad tensions that form twentieth century

America. To examine Williams' outcasts is to open avenues toward understanding those tensions.

Williams is regarded as one of the greatest American playwrights, and a great innovator of his genre. He used his life experiences of alcoholism, homosexuality, family life, and friends in his plays. Most of his work are set in the South, and portray a Romantic Gothic feel of the area in which the contemporary decay is juxtaposed to the more refined old ways. Williams, more so than any other playwright is remembered for his characters who have all become prominent figures in American theater. All of his famous characters are modeled after his family members or friends. For example, Laura in *The Glass Menagerie* is a representation of Williams' sister. He also brought many issues such as homosexuality, fetishism, sex, his belief in the falsehood of religion, and domestic violence that shocked the audiences of his time. Williams' language is often thought of as too poetic, and his plays are often called too wordy, others would say that his language is highly stylized, but still natural sounding. Williams's plays often contain an overbearing male figure, often a husband, and an almost overly emotional female. A major theme is survival in a world that seems bent on crushing the human spirit and the inescapableness of the human condition. Overall, Williams was able to bring new issues to the theater and great characters while still touching on many universal themes. What one cannot turn away from is Mr. Williams' unflinching preoccupation for getting at the truth, which at the time represented a real breakthrough, and was even considered shocking. Showing the effect of American social background in Williams' play, Raghukul Tilak in his book *History of American Literature* writes:

Williams' plays represent the side of American life, and they do not have happy endings. They plumb the depths of problems such as

homosexuality, symbolic cannibalism, alcoholism and lurid behaviours. Williams' general view of life is pessimistic, morbid and tragic. The world of Tennessee Williams, according to R. Watt is certainly dark, tormented and haunted by evil. This is the description of his work, not hostile criticism of it. There are indignant reviewers who insist that his plays are psychopathic in their subject matter. Though Williams' plays deal with frustration, their frustration unlike those of the Greek plays, is not universal. (150)

In this way, the presentation of the 1950's social background of the United States is the dark aspect of life. The characters are depressed in one or the other way. But Williams' entire psyche is not to see all of the life of humans so pessimistically.

Benjamin Nelson explains that "*The Glass Menagerie* exhibits several of Williams' weaknesses as well as his strengths as a playwright" (987). He discusses Williams' characterizations, especially of Laura and Amanda. He also points to "poetic passages" in the play that he feels are weaknesses. Ultimately, Nelson poses an interesting dramatic question: is the play a tragedy? The search for an answer to this question involves a full consideration of the play's strengths and weaknesses, its success or failure. *The Glass Menagerie* was Williams' first successful play. The play is set in St. Louis, Missouri, United States, during the Great Depression and deals with the troubled relationship between an aging mother, Amanda Wingfield, and her painfully shy daughter Laura Wingfield, as told by the son and brother, Tom Wingfield, who is supposedly relating events from memory. Amanda is fixated on her idealized version of her Southern childhood and is the perfect example of the 'faded southern belle.' Her current life involves such sorrows as a complete reversal of fortune. Amanda is worried about Laura and about getting her married. Laura has

a physical handicap: She wore a brace in high school, and now has a slight limp. She has become cripplingly shy as result. The outside world frightens her and she prefers the comfort of her collection of glass animals and the sounds of her father's old Victrola records. Although Tom provides financial support, working long hours in a shoe warehouse (a job he thoroughly despises), Amanda sees Tom as a selfish dreamer, who irresponsibly retreats into movies, alcohol and novels instead of doing more to provide for the family. Though Tom invites Jim for dinner on Amanda's insistence, things don't work out the way she had hoped for. Jim reveals that he is engaged and therefore cannot marry Laura. The play closes with an image of Laura blowing out the candle, leaving darkness.

Characters in his plays are often seen to be direct representations of his family members. Laura Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie* is understood to be modeled on Rose. Some biographers say that the character of Blanche Dubois in *A Street Car Named Desire* is based on her as well. The motif of lobotomy also arises in *Suddenly, Last Summer*. Amanda Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie* can easily be seen to represent Williams' mother. Many of his characters are considered autobiographical, including Tom Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie* and Sebastian in *Suddenly, Last Summer*. Actress Anne Meacham was a close personal friend of Tennessee Williams and played the lead in many of his plays including *Suddenly, Last Summer*.

Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* was first produced in 1955. It was even adopted as motion picture in 1958. It was a great critical and financial success and won a second Pulitzer Prize for drama as well. It is about an emotionally and psychologically disturbed characters sexual maladjustment. Brick, the protagonist of the play who was once a good sportsman and a popular sports announcer turns alcoholic after the death of his close friend Skipper. His relationship with Skipper is

suspected and questioned by all. His wife Maggie accuses him of having a homosexual relationship with Skipper. This incident leads Brick into alcoholism and frustration, and symbolizes the entire generation of the 1950's in contemporary society of the South. Frustration and restless life in the early 1950's had deeply scarred man's life and his environment. Brick is not satisfied with his relationship with Maggie. The end is hopeful for a blissful reunion of marriage life by Brick and Maggie. The play reflects the fragmented psychological, unhappy mood and illusions of the characters.

Tony Kushner

Born to Jewish parents on July 16, 1956 in Manhattan, New York, Tony Kushner grew up to be one of America's best known playwrights, a cultural icon of his generation. While he was still young, his musician parents moved the family to Louisiana, where they played with the New Orleans Philharmonic. He inherited an appreciation for opera and literature from his father and gained a passion for theater from his mother, who acted in local plays. Kushner's views on religion, politics and sex – that were the hallmarks of his later works as a playwright, began to take shape during his early childhood. He attended Hebrew school, where he developed an attraction towards his teacher but struggled to hide his homosexual feelings for several years. He felt further isolated as a Jew in the American South, where he regularly encountered anti-Semitism. When he left Lake Charles to attend Columbia University in New York, he was by his own estimation, liberal, ardently Zionist and extremely closeted.

Theater and life are the major subjects of Tony Kushner. First, it should be noted that Kushner was a student of Medieval Culture. He had little interest in the specific Christian contents of the cycle. Unlike Aristotle, he deliberately tries to

evoke the long history of western dramatic literature and positions himself in the same tradition as Shakespeare, Brecht and others.

While Kushner's use of multiple location is obviously consistent with medieval practice, his arrangement of incidents in *Angels in America* closely imitated the structural outline of mystery cycles. As the cycles trace the events ranging from Genesis of Dooms Day, so too, does Kushner's play. As the cycles begin with the creation and fall, Kushner's play also begins with the allusion to a more perfect and significantly Jewish past, now fallen from grace.

Secondly, Kushner tries to follow the blueprint laid down by great playwrights like Sophocles, Shakespeare, Brecht, G. B. Shaw, T. Williams and Miller. Like them, he is trying to show the social issues in theater and provide an open space for the audience to judge what is right and what is wrong. Like G. B. Shaw, Kushner has used the stage as a forum for social debate. Individual position in the society is the prime issue of Kushner's play. A search for identity is underway, beginning with the opening monologue of *Angels in America*, and each of the characters become involved in this search whether they intend it or not.

It is worth noting the influence of Kushner towards his contemporary writers. Tony Kushner seems highly influenced by the German playwright Bertolt Brecht and Carly Churchill and their concept of Epic Theater and Theater of Absurd. Bertolt Brecht (1896-1918) envisioned a new theater experience to replace what he perceived as a failing of the realistic theater. Brecht's epic theater has achieved an influence on the development of the modern equal to the influence of Stanislavsky's method acting on the development of contemporary psychological acting.

Brecht believed that there was a danger in the audience's becoming too deeply engrossed or lost in the story of the play. For Brecht, the realism to make the

audience members forget that they were in the theater made the theater into a kind of anesthetic. He wanted to find a way to make the audience step back from the drama in order to encourage analysis rather than empathy or identification. From Brecht comes the idea, the idea of interruption, of breaking the narrative to snap the audience out of what he saw as a hypnotic state. He also did not want the experience of the play to be completed within time and space. Instead, he saw the theater as a call to action where the performance would be a starting point or part of a process in which the audience and actors would become engaged in social action. Borrowing the concept of the Epic Theater, Kushner has visualized the problems the Minorities faced in *Reignites America*. Unlike realistic theater, he gives open space to audience to judge the facts and problems they faced

In early times, epic was is referred to a kind of tale Homer told in the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*: stories that cover long periods of time, perhaps months or even years; involved many locations, ranging from small rooms to forests and battle fields; followed many characters through multiple plotlines; and alternate short and long scenes, with a series of crisis points, rather than a single strong climax near the end. Shakespeare and Brecht followed this pattern and which is continued by Kushner.

Most importantly, the overall effect of an epic plot is cumulative rather than catastrophic. In a climatic work, like Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* or the plays of Henrik Ibsen *A Doll's House* and Arthur Miller *Death of a Salesman*, the events are compressed and occur quite near the end of the story, making an explosive confrontation inevitable. Epic plots allow events, circumstances and emotions to pile up, one on top of the other, over-whelming the characters and audience alike. Rarely does a single event-a character's error in judgment or an antagonist's vile deed-decide the outcome.

Kushner follows the tradition of large, important, political dramas, influenced mainly, he claims, by Bertolt Brecht. Brecht's theories for his Epic theatre contain many of the qualities of epic plot structure but also assume a strong political aspect; he was a staunch communist and held virulent anti-war beliefs. His plays were didactic, where by he wanted to teach his audiences something, and his lessons were usually stated strongly and openly. Brecht attempted to "alienate" his audiences by exposing theatrical devices (lighting, scene changes). Following Brecht, Kushner strives for a very theatrical presentation that doesn't attempt complete illusion.

Kushner is also extremely political, and he, too, wants his audiences to learn something, though he allows more subtlety of expression than Brecht. In Kushner's play, the strong political ideas are woven into the fabric of the sub-plot, plot and the audience is left with an impression rather than an obvious message. Controversial ideas are usually presented from both sides, leaving the audience free to draw their own conclusions. While Brecht strongly advocated communism and often hit audiences on the head with his overt pacifist rhetoric, Kushner lets his characters and their philosophies speak for themselves. The concept of the American Dream, for example, is viewed from several perspectives.

Apart from *Angels in America*, the other notable works of Tony Kushner are *A Bright Room Called Day*, *Homebody/Kabul*, *Caroline, Or Change*, *Hydrotaphia*, *Slavs!: Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness*. Kushner's *Caroline, Or Change* is a thorough –composed Broadway musical. The musical is set in Lake Charles, Louisiana during the American civil rights movement, just before, after and during the Kennedy Assassination. The title character, Caroline Thibodeaux, is a black maid for a Southern Jewish family, the Gellmans. The Gellmans' young son, Noah, is enamored of Caroline, a woman resistant to the sweep

of change she sees around her. When Noah's stepmother, Rose, enlists Caroline's help in a plan to teach Noah a lesson about leaving change in his pants pocket, the tide of change begins to affect Caroline's life firsthand, and she must come to terms with the necessity and inevitability of the end of segregation. Much of Caroline's work day passes in the Gellmans' laundry room, which adds some surprising singing characters to the cast.

A Bright Room Called Day (1985) was Kushner's first foray into professional theater. The play, which initially received only a brief run at London's Bush Theatre, concerns a group of friends in pre-World War II Germany. Kushner presents this period of time as an unstoppable wave of political upheavals and sets them against the life of a lone woman unable to cope with a social madness she can barely comprehend. The play is set in Germany in 1932 and 1933, and concerns a group of friends caught up in the events of the fall of the Weimar Republic and the rise to power of Adolf Hitler and Nazi party. The plot is centered around a woman named Agnes Eggling, a middle-aged actress, and all of the action takes place in her apartment. The action is occasionally interrupted by scenes featuring Zillah, a young woman in 1990 who has moved from Long Island to Berlin. Zillah has fled to Germany out of frustration and anger at the growing power of the Republican Party in America during the 1980s. Critics were not kind to the work, especially in the United States where it was dubbed the most infuriating play of 1991. Kushner himself called the production a "catastrophe." The writer's next efforts were adaptations: *The Illusion* (1988) taken from Pierre Corneille's play *L'illusion Comique*; and *Widows* adapted from a book by fellow playwright Ariel Dorfman (*Death and the Maiden*) and produced in Los Angeles in 1991. Employing an epic structure and expanded by Kushner's abundant theatricality, lyricism, and, as Harold Bloom writes "authentic

gift for fantasy” (109), Kushner’s play leads us into the darkest of the dark nights. He also made references to the Ronald Reagan presidency in many of his dramas as in *A Bright Room Called Day* and *Angels in America*.

Angels in America is an “epic” drama. The plot of the play unfolds over great distances of time and place, involving many characters and more than one story line. Two complete plays form the entire plot. The first part – *Millennium Approaches* and its second installment – *Perestroika*. Together, they present more than thirty characters in eight acts, fifty nine scenes and an epilogue. It is the story of two couples whose relationships are disintegrating. Set in America of the 1980’s against the backdrop of greed, conservatism, sexual politics and discovery of an awful new infection- HIV. It is this backdrop that provides *Angels in America* its magnitudes and sets it apart from other love stories. The plot is largely driven by its themes, which are viewed from different characters’ perspectives as through a kaleidoscope as the story unfolds.

This study will try to find or prove that Brick Pollitt and Prior Walter are treated as social pariah because of their indulgence to homosexuality. The society around them is not able to come to terms with them being homosexuals. They are treated as social outcasts by society due to the norms it formulates and then uses its power to define homosexuality through the discourse it controls.

Talking about Brick’s problem, Williams denied that the play was about homosexuality. Similarly, when Richard Brook made the film version of the play, the homosexual theme was rigorously denied. Brook claimed that there was no indication by Williams that Brick was a homosexual. Thus, the playwright and the other critics have denied Brick’s homosexuality. Brick has been isolated and marginalized.

Prior is caught up in the play’s biggest struggle over change. On a personal

level Prior is having change after change thrust upon him. First, his disease attacks him and then Louis abandons him, leaving him all alone in the hospital to cope with his new disease. Finally an Angel calls upon him and asks him to become a Prophet on behalf of the continental principalities. Prior's character has been able to dramatize the struggle between American conservatives and liberals, more specifically of the conflict over moral and social dilemmas, such as the conflict between religious beliefs and social realities of homosexuality. In fact, the play deals with a number of issues in current American society, many of which are of grave significance. The religious beliefs in conflict with social reality, the polarity of American politics, homosexuality, the after attempts to find a moral footing in multi-cultural and diverse democratic society in which values seem to be constantly changing.

The primary source of observation and analysis will be the text itself. A comprehensive comparative study of both the dramas will be carried out. For secondary sources, available critical reading and evaluation from authentic sources on the text and playwrights will be thoroughly studied. The social and cultural judgment of the American society on homosexuality will be looked into. This dissertation will take ideas developed in the field of homosexuality as a supportive tool to prove the hypothesis. Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (Vol.1) as well as his idea of discourse, power and truth will be a part of the theoretical modality.

This study is divided into four chapters. The first chapter deals with an introductory aspect of the study. It incorporates the thesis title clarification, hypothesis elaboration, introduction to the playwright's background, their works, themes, techniques, etc.

The second chapter delves into the theoretical modality that is to be effectively

applied in the analysis of the dramas. Therefore, it provides an introduction of the tool that is homosexuality, its history and development. This chapter also presents an elaborate commentary on *The History of Sexuality* (Vol.1) by Michel Foucault.

The third chapter of the dissertation presents an analysis of the dramatic texts at considerable length on the theoretical modality defined and developed in the second chapter. It quotes the necessary extracts from the dramas to support and justify the hypothesis of the research work.

The fourth chapter concludes the research work. Standing on the firm foundation of the analysis of the text done extensively in the third chapter, it tries to prove my hypothesis stated in the thesis proposal.

Chapter Two

Homosexuality

It is biologically natural for some people to be gay, no matter what environment they are born into, and therefore homosexuals should be accepted as normal. Homosexuality is a normal response to particular environmental factors.

Sexuality is not concerned only with physical attraction between same sexes or opposite sex but goes beyond it. It is revealed in appearance, personality and even bodily movement and structure. Sexuality, describes a whole range of a person's personality related to sexual behavior. Throughout history, generation and gender differences is regarded as natural, unproblematic and culturally accepted. However, sexual act involving the same sex partners is characterized as a deviant form of sexuality. Sexual deviation however cannot be defined in terms of the participating gender only. It is a social definition rather than natural phenomena. What is normative in behavior in a particular period may be a deviation or crime in another. No sexual type or behavior is universal. The entire meaning and value of any statement of sexuality is determined or defined by the social temporal context in which it occurs.

Homosexuality comprises choosing a same sex partner. The homosexual trait characterizes individuals who prefer romantic attachment and sexual interaction with the same sex. People with such traits are roused by the same erotic imagery. The term 'homosexual' is used for both sexes, although female homosexuality is often referred to as lesbianism. Of all variations of sexual behavior, homosexuality has provoked the greatest social pressure and evoked the liveliest historical account. It is regarded as problematic and culturally unacceptable. It has become subject to extreme prejudices in most western societies. It is largely considered 'perverted and

sick' and a 'disgrace to human nature.' Michel Foucault argues that sexual act between two persons of the same sex has been punishable through legal and religious sanctions well before the late nineteenth century. Only in the late nineteenth century did a new understanding of sexuality emerge in which sexual acts and desires could be considered constitutive of identity. Medical and serological literatures were one of the few sites of explicit engagement with the question of sexuality during this period and they held substantial definitional power within a culture that sanctioned science to discover and tell the truth about the body. For sexologists interested in same sex sexual behavior, the key issue is the relationship between the sexual partners and their identity.

The word 'homosexuality' has acquired multiple meanings overtime. In the original sense, it describes a sexual orientation characterized by lasting aesthetic attraction, romantic love, or sexual desire exclusively for others of the same sex or gender. Homosexuality is usually contrasted with heterosexuality or bisexuality. The term gay is used predominantly to refer to homosexual males. The adjective homosexual is also used for same sex sexual relations between persons of the same sex who are not gay or lesbian. Three major forms of homosexual relationships are proposed by anthropologists: egalitarian, gender-structured and age-structured. Of these, one is usually dominant in a given society at a given time. As there are different biological, historical and psychosocial components to sex and gender no single label or description will fit all individuals.

Definition of Homosexuality

According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Vol.VIII) homosexuality is "a preference for sexual relations with a person of same sex" (603).Likewise *New Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* defines homosexuality as "a person, usually a

man, who is sexually attracted to people of the same sex' (747). The website *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia* defines homosexuality that refers to sexual interaction and/or romantic attraction between individuals of the same sex. In modern use, the adjective homosexual is used for intimate relationships and/or sexual relations between people of the same sex, who may or may not identify themselves as gay or lesbian.

Development of Homosexuality

The word homosexuality came into general usage following the 1892 translation of Krafft Ebbing's *Psychological Sexualis*. Some earlier usage has been recorded: Swiss Doctor Karoly Maria Benkert used the term 'homosexual' in a response to German anti-homosexual legislation in 1869 to describe "inborn, therefore irrepressible drive"(Plummer 142). Foucault also records the use of the term in his 1890 paper *Archiv Fur Neurologie*, by Carl Westphal to describe "less a type of sexual relations than... a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and feminine in oneself" (43). However, the 1890's marks the general adoption of the term by writers such as essayists J. A. Symonds and theorist Havelock Ellis. Like Benkert, all these theorists were involved in a debate about whether desires and behaviors described by the term 'homosexual' were innate or culturally acquired.

By virtue of this definition, the term homosexual can be used to describe individuals as well as their sexual orientation, sexual history or self identification. Since the word places emphasis on sexuality, it should be avoided in reference to non-sexual contexts. Some people also feel the term is too clinical and somewhat dehumanizing. Much of that sentiment arose while homosexuality was still classified in the early nineteenth century as a mental illness in the Diagnostic and Statistical

Manual of Mental Disorders. As a result, the terms 'gay' and 'lesbian' are generally preferred when discussing a person of this sexual orientation, whose sexual history is predominated by this behavior or who acts as such. The first letters are frequently combined to create the acronym LGBT (which is also written has GLBT, in which B and T refer to bisexuals and transgender individuals). Some same sex oriented people personally prefer the term 'homosexual' rather than 'gay' as they may perceive the former as describing a sexual orientation and the latter as describing a cultural or socio-political group with which they do not identify with.

Although some early writers used the adjective 'homosexual' to refer to any single gender context, today the term is virtually exclusively used for sexual attraction. The term homo-social is now used to describe single sex context that are not specifically sexual. The more generic term 'homophilia' (same love) is also preferred by some.

Derogatory terms include faggot (or the common abbreviation fag), which generally refers to gay man, poof or poofster, which are used mostly in the United Kingdom and Commonwealths, Queer, which is generally used against anyone who is not exclusively heterosexual, but also reclaimed as an affirming term by many gays and academics, gay and homo, which are common terms among adolescents to harass each other and dyke, which refers specially to lesbians. The manifestation of sexual orientation is subject to considerable variability. Thus it is common for homosexual individuals in hetero normative societies to love, marry and have children with individuals of the opposite sex, a practice that may be done primarily for social reasons in societies which reject same sex relations, as a cover for one's orientation. These adaptations are forms of situational sexual behavior. A further and extremely common manifestation of situational sexual behavior involving homosexual acts is seen in prisons where individuals only meet members of their own sex for long

periods of time.

Regarding the orientation of homosexuality, writers can create such impression in the environment of his writing, or they can bestow their characters with distinctive markers in their performative behavior. Certain features such as effeminacy, excessive preoccupation with male beauty, misogyny, inability to express their deep feelings to their soul mates, etc. are described in pathology as the description of homosexuality. Only a single among aforementioned characteristics may be inadequate to identify that someone with such predilection is unmistakably a homosexual. But as pathologists agree when excessive preoccupation with male beauty comes jointly with any of those features, they are traces of homosexuality at the most, or homoeroticism at the least. The character having same sex passion detests nature at the cost of artificiality.

Throughout history homosexuality has existed in most societies. Various cultures have different attitudes toward it. The ancient Greeks not only accepted homosexuality but considered it to be an ideal relationship, perhaps because they were taught to consider women as inferior. Such men felt that only man could fulfill the role of true lover and friend. Similarly, some ancient African cultures accepted same sex marriage. Among the Nzema of Ghana, 'friendship marriage' between man and the male teenager and sometimes two women of different generations was taken as means of transmitting, social and spiritual guidance. There is a long tradition in the Christian west of hostility toward homosexuality although this usually took the form of formal regulation of male homosexual activity rather than female lesbian activity. Christian taboos against homosexuality have varied in strength through time and have had different effects on male and female homosexual behavior. Attitude towards homosexuality are, thus, culturally specific and vary enormously across different

cultures and through various historical periods. Not only attitudes vary, the social and subjective meanings given to homosexuality are also culturally specific.

Social and cultural judgments on homosexuality have however relied on theories developed in the field of sexology after the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Pioneer sexologists of the period developed the notion that homosexuality was characteristic of a particular type of person. Karl Wistphal, for instance, in the 1860s, described contrary sexual feelings and argued that homosexuality was a product of moral insanity resulting from congenital reversal of sexual feelings. Karl Ulrichs, a German Lawyer and writer who was himself homosexually inclined, pioneered congenital theories and argued that the 'Uring' (as he terms homosexuals) was the product of the anomalous development of the originally undifferentiated human embryo, resulting in a female mind in a male body or vice versa. Such bodily structure is known as intermediate sex. On a more scientific level, the great German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld developed the notion of 'third sex' and integrated into this notion the discoveries of the significance of hormones in the development of sexual differentiation. His ideas were taken up by homosexual apologists to form the basis for an explanation of homosexuality, which was free of the pejorative implications of sin or moral weakness theories.

The role of emotions in sexual life was a matter of concern for later sexologists like Edward Carpenter, who was especially anxious to know about emotional sexual feelings. Carpenter, the gay socialist and free thinker who wrote a number of books in defense of homosexuality introduces differences between love and sexual feeling. Talking of the intermediate sex (1908) he writes:

The word love is commonly used in so general and almost indiscriminate a fashion as to denote sometimes physical instincts and

acts, and profound feelings; and in this way a good deal of misunderstanding is caused. In this book the word is used to denote the inner devotion of one person to another; and when anything else is meant as, for instance, sexual relations and actions- this is clearly stated and expressed. (188)

The linguistic demarcations that Carpenter sets up between love feelings and sexual acts are partly, of course, strategic rather than scientific. He is concerned with defending homosexual men. By stressing the significance of the emotional, rather than the physical aspect of sexual relations, he argues for greater moral rectitude in gay love, which was, in experience, often unconsummated. Eroticism between men, in his opinion, easily reaches a state of transcendence not because of its sexual possibilities but because of its tendency to run along emotional channels. Differentiating between emotional states of being and sexual acts, Carpenter describes his version as something emotional rather than sexual. Borrowing the notion of intermediate sex from Karl Ulrich, Carpenter says that urnings have a specific part to play as reconcilers of the sexes to one another, Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character* (1903) appeared two years before Freud's first edition of *Three Essays on Sexuality*. Though the book is quite unbalanced in its view of gender, it popularized the notion of universal bisexuality. Weininger urges that it is impossible to love actual women. Men who love women can do so only by projecting on to them their own narcissistic ideal. Conversely, women who have no essence and no existence cannot love. Thus, Weininger regards homosexuality not as degenerative or pathological, but as an internal human quality.

Along with invigorating congenial theories, Havelock Ellis also accepted environmental factors in the formation of homosexual desire. Ellis redefined

homosexuality as an inborn condition rather than a form of sin. He furthermore, differed from many of his European counterparts in explicitly rejecting the vocabulary of 'degeneration', insisting that homosexuality should be seen as a harmless physiological variation rather than a neuropath taint. His sexual inversion is a distinct and definitive investigation of homosexuality. This book seeks to normalize male homosexuality by rendering it acceptable to a wider audience and downplaying its association with effeminacy. The book largely intends to defend homosexuality. Ellis assumed that the invert might be visually distinguishable from the normal body through anatomical markers, just as the differences between the sexes had traditionally been mapped upon the body. He argues, homosexuality is an innate condition. He admits that external environmental factors might excite the latent condition although he insists such factors require favorable pre-disposition.

By the early twentieth century, theories of sexuality had begun to shift in emphasis, moving away from a focus on the body towards psychological theories of desire. With the movement towards psychological modes of sexuality, sexologists relied less and less upon the methodologies of comparative anatomy and implicitly acknowledged that physical characteristics are inadequate evidence of the truth of the body in question. In this regard, psychoanalytic theory developed by Sigmund Freud is of vital importance. Freud doubts the very existence of innate inversion and strongly opposes the earlier sexologists who believed homosexuals should be demarcated as special category persons. He believes homosexuality as arrested psychological development.

Recent advantages in social psychology and neo-Freudian theory suggest that development of heterosexual or homosexual propensities during youth is not a product of inherent biological imperative but the effect of historically conditioned

familial and social influences channeling sexual possibilities which exists in a young child. The changing family, the changing notion of childhood and the role of parents and so on actually have profound effects in the construction of individual heterosexual, or other sexual categorizations. Emotions are differentially structured according to different social forms and pressures. But, even if primary differences were biologically formed, this would not fundamentally alter the argument. Society plays a very crucial role in respect to homosexuality. The important point to be observed while studying homosexuality is that there is no automatic relationship between social categorization and individual sense of self-identity. The meaning given to homosexual activities can vary enormously. It depends upon a variety of factors, social class, geographical location, gender differentiation and so on. In the *Construction of Homosexuality* Jeffrey Weeks writes, “It is vital to keep in mind when exploring homosexuality which has always been defined in our culture as a deviant form, that what matters is not the inherent nature of the act but the social construction of meaning around that activity, and the individual response to it” (177).

Homosexuality remained for long the term of abuse. The same sex practice encountered not only legal hurdles, but more severely, many people were massacred in the name of being homosexuals. But later, homosexuality earned the stature of special species. Homosexuals were considered a ‘social freak’ which has to do something with the effect of power circulating within the society. Power in its productive phase functions to install limits through ‘marking off’ the discursive domain specific to individual subject positions.

Late in the 19th century, as large cities allowed for greater anonymity, as wage labor apart from family becoming common, and as more women were drawn out of homes, evidence of a new pattern of homosexual expression surfaced.

Regarding Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgender, Intra-sexual and Queers, (LGBTIQ) movements, in *Readers' Companion to American History*, Houghton Mifflin has described how these individuals developed ways of meeting one another and institutions to foster a sense of identity. By 1915, one participant in this new gay world was referring to it as “a community distinctly organized” (5). An urban gay subculture had come into existence by the 1920s and 1930s which, for the most part remained hidden from view because of social hostility.

World War II served as a critical divide in the social history of homosexuality. Large numbers of the young people left their families, small towns, and closely knit ethnic neighborhoods to enter a sex-segregated military or to migrate to larger cities for wartime employment.

After the war, many of them made sexual choices designed to support their gay identities. Pat Bond, a woman from Iowa who first met other lesbians while in the military, decided to stay in San Francisco after her discharge. Donald Vining remained in New York City rather than return to his small hometown in New Jersey. They, along with countless others, sustained a vibrant gay subculture that revolved around bars and friendship networks. Many cities saw their first gay bars during the 1940s.

RCAH further summarize that this new visibility provoked latent cultural prejudices. Firings from government jobs and purges from the military intensified in the 1950s. President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued an executive order in 1953 barring gay men and lesbians from all federal jobs. Many state and local governments and private corporations followed suit. The FBI began a “surveillance program against homosexuals” (9).

The lead taken by the federal government encouraged local police forces to harass gay citizens. Government officers regularly raided gay bars, sometimes arresting dozens of men and women on a single night. Under these conditions, some gays began to organize politically. In November 1950 in Los Angeles, a small group of men led by Harry Hay and Chuck Rowland met to form what would become the Mattachine Society. Mostly male in membership, it was joined in 1955 by a lesbian organization in San Francisco, the Daughters of Bilitis, founded by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon. In the 1950s these organizations remained small, but they established chapters in several cities and published magazines that were a “beacon of hope to the readers” (11).

In the 1960s, influenced by the model of a militant black civil rights movement the ‘homophile movement,’ as the participants dubbed it-became more visible. Activists, such as Franklin Kameny and Barbara Gittings, picketed government agencies in Washington to protest discriminatory employment policies. In San Francisco, Martin, Lyon, and others targeted police harassment. By 1969, perhaps fifty homophile organizations existed in the United States, with memberships of a few thousand.

A massive grassroots gay liberation movement was born. Mixing their voice with that of the radical protest of blacks, women, and college students in the 1960s, gays challenged all forms of hostility and punishment meted out by society. Choosing to come out of the closet and publicly proclaim their identity, they have ushered in a social change movement that has grown substantially. By 1973, there were almost eight hundred gay and lesbian organizations in the United States; by 1990, the number was several thousand. By 1970, 5,000 gay men and lesbians marched in New York

City to commemorate the first anniversary of the Stonewall Riots; in October 1987, over 600,000 marched in Washington, to demand equality.

The changes were far-reaching. Over the next two decades, half the states decriminalized homosexual behavior, and police harassment was sharply contained. Many large cities included sexual orientation in their civil rights statutes, as did Wisconsin and Massachusetts, first among the states to do so. In 1975, the Civil Service Commission eliminated the ban on the employment of homosexuals in most federal jobs. Many of the nation's religious denominations engaged in spirited debates about the morality of homosexuality, and some, like Unitarianism and Reformed Judaism opened their doors to gay and lesbian ministers and rabbis. The lesbian and gay world was no longer an underground subculture but, in larger cities especially, a well-organized community, with businesses, political clubs, social service agencies, community centers, and religious congregations bringing people together. In a number of places, openly gay candidates ran for elective office and won.

These changes spawned opposition. In 1977, the singer Anita Bryant led a campaign to repeal a gay rights ordinance in Dade County, Florida. Her success encouraged others, and by the early 1980s, a well-organized conservative force had materialized to target the gay rights movement. Politicians, such as Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina, and fundamentalist ministers, such as Jerry Falwell of Lynchburg, Virginia, who formed Moral Majority, Inc. joined forces to slow the progress of the gay movement.

Michel Foucault: *The History of Sexuality* (Vol.1)

Power creates a series of binary identifications. The creation of new political and social identities is one of the most distinctive effects of power/knowledge nexus.

As such, power effectively ‘produces’ individual subjects, both in the sense of being “subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to (one’s) own identity by a conscience or self knowledge” (12). Foucault’s treatment of homosexuality provides a characteristic example. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* Foucault speaks of the invention of homosexuality, among other exotic perversions, via the “specification of individuals” (42). Such a process effected the creation of new sexual identities around particular acts and perversions hitherto regarded as temporary aberration(s). Around the figure of the homosexual in particular was constructed a whole “personage, a past, a case history and a childhood, in addition to a . . . life form and a morphology” (43). The specification of the homosexual was made possible by the confluence of a network of disparate discourses and practices targeted at the body of the pervert. The new sciences of sexology, psychiatry and medicine were particularly instrumental in the construction of this new identity, whilst the articulation of power in the practices of confinement and treatment enabled such discourses to have practical effects.

The example of the homosexual also illustrates the extent to which the government of socially marginal identities simultaneously regulates the experience of subjectivity in the wider population. This is, in fact, one of the most important functions of those dividing practices examined above. In the example cited, the specification of homosexuality inevitably calls forth the establishment of heterosexuality and its attendant social and political identities: “just as the homosexual is enmeshed in a series of relations of power and knowledge, so to is the heterosexual couple” (105). Beyond this particular case, Foucault explores a number of other marginalized identities, including the delinquent, the madman, the pervert and the criminal, each of which only further illustrates the construction of limits

distinguishing normal from deviant and self from abject. Foucault argues that the constitution of subjectivity through such practices effects the reification of the 'normal subject' thereby facilitating a pervasive normalization of subjectivity so characteristic of modern societies. Foucault's studies provide a series of histories of the "different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subject" (208). Identity and subjectivity are not, for Foucault, the realization of some deep, interiorized essence, ostensibly the very distillation of human nature. Rather the question of humanity's nature is a problem generated in discourse, arising at certain moments and belying a particular discursive history. As Foucault concludes, even the history of man has a history.

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault examines the organization of homosexuality in the west. He begins his analysis with a powerful critique of what he terms "the repressive hypothesis". Conventional understandings of western sexuality appeal to the repressive nature of Victorian society. Sexuality is a taboo, something about which nothing can be said. Silence and censorship are the law. In the contrast of this view Foucault suggests that sexuality is talked about all the time in Victorian society. From the rise of sexology to judicial institutions, sexuality is a profusely discussed and regulated entity. It is something which is produced through discourse, not repressed through censorship.

The most significant aspect of Foucault's research centers on the production of the homosexual. The proliferation of discourse of sexuality gave rise to the category "homosexual" originally, a taxonomic device employed within sexology, the terms subsequently gained currency in judicial and psychiatric fields of knowledge. By demonstrating that "homosexuals" did not exist before this classification, Foucault shows that social identities are effects of the ways in which knowledge is organized.

He observes the politically ambiguous characters and the formation of characters like the homosexual:

There is no question that the appearance of nineteenth century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourse on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversions, pedantry, and “psychic hermaphroditism” made possible a strong advance of social controls into the area of “perversity”; but it also made possible the formation of a “reverse” discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or “naturally” be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified. (101)

Foucault offers an account of the social production of identities which are assumed to be natural in current dominant knowledge. Foucault views the invention of the homosexual and the addict as predicated upon the modern epistemic regime in which particular acts and behaviors like sodomy and drug taking were transformed into criminalized and pathologized identities through the positive effects of power. The modern regime which organized through a division between normal and abnormal, are mutually dependent categories: the self’s border is produced through a social power of producing and policing the other. As Michel Foucault explained, the shift from acts to identities is an effect of a modern epistemic regime that produces, locates, and contains what and who are threatened and threatening in order to produce and stabilize the norm. The strategies and operations of modern power are concealed but work to produce and render visible the deviant, the pathological, the delinquent:

There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourse of truth which operates through and on the basis of this

association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth In the end, we are judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living and dying as a function of the true discourse which are the bearers of the specific effects of power. (35)

Foucault wished to prove beneath such abstract system in which discursive practices are interwoven with social practices by the circulation of power. Truth then is itself a product of relations of power and of the systems in which it flows and it changes as system change. Hence, he avers that homosexuality is socially created, historically variable and therefore deeply politicized.

At the juncture we should be aware of the fact that sexuality is a metonym for homosexuality and in *The History of Sexuality* Foucault traces unmistakably the history of homosexuality of “sodomites”. Thus, whenever I’m stating Foucault’s concept of sexuality, I am stating homosexuality, like Sedgwick says, “[homosexuality is] the metonym for sexuality that the two story of sexuality actually installs is homosexuality . . . and the history of sexuality is the history of homosexuality, under the heading incorporation of perversions and a new specification of individuals” hence, the term themselves are interchangeable (Sedgwick 281).

Foucault’s discussion here of the invention of ‘the homosexual’ is presented as an exemplifying instance of a process of specification, of the emergence of identities where previously there had been acts, that also included all those minor perverts whom 19th century psychiatrists entomologized by giving them strange baptismal names.

Foucault's claim reflected to shift the tactics of power from an emphasis on sexual behavior to one on sexual personhood is the place of the opposition between natural and unnatural acts, sexual experience would be divided into normal and abnormal identities. Sexuality therefore became a central site of the construction of subjectivism.

In constructing a genealogy of the homosexual/heterosexual divide, Sedgwick's work draws on Foucault. To be homosexual, is not to be heterosexual, and in the more direct terms to be male is not to be female. It is precisely this fixing of identity, this 'government of individualization', that Foucault is so opposed to (208-223). Foucault thus exhorts us to consider the costs of our subjectification in terms of the active restrictions of freedom and agency. Foucault's intention is to wake us from our great 'anthropological sleep' such that we might become aware of the extent to which our subjectification erects limit our experience (430-433). Whilst limits have very immediate and very concrete practical effects, Foucault stresses that limits remain 'events of thought' and as such might be discursively and practically reconstituted. In this sense, the subject may actively challenge the pervasive observation of limits through his or own aesthetic practices, through the realization of a limit 'attitude'.

For Foucault, the construction of homosexuality since the mid-nineteenth century has engendered innumerable transformations in the manner in which men relate to one another in their ordinary social interactions. In particular, Foucault argues that intimacy between men and the access to other men's bodies has been problematized through the reification of homosexuality and its attendant homophobia. The construction of what Foucault calls a homosexual 'mode of existence' has thus ensured that friendship and intimacy between men have become aligned with a sexual

identity, hopelessly problematizing the manner in which men might come to share “their time. . . their leisure, their grief, their knowledge, their confidences” (136). Foucault here notes the extent to which the desire to develop intimate relationships with other men has been conflated with sexual desire and the practice of homosexuality.

Recent critical studies on “sexuality,” undoubtedly, have to deal with it as a category consisting of wide range of sexualities rather than only a monolithic heterosexual one. The traditional formula of ‘normative’ heterosexuality, it seems, has erased the historiographies of many people or groups whose sexual behavior define such norm. Contemporary studies on sexuality seek to describe the repressed historiographies, and these “other” sexualities that were ignored or denied by traditional scholars. Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, among many others, have illustrated and emphasized the shift-worthwhile to be noted- from sexual behavior to sexual identity with the commencement of modern practice of putting mortals into either/or camp of sexuality from nineteenth century onwards. In his influential *The History of Sexuality*, volume one, Foucault argues that homosexuality and homosexuals date from the 1870s. Foucault argues:

The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality [. . .] Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practices of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the

soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species. (43)

Foucault, however, does not mean to say that sexual acts that we refer to as homosexual acts were unknown before the 1870s. Rather, such behaviors already had a long rich history and as Sedgwick comments, “What was new from the turn of the century was the world-mapping by which every given person, just as he or she was necessarily assignable to a male or female gender, was now considered necessarily assignable as well to a homo- or a hetero-sexuality [. . .]” (2). This shift obviously was a political one. In the name of maintaining morality, the society exerted a set of limitations by constructing parameters of normalcy. It is interesting to note the use of the concept of ‘normalcy’ in the modern sense and its connection to the act of rendering sexualities other-than-hetero-sexualities as deviant. Though early Christianity had adopted anti-sexuality-as different from the sexual permissiveness of Hellenistic times-as its major tenet, watertight classification of individuals into heterosexuals and homosexuals occurred only in the late nineteenth century. The then bourgeoisie, by making use of what Foucault calls deployment of ‘technologies of power’, was able to make that arbitrary imposition of hetero/homo division in seemingly natural ways, which, in turn made hetero-desire a compulsion.

No area was exempt from this strict regulation and policing of sexuality, whether that is medical, legal, judicial, academic, or any other for that matter. Classical psychoanalysis, for instance, simply takes heterosexuality for granted. So, is the case with mainstream feminists; eventhough, sexuality and literature related to it or representing it had first become an issue within the very movement. The mainstream feminist contention of sexuality as a construction of patriarchy would not satisfy the radical/lesbian feminists, for whom there was no less oppression within the

movement. In similar fashion, gay liberation movements-notably after Stonewall riots in 1969-developed collective activism, openly affirming what they were. Many gays, who were in 'closets' due to the rigorous sexual taxonomy of individuals, 'came out' only then.

Along with Foucault, Jacques Derrida's poststructuralist contribution of deconstructive strategies, has similarly disclosed the credibility of the spectrum of sexualities, demarcating "the insecure divisions between male and female, femininity and masculinity, heterosexual and homosexual, friend and sodomite" (337), as Rachel Adams and David Savran ascribe in the introductory part of *The Masculinity Studies Reader*. Since all such terms as historically contingent, talking only of homosexuals and heterosexuals, for example, is not only insufficient to refer to conscious or unconscious performances such as "queen, dyke, butch, transsexual, nelly, femme," (Chinn 295) but absurd also, as the system of constructing such binaries is less a condition of human nature than being a feature of certain kind of society.

Binaries, such as Adams and Savran mention, especially their traditional formulaic referential significance, are inefficacious to include the dynamic range of sexual desire and multiple identities. At present, the terms 'sex', 'gender' and 'sexuality' often blur into each other in a complicated way. 'Sex' not only refers to what Sedgwick calls 'chromosomal sex' but to the cultural expectations of male and female, namely masculinity and femininity. 'Gender' again fares the same schema, as due to the hardcore imposition of masculine/feminine qualities, individuals are forced to act accordingly. If gender was not limited to the logic of the binary, sexuality would also be able to cater to wider range of other repressed or unacknowledged desires and practices. Moreover 'sex' and 'sexuality' also overlap, as Sedgwick clarifies:

[. . .] the whole realm of what modern culture refers to as ‘sexuality’ and also calls ‘sex’ -the array of acts, expectations, narratives, pleasures, identity-formations, and knowledge, in both women and men, that tends to cluster most densely around certain genital sensations but is not adequately defined by them-that realm is virtually impossible to situate on a map delimited by the feminist defined sex/gender distinction. (29)

Sexuality, thus, can be seen as a fluid category, which incorporates not only concrete and real activities but ruminations, fantasies, and what-not. Moreover, due to the individual differences it is very hard to define a precise boundary of sexuality. Even identical sexual acts may mean very different things to different people. Many people may even have rich mental or emotional involvement with sexual acts they do not do, or which they even do not want to do. Thus, the homo-/hetero-opposition turn out to be overtly constricting in this regard.

In a nutshell, rather than being embroiled in the accuracy of biological essentialism versus historical constructivism regarding sex, gender, and sexuality, it would be more reasonable, as Sedgwick argues, to keep such understanding, and “cultural and material reproduction, plural, multi-capillary, argues-eyed, respectful and endlessly cherished” (44). And as Garber’s concept “clothes make the man”(75) in her *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety* also suggests, the concept of male and female or masculinity and femininity and, by extension, sexuality, must be viewed as an unstable historical and political construct in our societies and such an awkward issue has continually to be revisited, disavowed, rediscovered, and affirmed.

Homosexuals in America

Homosexuality is still considered an uncomfortable, if not inappropriate, topic of discussion. Many literature professors simply avoid addressing lesbian and gay issues in undergraduate courses not specifically devoted to lesbian and gay writers. And at many colleges, although courses on gay and lesbian writers can be offered occasionally as “special topics” courses, they do not always occur as regular course offerings in undergraduate English Faculties, despite the progress made by gay study programs since the 1970s and the emergence of lesbian, gay and queer theory as an important force in academia in the early 1990s.

Gay people are no longer placed in mental institutions for “treatment” - which sometimes included aversion therapy, electric shock treatment, and even lobotomies-it wasn't until 1974 that such practices officially ended, when the category of homosexuality was removed from the American Psychiatric Association's list of psychological disorders. Moreover, it wasn't until 1990 that the 1952 immigration policy restricting homosexual immigration into the United States was lifted.

Homophobia is evident in many forms of discrimination against gay men and lesbians still practiced today, despite the enormous social and political gains achieved by gay and lesbian activist groups since the Gay Liberation Movement began in 1969. Then the gay and lesbian patrons of Greenwich Village's Stonewall Inn Bar had finally responded to police brutality by fighting back, two thousand strong, during two nights of rioting. This momentous event, referred to as *Stonewall*, has great symbolic significance because it marks the turning point when gay men and women renounced their victim status and stood up, collectively, for their rights as American citizens.

In the 1990s, gay men and lesbians in America still face discrimination in the military; in obtaining jobs and housing; in using public facilities, such as hotels and

taverns; in areas of family law such as the right to marry, retain custody of their children, adopt children, or provide foster care; as victims of police harassment and violent hate crimes; and in AIDS related discrimination. Gay men and lesbians who are members of racial minorities in America face a complex system of discrimination. For in addition to the oppression they suffer in white heterosexist culture, gay and lesbian African Americans, Asian Americans, Chicanos, and Latinos are sometimes heavily stigmatized in their own communities.

The myth that gay people are sick, evil, or both and that it is therefore in their “nature” to be insatiable sexual predators, to molest children, and to corrupt youths by “recruiting” them to become homosexual. Another myth portrays gay men and lesbians as a very small population of deviants, when, in fact, it is estimated that gay people comprise at least 10% of the population of the United States. Other common misconceptions include the belief that children raised by gay men or lesbians will grow up to be gay, that unchecked homosexuality will result in the extinction of the human race, and that gay people are responsible for declines in U.S. foreign power.

Gay Criticism

Gay criticism doesn't tend to focus on efforts to define homosexuality. Sexual relations between men, or even just the sexual desire of one man for another, are the generally accepted criterion of gayness in white middle-class America today. Nevertheless, not all cultures share this definition. For example, in Mexican and South American cultures, the mere fact of sexual activity with or desire for another male does not indicate that a man is homosexual. As long as he behaves in a traditionally masculine manner - strong, dominant, decisive - and consistently assumes the male sexual role as penetrator (never allowing himself to be penetrated, orally or anally), a man remains a *macho*, a “real” man. As a *macho*, a man can have

sex with both men and women and not be considered what North Americans call homosexual. The same definition of homosexuality was used in white American working class culture around the turn of the twentieth century: only men who allowed themselves to be penetrated by a man during sex and behaved in a traditionally feminine manner - submissive, coy, flirtatious, “soft” were considered homosexual.

It wasn't until the nineteenth century that the notion of homosexual identity, or even the word homosexual, was adopted in Anglo European and American culture. Before that time, certain sexual acts generally speaking, all forms of non procreative sex - were forbidden by church or state, but they weren't viewed as evidence of a specific sexual identity. The idea that one could be a homosexual came along with the idea, promoted by the medical professions, that such an identity was a form of pathology. This is why many gay men today prefer to refer to themselves as gay: the word homosexual is associated, for many, with the belief that homosexuality is a medical or psychological disorder.

Attitudes toward homosexuality, like attitudes toward sexuality in general, differ widely from one place to another and from one historical period to another. The intense anti-gay sentiment that emerged in an especially concentrated and virulent form in America during the early 1950s and that which lingers today does not represent some kind of universally held attitude toward, or even definition of, homosexuality.

Gay sensibility includes an awareness of being different, at least in certain ways, from the members of the mainstream, dominant culture, and the complex feelings that result from an implicit, ongoing social oppression. In other words, part of seeing the world as a gay man includes the ways in which one deals with being oppressed as a gay man.

Gay critics attempt to determine what might constitute a gay poetics, or a way of writing that is uniquely gay; to establish a gay literary tradition; and to decide what writers and works belong to that tradition. Gay critics also examine how gay sensibility affects literary expression and study the ways in which heterosexual texts can have a homoerotic dimension. They try to rediscover gay writers from the past whose work was underappreciated, distorted, or suppressed, including gay writers who have been presumed heterosexual. They try to determine the sexual politics of specific texts, analyzing, for example, how gay characters or “feminine” men are portrayed in both gay and heterosexual texts. Finally, gay critics identify and correct heterosexist interpretations of literature that fail to recognize or appreciate the gay sensibility informing specific literary works.

Chapter Three

Brick and Skipper as Homosexual Couples

William presents homosexual relationship in the play *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Though not stated clearly and given a back door entry by Williams, Brick and Skipper are the homosexual couples in the play. The idealized friendship between Brick and Skipper deserves the sympathy of readers that none of the heterosexual relationships can match. William appreciates Maggie, but even she cannot come up to the level of communication shared by the friends. Homosexuality is the inadmissible thing that hovers over the background of the play.

The room in which the action takes place between Brick Pollitt and Maggie is the same room that was occupied for so many years by the former owners of the plantation, Jack straw and Peter Ochello, who were homosexual lovers. William admits that the two “shared this room all their lives together” (939).

Never appearing in the play, but nonetheless an integral character, Skipper was Brick’s best friend. Skipper’s love for his friend and subsequent suicide, began the trek through darkness that would become Brick’s life.

Skipper and Brick shared a closed bond—possibly too close by the moral standards of time. Maggie became convinced that they loved one another. She confronted Skipper with her suspicions, and he tried to ‘prove’ her wrong, but was unsuccessful. Skipper tried to make love with Maggie but he wasn’t able to satisfy her sexually. Then Maggie realized that the love between her husband and Skipper was a love that dare not speak its name and a love that could not be satisfied or discussed. Ashamed by his feelings, Skipper began to drink heavily. One night, after finally acknowledging he was gay, Skipper’s heart couldn’t take it any more and he committed suicide because of depression and alcoholism. Guilt-ridden over the death

of his friend and his own deeply repressed feelings, ashamed of his actions and of his nature, Brick stops sleeping with his wife and starts sleeping with a bottle.

Margaret: Why I remember when we double-dated at college, Gladys Fitzgerald and I and you and Skipper, it was more like a date between you and Skipper. Gladys and I were just sort of tagging along as if it was necessary to chaperone you!—to make a good public impression—(954)

Brick hung up on his friend's admission of desire and shut out his wife sexually and emotionally. Unable to endure any kind of intimacy, Brick drinks himself into detachment.

Margaret: You know, our sex life didn't just peter out in the usual way, it was cut off short, long before the natural time for it to. (952)

Maggie seduced Skipper to find out what his relation with Brick was, and when he was unable to perform sexually with her, she felt she knew the truth. Because of his sexual predisposition toward Brick, Skipper decided to 'skip' Maggie.

Margaret: He slapped me hard on the mouth—
then turned and ran without stopping once. (956)

Brick's real problem is that he cannot face the complexity of his own emotions and sexual desires. He needs to see his feelings for Skipper as pure because the thought of being branded as a queer terrifies him. Like all deeply closeted people, Brick is obsessed with what his audience will think.

Brick: One man has one great good true thing in this life. One great good thing which is true—I had friendship with Skipper—you are naming it dirty! (956)

Brick feels that the cause of death of Skipper is because of Maggie. Had Maggie not enticed Skipper, maybe the latter would still be alive. For this reason Brick is not able to forgive Maggie and does not like her forced company.

Brick: Give me my crutch.

Margaret: Lean on me.

Brick: No, just give me my crutch.

Margaret: Lean on my shoulder

Brick: I don't want to lean on your shoulder, I want my crutch!

Are you going to give me my crutch or do I have to get down on my knees on the floor and – (948)

Skipper, Brick's deceased friend embodies some of the most important issues. The issue of sexual preference is peripheral. The primary motive in creating the unseen character (Skipper) was to demonstrate the power of human relationships, to reveal the incredible hold that one individual can have over another. Skipper is the sexual barometer in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Skipper's voyage with Brick leads to troubled waters for them both.

William's made Brick's homosexuality with Skipper more or less ambiguous. But still their presence as a homosexual couple cannot be ruled out. The homosexuality of Brick and Skipper is the central idea that guides the story. Through the Brick and Skipper relationship, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* was heralded by many as a play in which homosexuality was at last to be presented without evasion.

Prior and Louis as Homosexual Couples

Louis: When did you find this?

Prior: I couldn't tell you.

Louis: Why?

Prior: I was scared, Lou.

Louis: OF WHAT?

Prior: That you'll leave me. (28)

In the beginning of the play Louis and Prior experience a major terrible shock. It is more of a double shock for Louis. His grandmother had passed away and Prior adds another shocking news. Prior reveals that he has been infected with AIDS– and that awful moment signals the inevitable destruction of their relationship. As the play begins we are made to know that Louis Ironson and Prior Walter are in a homosexual relationship. It is their conflict that will confront them for the rest of the play. From the queasy beginning we can predict the downward arc of their relationship.

Paralleling the homosexual relationship of Louis and Prior is the heterosexual relationship of Joe Pitt and his wife Harper. It is the story of these two couples whose relationships are disintegrating. The two couples' fates quickly become intertwined. Joe stumbles upon Louis crying in the bathroom of the courthouse where he works and they strike up an unlikely friendship based in part on Louis's suspicion that Joe is gay. Harper and Prior also meet, in a fantastical mutual dream sequence in which Prior, operating on the "threshold of revolution", reveals to Harper that her husband is a closeted homosexual.

Ironically and precisely, Prior is the play's chief victim. He begins the play at the mercy of everyone and everything around him. He is abandoned by Louis for no fault of his.

Louis: I have to go bury grandma.

Prior: Lou?

Then you'll come home?

Louis: Then I'll come home. (28)

Prior tells Louis he is afraid he will leave him, but rather than comforting him or telling him he loves him, Louis just says “oh,” than says he has to go. Only with prompting does Louis say he will come home. Louis reneges on his own responsibilities and his actions are clearly condemned. His abandonment of Prior is weak, selfish and insensitive. Caring for Prior is complicated and excruciating and Louis’s guilt is genuine. He walks out on Prior with his eyes open, aware of the callousness of his action yet brave enough to do what he feels he must. Louis doesn’t have the moral strength to stick with Prior and therefore abandons him. As a result, Prior is terribly unhappy and thinks he is beginning to lose his mind when he starts hearing voices and having visions.

Louis might seem like one of the play’s villains, abandoning his lover at the time of his greatest need. But although Louis has human failings and commits an immoral act of leaving Prior, he is no villain, as Act II, Scene i helps us to understand. The depiction of Prior’s illness is truly awful. The screams in the night are frightening, and Louis’ panic is entirely justified; Prior refuses to go to the hospital, but there is no way Louis can help him. He cannot even perform the simple task of cleaning his body, since Priors’ blood is infectious. In addition to this physical and medical helplessness, the scene conveys the emotional difficulties Louis must suffer. The gentle, witty Prior of years past is replaced by a person who screams and cries, shouts at Louis for touching him and faints without warning. He is entirely self-centered which is understandable but difficult for his lover. Faced with such a constant nightmare, Louis’ actions become more comprehensible.

Prior: I think something horrible is wrong with me.

I can’t breathe. . . .

Louis: (starting to exit) I’m calling the ambulance.

Prior: No, wait, I. . .

Louis: Wait? Are you fucking crazy? Oh God you're on fire, your head is on fire.

Prior: It hurts, it hurts. . .

Louis: I'm calling the ambulance.

Prior: I don't want to go to the hospital, I don't want to go to the hospital please let me lie here, just. . . (53)

Homosexuality as a Construct

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 exclusively for others of the same sex or gender. Homosexuality is usually contrasted with heterosexuality and bisexuality.

Brick is trapped by the sexual categories he has been taught since childhood that men are for friendship, women are for sex. Unfortunately for him, those categories have become blurred: His best friend was sexually attracted to him, and his wife wants their marriage to have, in addition to sex, the honesty of friendship.

As discussed in the second chapter about homosexuality being a social construct, so is the case in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. The Native American cultures with cross-gender tradition viewed both gender and sexuality very differently from European Colonists. Religious and civil authorities condemned such acts as sinful and unnatural. Participants in such acts, then began to be known as 'homosexual', 'perverts', 'inverts' and gradually later came to be known as 'gay' and 'lesbian' in the mid-twentieth century. *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* was written before the emergence of the Gay Rights Movement of the 1960's and 1970's which forced many societies and countries to alter their prejudiced views on homosexuality.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof premiered in the 1950's. After the end of the Second World War, Americans had begun to re-evaluate themselves. The old values and systems had collapsed and man felt orphaned and defrauded. Faith in religion had been shaken. The result was a loss of identity and a feeling of alienation. A quest for meaning and stability, both in individual and social life began. Homosexuality had existed at that time also when *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* premiered after the war. But Tennessee Williams was not able to talk or present his views on homosexuality during this very critical period. The mainstream society was not ready to accept homosexuals. Being a gay himself, Tennessee Williams fell in love with Frank Merlo in 1947. In 1961, Merlo died of lung cancer and the playwright went into a deep depression that lasted for ten years. William's gayness was an open secret he neither publicly confirmed nor denied until the post-Stonewall era when gay critics took him to task for not coming out. The relationship of Williams and Merlo parallels the friendship between Brick and Skipper in the play.

Big Daddy: You started drinking when your friend Skipper died.

Brick: What are you suggesting?

Big Daddy: I am suggesting nothing.

Not, well, exactly normal in your friendship with – (970).

In the play, the mainstream society is represented by Big Daddy and Maggie. They use their power to get their hold over the minorities in the society. In *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, the minorities are represented by Brick. The central scene of the play is a reversal of the usual father-son confrontation over homosexuality. Here son Brick is horrified that Big Daddy is not shocked at the thought of homosexuality. To hide his homosexuality from the other family members, as it is not acceptable to them, Brick says that his friendship with Skipper was pure. Brick is unable to compromise neither

with his social image not with his platonic ideal. He represents the homosexual personality of the era of its transition and also its failure and crisis.

Brick: Both of us married into society, Big Daddy. (961)

Big Daddy loves Brick dearly, favoring him as his rightful heir. The confrontation between Big Daddy and Brick in the second act has been forced by the former because of his love for his son. It is his feeling for Brick which makes Big Daddy to bring the young man out of his psychological paralysis and back into the world of the living. Big Daddy was old and dying. He realized that he could not hand over his large estate to an alcoholic homosexual outcast. It would result in the decimation of the biggest plantation estate in the South. Big Daddy wants Brick to come out of his drinking and take hold of his estate.

Brick: You think so, too? You think so, too? You think me an' Skipper did, did, did!—sodomy!—together?

Big Daddy: Hold—!

Brick: You think Skipper and me were a pair of dirty old men? (971)

On the other hand, Maggie also represents the mainstream society. She is not comfortable with the relationship that her husband had with Skipper. She had lured Skipper into seduction but after he could not perform sexually, she was sure of their homosexual relationship. She calls herself a 'cat'. She is the 'Cat on a Hot Tin Roof', in the sense that her married life with a homosexual is very unpleasant. She longs for a healthy sexual relationship with her husband, but Brick does not want to go to bed with her, and they are childless.

Margaret: Y'know what I feel like, Brick?

I feel all the time like a cat on a hot tin roof.

Brick: Then jump off the roof, jump off it, cats can jump off roofs and land on their four feet uninjured!

Margaret: I can't see a man but you! Even with my eyes closed, I just see you, Brick. (949)

Brick is a homosexual, or at least a bisexual. Brick dislikes Maggie because of her unceasing and uncompromising efforts to make him normal, social and a responsible person. She wants him to return into normal life and accept the reality and responsibility of living like a family and social man. She is struggling to make him understand the necessity of some property with which to sustain life, the necessity of having a child and pleasing Big Daddy. She is sexually frustrated because her husband is no longer treating her as a wife. Another reason for her frustration is the possibility that the fortune she thinks she married into may be lost to her because of her drinking homosexual irresponsible husband.

Margaret: You know, our sex life didn't peter out in the usual way, it was cut off short, long before the natural time for it to.

Brick: You could leave me, Maggie.

Margaret: Don't want to and will not!

Margaret: You can be young without money, but you can't be old without it. You've got to be old with money because to be old without it is just too awful. (952)

Throughout the play, Williams privileges the troubled closeted homosexual over the fertile heterosexuals. But as the heterosexuals are in majority and in power, homosexuals become secondary and marginalized. The heterosexual is Bricks awkward, nerdy brother Gooper trapped in a loveless marriage with the crass, hyper fertile Mae.

Big Daddy: But Gooper's wife's a good breeder, you got to admit she's fertile. Hell, at supper tonight she had them all at the table and they had to put a couple of extra leafs in the table to make room for them, she's got five head of them, now, and another one's comin'.

Brick: Yep, number six is comin'. . . (962)

There is overwhelming dramatic evidence of Mae and Gooper's attempt to please Big Daddy and take control of the estate. Mae and Gooper represent heterosexuality with their six 'no-neck monsters' while Brick is seen as the lonely outcast homosexual who is married to Maggie but are childless. A lawyer in Memphis, Gooper has helped with running the plantation and considers himself the responsible son, the one capable and deserving of taking over from Big Daddy. To further consolidate his position, Gooper and Mae have parented five children and the sixth is on the way. Gooper and Mae are disgusted with Brick's lifestyle and feel superior to him. They always try to marginalize Brick and not give him a share of the plantation. They know about Bricks homosexuality problem and also the indifference of Brick toward Maggie. They try to plead their case against Brick with Big Daddy. Mae and Gooper try to gain an advantage over the irresponsible drunkard and homosexual Brick.

Individual human beings have different racial and ethnic origins. People have different sexual orientations and gender identities. But all must be respected. The society, always stigmatizes the minority subjects.

In America, there was no hard debate on gender and sexuality till 1980's because it had not created such a big problem in the society. The social order had always been constructed and ordered by heterosexuals. Sexual minorities especially

those who have different sexuality and gender identities than biologically assigned role were slowly asserting their presence. They gradually started to express their feelings, sexual emotions differently that made no problems with heterosexual society.

After 1980's, sexual minorities started to raise their voices and started to demand for their right like other ethnic and religious groups. At the same time a new virus called HIV also appeared among gay people that was diagnosed as AIDS. This fatal infection drew the attention of the majority, media and mainstream community. For a very long time the dominant construction of homosexuality like that of alcoholism was a moral one. This problem was owned by the church. The church ruled that the act of homosexuality was against the wishes of God and nature and homosexuals were committing an unpardonable sinful act. Later Gay and Lesbians were presented as a minority group.

To challenge the social belief that a man can fall in love with man, a woman can fall in love with woman, and a person can have different sexuality apart from his biological sex, Kushner has used the characters with different sexual, gender identities. People took it for granted that the emergence of the AIDS disease caused by HIV positive virus was the result of homosexuality. The mainstream society which had been composed of heterosexuals said and believed that because of homosexual contact between two men, AIDS was the resultant disease. To add to their argument, the church said that AIDS was a sin God gave to homosexuals because of going against nature. AIDS was and is still a fatal disease. Due to hopelessness and social stigma, people used to die after being infected. The medical community had no clue about AIDS in the 1980's when it first emerged. Family members and friends hesitated to go near an infected person.

Mostly gay men are at risk of contracting AIDS. Condoms and safe sex products are out of the gay man's reach. This is a consequence of the result of the high stigma and sexual discrimination toward sexual minorities. In the mainstream society gay men and homosexuals have no right to practice their sexual desire openly. The society has restricted them and constructed a discourse about them against making love openly. To hide from the mainstream society's gaze, homosexuals are forced to make love in far, isolated and dark places often away from the city or market place. During such a time, the homosexual minorities cannot practice safe sex and the resultant disease is AIDS. After Prior was admitted to the hospital, Louis unable to control his sexual urge, went to a Public Park and had sex with a stranger. During the intercourse, their condom ruptures. But both of them are not bothered and continue their sexual act without the fear of being transmitted by HIV virus.

Louis: What?

Man: I think it broke. The rubber. You want me to keep going?

(Little pause) Pull out? Should I. . .

Louis: Keep going

Infect me.

I don't care. I don't care. (63)

AIDS is made to be the product of homosexuality in *Angels in America*. The best example is of Roy Cohn, a corrupt lawyer and political operator. Roy Cohn is the closeted homosexual and red-baiting attorney for Joe McCarthy. The play asserts that his perspective on AIDS reflected a general intolerance of difference. *Angels in America* further represents the disavowal of AIDS in Cohn's relationship to his own homosexuality. When told by his doctor that he has contracted the disease, Cohn feels that it would threaten and ruin his career if this news gets out. Roy asserts that

he is dying from liver cancer. Identified by his power and political clout (rather than by his sexuality as a gay man) Roy feels he cannot identify himself to be a homosexual and so he cannot have AIDS. Roy considers himself as a heterosexual man who sometimes fools around with other men. Cohn's twisted logic represents the entrenched homophobia of the 1980's in America and his refusal to admit that he was gay and infected with AIDS. Though a Gay Rights Bill was introduced in the New York City Council in 1971, the first in the country, gay activists could not get it passed until 1986. The social stigma attached to being a gay was immense at that time. Roy felt that if he declared himself to be a homosexual with AIDS then he would lose everything he had. Roy believed and hid behind the veil of his money, power and status. He was afraid of being marginalized and felt that his status and his money would protect him from oppression and could even buy him immunity from AIDS in the form of AZT. Roy not only feels no solidarity with other oppressed groups, like women or racial minorities, he even rejects other gays and lesbians. Since his personal bonds with others are based not on affection or shared ideology but on power, this is not surprising. Roy might desire another man, but desire is irrelevant: he only identifies with other powerful people, like Nancy Regan, who belonged to the powerful ruling political elite rather than powerless gays like Joe Pitt. But the later events in the play demonstrated how wrong he was and AIDS could not and cannot be held at bay no matter how many AZT drugs Roy took.

Roy: This disease. ...

Henry: Syndrome. ...

Roy: Whatever. It afflicts mostly homosexuals and drug addicts.

Henry: Mostly. Hemophiliacs are also at risk.

Roy: Homosexuals and drug addicts.

So why are you implying that I . . .

(Pause)

What are you implying, Henry?

Henry: I don't

Roy: I'm not a drug addict. (49)

Another example of homosexuality as a construct can be seen in the character of Mormon lawyer Joe Pitt. Social history reveals that, there are two sexes—male and female. But society has completely ignored other possibilities that a man can fall in love with another man. A person can have different sexuality from his biological sex, and he may have different gender identity besides his social gender role. Our society is so much rooted on social rules and regulations that have been constructed by the discourse of power by the mainstream society that everybody is mechanically obeying those rules as a part of their body. The fact is that a person can have different sexuality and gender identity beside the biological sex. The society Joe resides in has totally ignored this fact and an individual like Joe has to struggle against it. Even as Joe tries to reveal his sexual preference and gender difference to his mother, she refuses to accept it. The social stigma against homosexuality affects Joe, one of the major characters of the play. Joe is a married gay man and lives a double life. He tried his level best to confess about his sexuality and his real desire for men to his mother and wife but failed. Ultimately he reveals about his homosexuality to his Mormon mother.

Joe: Mom. Momma. I'm a homosexual. Momma.

Boy, did that come out awkward.

(Pause)

Hello? Hello?

I'm a homosexual.

(Pause)

Please, Momma say something.

Hannah: You're ridiculous. You are being ridiculous. (82)

Joe tells Harper that he still loves her and that he will not abandon her. Even when they were first married he knew inside that he was different from other men. He was inclined towards homosexuality. Due to the fear of the mainstream society, he kept quiet and repressed and internalized his desires.

Joe: Forget about that. Just Listen. You want the truth. This is the truth.

I knew this when I married you. I've known this I guess for as long as I've known anything, but...I don't know, I thought maybe that with enough effort and will I could change myself...but I can't...(83)

People like Joe who have different gender identities besides their biological sex, are not accepted by their near and dear ones. In such a situation they have to abide by the family diktat or leave the family and society and live an alienated life which Joe doesn't want.

Social rules, norms and values and spectrums of morality are made by the powerful church and the majority mainstream society. They make all the rules according to the values and perceptions through the discourse they control. The minorities like homosexuals are always ignored. They are stigmatized as abnormal and their voices are repressed, suppressed and oppressed. God has created everybody equal and the mainstream society does not have the authority to impose their *fatwa* on the minority homosexuals. Since norms are the production of majority or power, they

exert harsh impacts on the minorities. In addition, people who are treated as members of the minority, often start 'acting normal' in order to avoid being the objects of stigma. That is, they do their best not to be perceived as different from the majority. At times such kind of acting, done in order to be perceived normal inflicts fatal consequences upon others. Roy, the closeted homosexual, for example does the same in *Angels in America*. Further, the relation of both couples-Prior and Louis and Joe and Harper- disintegrate mainly due to their inability to resist the so called norms of the society. On the one hand, Joe cannot profess his homosexuality as he is a Mormon, and marries Harper in spite of himself. On the other, Louis cannot cope with Prior's AIDS and flees away not knowing how to proceed.

Treatment of Homosexuals

Brick is a homosexual representing the homosexuals of the nineteen fifties, so he also represents the social victims that the homosexuals of the time were. The play concentrates on the plight of Brick whose life and difficulties symbolize the crisis of the mid-century homosexual culture. Brick's story of conflict, suffering and the mind-breaking impact of social stigma is the problem of the play. His paradoxical situation, and his inability to speak out and to live a normal life, is supposed to 'expose' the problem of the lives of homosexuals of the time, rather than illustrate or suggest a solution.

Brick is *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof's* broken man. The favorite son and longed for lover of a wealthy plantation family, he possesses the charm of those who have given up and assumed a pose of indifference before the world. Brick—a 'brick' of a man-embodies an almost archetypal masculinity. Brick's enviable coolness, however, is the coolness of repression, a repression that keeps his desires at bay. The death of Skipper effectively ends his marriage, and he turns to alcohol for solace, looking daily

for the click. The click in his head is what makes Brick peaceful as he thinks it to be a mechanical thing which turns the hot light off and cool night on. Brick is caught up in an inner battle between his love for another man and his disgust with Maggie. Brick withdraws into mourning, abandoning the world in grief. His mourning is made all the more difficult by a desire he cannot avow. The dead Skipper continues to intervene between husband and wife, and Maggie protests that she is alive in vain. Indecision and internal turmoil disturbs Brick.

Brick: Why can't exceptional friendship, real, real, deep, friendship! between two men be respected as something clean and decent without being thought of as—(972)

Brick is a failed homosexual who also hates to be a heterosexual. He was very much worried about what the society would tell and react after knowing about his close relationship with Skipper. Brick shied away from his commitment to Skipper and married Maggie. Brick is an alcoholic who cannot avow any desire in his relationship with Skipper.

Brick is in a dilemma after the death of Skipper. It was a trauma for the homosexuals to live in a society during those decades. Brick is unable to decide about his sexual preference. As a result he gets frustrated and intoxicates himself with alcohol, oblivion, illusion and evasion. He avoids encountering people who talk about his homosexuality because of the social stigma attached to it. But the problem is that he cannot give it up, adopt a normal life and live with Maggie.

He goes to the extent of rejecting his father's offer of his immense wealth. The crisis of Brick and other homosexuals is that they had personally become conscious of their unconventional sexual orientation but they were thought to be deviant, abnormal and unnatural by the society. The social pressure upon Brick

turned into psychological pressure and he became a psychological as well as a social victim. His only escape was alcoholism and some kind of illusion.

Brick: Something—hasn't—happened. . .

Big Daddy: Yeah? What is that?

Brick: (sadly)—the click. . .

Big Daddy: Did you say click?

Brick: Yes, click.

Big Daddy: What click

Brick: A click that I get in my head that makes me peaceful. (967)

The idealized friendship between Brick and Skipper deserves the sympathy of readers. Maggie is the intruder in a clean pure male entente, the cat who destroys their friendship with her female lust. She and the dominant society cannot bear any homosexual relationship. Lovelessness and greed are characteristic of heterosexual relationship whereas understanding, sympathy, love and trust are the features of homosexual couples whether they realize the truth of their sexuality or not.

Brick: Why do I drink?

Big Daddy: Yea! Why?

Brick: Give me a drink and I'll tell you.

Big Daddy: Tell me first!

Brick: I'll tell you in one word.

Big Daddy: What word?

Brick: DISGUST! (968)

Brick is frustrated and disgusted. He claims that he drinks and tries to avoid people and the world because of people's tendency to lie, which he calls "mendacity". However, he is not drinking because of his disgust with mendacity of others, but only

to avoid the self-disgust of his own mendacity. He had lied to Skipper, or at least he was not sincere. He wanted the platonic ideal homosexuality, but he could not declare and openly accept it before his family and society. He had realized that there was no place or space for homosexuals in his society. That is why he becomes an outcast within his own family and society and takes to alcoholism to divert his attention. All the activities of Brick are nothing but his desperate attempts to avoid and escape from his own true self, the reality of the world, and the social necessity of having to compromise and conform to some extent. Brick is trying to escape from reality because of the unfavorable social conditions.

Rabbi: The Holy Scriptures have nothing to say about such a person.

Louis: Rabbi, I'm afraid of the crimes I may commit. (31)

Louis feels that homosexuality is a crime and therefore asks repentance from the Rabbi. It was believed that homosexuals cannot be involved in any religious activities. Homosexuality was an illegal, immoral and sinful act not acceptable to the Christian church and gay men were kept away from it.

Prior: I'm a homosexual.

Harper: Oh! In my church we don't believe in homosexuals. (38)

We are at a shock to learn that Louis abandons Prior who is infected and dying of AIDS. Louis's eventual abandonment of Prior is extreme and selfish but it is perfectly human. Both of them were in a homosexual relationship. Louis did not want to continue with the relationship and be contracted with AIDS because it would be very difficult to lead that type of life in the America of the 1980's. The millennium was approaching and all the people were confused and speaking prophetically about where their country, their soul, their politics and their values were heading. The AIDS epidemic had just erupted and being in love in the age of AIDS

was extremely difficult. As AIDS was related with homosexuals, Louis didn't have the moral strength to stick with Prior.

Belize: How long have you been here?

Prior: (Getting suddenly upset) I don't remember, I don't give a fuck. I want Louis. I want my fucking boyfriend, where the fuck is he? I'm dying, I'm dying, where's Louis? (66)

Louis is a stereotypical example of a white, Jewish liberal, who is appalled by the conservative views of someone like Joe, but is flat-footed and insensitive. Louis who loves Prior but whose love is not powerful enough to overcome the tremendous divisive power of AIDS. Prior's body makes AIDS an "inerasable biological stigma"—he can no more act as "normal." AIDS which is the product of their homosexual relationship keeps Louis and Prior apart. It subjects Prior to prejudice and disenfranchisement within the gay community. While solidarity may be an ideal, it cannot be achieved solely by the power of an idealized gay brotherhood. Prior's AIDS infection is too great a barrier for Louis to overcome. Louis does not have the moral strength to stick with Prior, leaving Prior to turn to his former lover Belize.

Prior's family was the epitome of stability, so much so that all the sons bear the same name. Prior lived off an inherited trust fund. But this unbroken line would come to an end as Prior was a gay man. He would not bear any children and a person with AIDS he was likely to have a short future left. Since he rarely worked, he could never add to the family's store of capital. Because of his homosexuality Prior is blamed for breaking of the thread. His family would be in shame and they would not be able to accept their offspring. He would always remain a family and social outcast. Prior would be the one to bring instability to his family because of being gay.

Roy Cohn and Joe Pitt are the other closeted homosexuals who fear the mainstream society. The binaries that haunt *Angels* are mirrored structurally by sets of symbolically paired characters and their treatment of homosexuality. Roy and Prior are both HIV positive. Roy refuses to claim his HIV status or any kind of homosexual identity. He fears the mainstream society of which he is a part. His revelation will lead to his downfall. Prior is not only out of the closet but performatively discloses his diagnosis. Roy is the victim of internalized homophobia. Roy uses Ethel as a scapegoat to save himself from accusations of homosexuality by championing regressive right-wing family values and attacking homosexuals in the public sphere. It is crucial to note that a person like Roy Cohn who is a famous advocate and a wealthy established person rejects the term AIDS. His unreasoning fear and aversion to homosexuals has led to his disapproval of AIDS. Instead of accepting his infection, he avoids it, gives it another name.

Roy: And what is my diagnosis, Henry?

Henry: You have AIDS, Roy.

Roy: No, Henry, no. AIDS is what homosexuals have. I have liver cancer. (52)

Roy is the heartless, greedy man who cares only for money and self-promotion. He is so consumed by his power over other people that he neglects his AIDS disease. Accepting the disease AIDS like Prior would mean becoming powerless and dubbed as a social outcast. Due to his fear of losing power that he holds, he pays for it with his death. Because of his influential power he is able to get the AZT medicine. While common people and minorities would have to wait up to two years to get AZT, Roy was able to get it delivered to him in no time. But AZT did not prove to be the life saving drug he took refuge in. Roy died because of his

closeted behavior and not being able to accept the truth and reality, his own ill-concealed anti-Semitism and homophobia. Roy's isolation from his natural identity contributed to his twisted villainy and his unprofessed but profound loneliness.

Joe is another closeted homosexual in the play who goes through the fear of homophobia. Joe is a gay man married to Harper. He fails to perform his masculine role of a husband and his sex life with his wife is in disarray. Joe dreams for handsome, masculine men, whereas Harper is longing for his penis and a baby. Harper believes that Joe must have sex with her as it is her right to have sex with her husband. But due to his different sexual preference, Joe is looking for a man partner. He marries Harper because the society would continuously question him as to why he remained unmarried. To quiet the society, Joe married Harper. Joe's commitment to justice keeps him from accepting Roy's offer, and his love for Harper traps him in an unhappy marriage. Freedom is frightening to him because it means abandoning his value system, the mainstream society. Joe and Harper were just as unhappy in Utah as they are in New York. The only difference is that, there, a conformist society prevented them from finding a better way, requiring them to seem cheerful, uncomplicated and strong.

Thus, we see how Roy and Joe because of their internalized homophobia led a life of a closeted homosexual. The fear of the mainstream society and their reluctance to leave the society they did not belong to resulted in their respective losses later in life. Roy paid for it with his life. Joe was unable to discuss about his sexuality with his Mormon mother and his wife. Therefore he faced a number of problems that were psychological and emotional. Due to Joe's silence two lives were destroyed- his and Harper's, his wife. When he later confesses about his own sexuality, both of them become liberated. Harper leaves Joe and sets off on an optimistic voyage to San

Francisco to begin her own life. Joe feels light at heart after having accepted his sexuality.

Joe: My whole life has conspired to bring me to this place, and I can't despise my whole life. I think I believed when I met you I could save you, you at least if not myself, but. . .

I don't have any sexual feelings for you, Harper.

And I don't think I ever did.

Harper: I think you should go. (84)

Chapter Four

Conclusion

Though Tennessee Williams contributed significantly in introducing both gay and straight sexual issues to the American stage, he did not venture to produce overtly gay-themed plays-despite the subject of homosexuality and gay characters appearing in his works. The play first premiered in 1955. As different from his predecessors, however, Tony Kushner does not hesitate to produce works that are openly gay. Kushner rather felt proud that *Angles in America* was identified as a gay play. Critics on both sides of the Atlantic have waxed lyrical over his talent, declaring him to be a new gay icon. In scale and ambition, *Angels in America* stands alone on the contemporary stage that appeals to a wide audience.

His another masterpiece *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* deals with issues like homosexuality, addiction and other tensions (mendacity). The behavior of Brick is fully engraved by sexual frustration. The ideal of male companionship is one of the most enduring myths in American literature. Williams used this theme when he describes Brick's relationship with his friend Skipper. Yet the myth is twisted and subverted when his male characters perform an innocent relationship. The heterosexual couples of the play are full of lovelessness, mistrust, hypocrisy and mendacity. Brick and Maggie personify divorce, alienation and lack of communication. Neither does Maggie understand Brick's problem nor does Brick understand Maggie's plight. Their plight is symptomatic of the generalized failure of heterosexual love.

In conspicuous contrast to dramatic evidences of the lovelessness of the heterosexual relationships, there are favorable references and remarks in the play to homosexual relationship. Homosexual relationship between Jack Straw and Peter

Ochello affords the existential fulfillment of love. Their relationship is invested with mythic love, loyalty, and brotherly devotion, as suggested by Big Daddy's account of Ochello's behavior when Straw died. This exposes the corruption inherent in heterosexual love in the then American society and the favorable action of homosexual love, which highlights the possibility of Brick's homosexuality.

When Brick was asked to clarify his reason for disgust, he always says that he is disgusted by mendacity. His disgust with mendacity is actually his own disgusted revulsion against denying an aspect of himself and his friend that he finds unacceptable. His feeling is intensified by his wife's penetration into their male relationship. His disgust is self-directed because of his own failure to abandon Skipper because of society and its standard of norms and morality. The "guilt of a crime, a transgression so dreadful that neither he nor his family dare speak its name" (Jackson: 98) is his cause for disgust.

Moreover, the play has widely dealt with the writer's own biography. Williams has apparently been discussing his own situation in most of this play. The characters that collect his sympathy, failure and disappointments are the statements of many of his own needs. His idealism is constantly outraged by the carnality of the physical. The same conflict immobilizes Brick, the protagonist of the play who is a victimized character. He is not satisfied by the behavior against him by members of his family. The environment that he faces outside and inside has a one on one relationship with his life. The side of writer's life is very much reflected by the protagonist Brick. The characters are therefore a very lively sketch of 1950's society in America. The characters displayed are dissatisfied with one thing or another. They do not simply trust each other. Big Daddy detests Gooper and Mae. Maggie is suspicious of Gooper and Mae's sly plan to take over Big Daddy's property and not

disinherit her. Brick's present condition is mainly due to mendacity. He is in his own world of booze and his desire for Skipper. Big Daddy's dissatisfaction with his wife and the passion for sexual relationship can also be taken as a major cause of his disgust. All the characters in the play are the representations of disappointment in one form or another. Brick as an isolated, alcoholic and an outcast homosexual depicts the playwrights' success in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.

Tony Kushner moulds Prior, the protagonist of the play- who is gay and infected with AIDS, as a mouthpiece. Through Prior, Kushner has expressed his hope and optimism about the future, even though at present there is a great social misunderstanding regarding homosexuality and gender construction. The society was guided by their canonical and religious beliefs constructed by the powerful and majority of the people. Due to misconception, social beliefs, norms and values, religion, and so on, the mainstream society could never accept homosexuality. Gradually times are changing and circumstances are different from what they were.

Society is gradually changing and advancing. The mainstream people are willing to reform their beliefs, the process is continuing. People are willing to provide space to the minorities by altering their traditional beliefs towards gender and sexuality. It is not an overnight process that will happen instantly. The thought process has begun and Kushner is optimistic that it will change one day. On that day all concepts, beliefs and constructed norms will melt like ice. That day, society comprising the binaries of mainstream and minorities will stand on the same platform and a new era will begin. For that new dawn, great patience and tolerance is required on both sides of the binaries.

The AIDS epidemic has caused the death of heterosexuals as well as homosexuals. Homosexuals are the victimized lot as they are forced to spend their

lives in a cocoon. They are unable to come out of it. After realizing their preferred sexuality, homosexuals spend their entire life in the cocoon because of social stigma and discrimination. As a result people like Prior is abandoned by his lover Louis because the latter fears he may also be contracted with AIDS and be discarded by society. Roy Cohn is a prime example of a closeted homosexual who falsely believed he did not have AIDS but liver cancer. He had great influence upon government and legislation. He had the capacity to change laws that would benefit the likes of him and not remain closeted. Instead of showing solidarity to other homosexuals, he develops a kind of homophobic attitude towards them and discards them totally. He rejects and neglects his own infection. As a result, he meets an untimely death. But all are not like Roy Cohn and have not given up on life. Those who are still living will fight for their rights, and for the sake of the coming generation. Joe Pitt is another closeted homosexual. While trying to hide his homosexuality, Joe goes through a period of mental pain and suffering. Later, he acknowledges his gayness to his mother and his wife. At that moment he feels liberated. Prior is not bothered about his sexuality nor about AIDS. He has come to accept it. Prior and Joe are the ray of hope for the present and future generations to fight for their rights.

Each and every human being is a citizen of the country and has equal rights to enjoy the privileges of the right to life, liberty and all pursuits of happiness. One should not hide their real sexuality and the other should not mock and try to marginalize them. All of us are God's creation. God has given us the beauty of life and nature has bestowed us our sexuality. So if we are gay or lesbian, it should not be a problem to the other person. In God's world and in His creation, all is fair and nothing is wrong. It is we humans and our society that constructs right, wrong, norms, values, morality, etc. and forces the minorities to accept what the majority

decides. Whatever God makes, He makes perfect. If there is any problem, the problem is with the human society.

In conclusion, it can be surmised that homosexuality is a social construct and that homosexuals are treated as social outcasts like Brick Pollitt and Prior Walter. The life of Brick and Prior show the journey traveled by the homosexual community in America. Brick lived around the 1950's when the American society was not able to accept homosexuality in their society. Some decades later Prior is another homosexual who is abandoned by the society because he has contracted AIDS. Though the concept of homosexuality was more open and discussed at the time of Prior than Brick's, the social stigma attached to it was more or less the same. There was a very miniscule difference regarding their acceptance by the main stream society. Brick and Prior were subjected to treatment as social outcasts in both the eras that they lived in. Williams presented homosexuality in a subtle manner in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Tony Kushner gave homosexuality a grand entry in *Angels in America* in the world of America where homosexuality was celebrated which then found further celebration and a more formal acceptance in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.

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