

REPRESENTATION OF INVERSION: THE MODERN ALIEN IN THE WORKS OF
E.M. FORSTER, VIRGINIA WOOLF, AND DJUNA BARNES

by

Drew Siler

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master
of Arts in English

Middle Tennessee State University
August 2013

Thesis Committee:

Dr. Will Brantley, Director

Dr. Allen Hibbard, Second Reader

I dedicate this work to the “inverts.” Without their stories, I would not have been able to create this thesis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foremost, I want to thank my parents, Wendy and Britt Siler. Without their support (mental and fiscal), I would not have been able to pursue this interest. I love them both, and this thesis's existence is a testament to their love for me. I would also like to thank Dr. Will Brantley and Dr. Allen Hibbard for working, at times struggling, through this process with me. Quite the ride this work has been, and I would have gotten off many stops ago if not for the two of them. Thanks to my roommate, Tori Warenik, commiserating fellow in the birth of a thesis. The pecking of her Mac keyboard was just the motivation I needed at times to return to my own work. Finally, I would like to address the numerous instances of encouragement from other friends and family; they know who they are. Without their words, I would have been lost to the blank digital pages of my laptop.

ABSTRACT

Representations of Inversion: The Modern Alien in Works of E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, and Djuna Barnes

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sex became a topic of great interest for European scientists, and of special concern were those aspects considered taboo, such as fetishes and sadomasochism. One of the most controversial issues that came from this interest in sexuality was a focus on the study of sexual inversion, a term used by sexologists to define men and women who were attracted to members of their own sex. The ramifications of this scientific and sociological interest in homosexual attractions were felt in a burgeoning cultural awareness of sexual inverts, as literary texts from the time period reveal.

The literary portrayals of sexually inverted characters serve to highlight an alienated social position often thrust upon those whose sexualities were considered aberrant. Three modern novels--E.M. Forster's *Maurice* (1913), Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* (1931), and Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (1936)--include sexual inverts as protagonists, and these characters experience stifling isolation because of their sexual orientations, revealing that a narrative of isolation is integral to the experience of the invert in modernist fiction.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: E.M. Forster’s <i>Maurice</i> : Social Segregation and Sexological Study.....	23
Chapter Two: Virginia Woolf’s <i>The Waves</i> : Alone Among Friends.....	46
Chapter Three: Djuna Barnes’s <i>Nightwood</i> : Inversion and Beyond.....	64
Conclusion.....	86
Works Cited.....	90

Introduction

Modernism is a word with a multitude of connotations, and it is important to understand the difference between what is considered temporally modern and what is considered artistically modern. The former applies to that which is contemporary while the latter describes a very specific movement of the arts which began in the late nineteenth century and continued into the early twentieth century. Discussing modernism's origins, Jon Stallworthy and Jahan Ramazani state that the "roots of modern literature are in the late 19th century" (1827). They elaborate further: "The aesthetic movement, with its insistence on 'art for art's sake,' assaulted middle-class assumptions about the nature and function of art" (1827). Modernism, then, represents a turbulent time period for art, an entirely understandable fact considering that both world wars occurred during the time period covered by the modern movement.

Modern artists were beginning to break free from the belief that art had a moral duty, a central value of the Victorian era. Stallworthy and Ramazani discuss specifically the responsive nature of the movement, "Rejecting Victorian notions of the artist's moral and educational duties, aestheticism helped widen the breach between writers and the general public, resulting in the 'alienation' of the modern artist from society" (1827). This concept of alienation factors heavily into many modernist works, examples including T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). Modern artists felt isolated and cut off from practices that upheld the moralistic value of artistic endeavors. Representation of sexuality was one of the most divisive issues separating modern artists from the general sensibilities of their surrounding communities.

Works such as Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) pulled sexuality from the shadows of discussions into the light of scientific observation and dissection. The study of sex and sexuality, referred to as sexology, created and promoted conversations about bedroom activities, giving rise to words like libido, sexual invert, masochism, and sadism. Though shocking and outrageous to the common man and woman of the late 1800s and early 1900s, the genesis and dissemination of such words laid the foundation for modern studies in sexuality. Works from these turn-of-the-century scientists reveal a desire not to hide sexuality, but rather to expose all aspects of it in an effort to label each part. In this sense, sexologists were akin to schoolchildren attempting to complete an exhaustive bug collection. Each unique piece of the human sexuality puzzle was worth studying, especially those considered perverse.

The desire to explore and understand human sexuality was voracious in these early scientists of sex, but the exploration of human sexuality was found not only in the field of science. Modernism saw great sexual experimentation in the arts. Ezra Pound, one of the fathers of the literary modernist movement, took up the slogan "Make it New" in his approach to creating modern literature, and he promoted this theory to other prominent authors of the movement, including William Carlos Williams, Hilda Doolittle, and T.S. Eliot. Rebellious against the prudishness of Victorian literature, authors of the Modern movement began to use sexuality as a salient common theme in their works. Progressive authors dealt with issues considered especially forbidden to discuss in common speech, much less in print, and chief among these issues was the topic of homosexuality. Sexologists knew homosexuality by another name, however: inversion, named such because it was believed that those whose sexualities were thus oriented

experienced an inversion of the traditional sexual schema--that is, attraction to the opposite sex (Doan 26). Many Modern authors chose to explore the topic of homosexuality, among them T.S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, and Gertrude Stein. That these pillars of the modern movement chose to discuss inversion in their works highlights the fact that homosexuality was a topic that was in the air; it was coming out of hiding and seeping into major cultural centers of influence, science and art.

Historical evidence reveals that both Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forster each had direct experience with the writing of sexologists. Karyn Z. Sproles points out that in *Desiring Women: The Partnership of Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West*, Havelock Ellis wrote a “supportive introduction” to Radclyffe Hall’s novel *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), a novel that deals explicitly with the scientific theory of sexual inversion (30). The story’s central character even reads Krafft-Ebing’s *Psycopathia Sexualis* (1886). The novel’s treatment of homosexuality led to its ban soon after publication (31), and it is at this point that Woolf and Forster enter the picture. Forster and Leonard Woolf “circulated a petition to protest the ban” (31). In a personal letter to Vita Sackville-West, Woolf jokingly suggests that Sackville-West not sign the petition because of her “proclivities” (qtd. in Sproles 31). That both of these authors, Forster and Woolf, were working with the petition to protest the ban suggests clearly that they were familiar with the work and subsequently with its introduction. Championing the theories of Ellis and Krafft-Ebbing, the novel exposes its readers to sexological theory.

Though the connections between sexologists and Djuna Barnes are not as neatly available as they are for Forster and Woolf, Christine Berni’s article “A Nose-Length into the Matter: Sexology and Lesbian Desire in Djuna Barnes’s *Ladies Almanack*,” provides

some distinct options which could have exposed Barnes to inversion. This entire article analyzes Barnes's *Ladies Almanac* (1928) through theories of sexual inversion, both contradicting and supporting the theories. Berni works upon the assumption that Barnes's knowledge of inversion resulted from sex manuals: "From the late 1910s through World War II, the cultural influence of Ellis and Freud's work was widely deployed in popular sex and marriage manuals published in England and the United States" (84). Barnes's understanding of Ellis's *Sexual Inversion* (1901), Berni claims, was so strong that she was able to effectively parody it in *Ladies Almanac* (89). Berni also argues that Barnes challenges Freud's *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* (1905) by asserting that homosexuality has always existed and that woman is not essentially sexually repressed (95). That Barnes was cognizant of the theories of these prominent sexologists seems clear from her ability to rebuff and deny them.

Of the contributions these men made to science, a particularly significant one unites them: the willingness to study homosexuality and discuss it in a time when homosexual acts were illegal in many countries across Europe. However, that which makes them positive figures in the understanding of sexual inverts also highlights one of the biggest problems with the sexological study of homosexuality: The necessity to isolate in order to study effectively. When scientists wish to study a virus or bacterium living in the human body, they must first find a means by which to isolate the agent of disease. This fact is true also of sexual inverts: when science turned its eye to sexual inversion, it had to isolate the abnormality which set some humans apart from others. This scientific alienation parallels a cultural alienation following alongside the growing number of scientific inquiries into sexual inversion. As science journals were separating

and dissecting sexual inverts en masse, the literature of the modern era was highlighting the cultural isolation of sexual inversion. Three modern works in particular exhibit the cultural alienation felt by sexual inverts during this time period: E.M. Forster's *Maurice* (1913), Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* (1931), and Djuna Barnes *Nightwood* (1936). Each of these novels presents either a single character or multiple characters who are sexual inverts, and these characters find themselves exiles from their societies.

E.M. Forster's novel *Maurice* was a bold book for its time, so scandalous in fact that even though it was written during the years of 1913 and 1914, it was not published until 1971. That Forster delayed the release until after his death shows the cultural climate surrounding the issue of homosexuality. The novel tells the story of Maurice Hall, from his childhood to adulthood. The novel's most important motif is Maurice's sexual inversion, as it affects every aspect of his life, from his home life with his family (all women, a mother and two sisters specifically), to his education (he leaves school because of his sexuality), to his friendships (he falls in love with his best friend). In every facet of his life, Maurice finds that his sexual inversion leads him to isolation. He cannot tell any of his friends, as most believe his condition is a mental disorder. He becomes distant from his family because they do not understand his feelings for Clive, the best friend whom he loves. Maurice feels especially alienated from the Church, as his interactions with the Reverend Borenius make clear. Even the happy ending of the novel (Maurice leaves with a young man named Alec) invokes a sense of societal isolation, as the two men must disappear from their former lives to be able to exist in peace.

Virginia Woolf's novel *The Waves* was first published in 1931. Like *Maurice*, it is a character-driven novel, but unlike *Maurice*, it follows the lives of six unique individuals

who grow from childhood to old age. Among these characters is Neville, another sexual invert whose experiences in the novel present him as an alien to his society, but even worse, his inversion presents him as an alien to his friends, those people to whom he is the closest. His family is not mentioned in the work, so his close-knit groups of friends become a surrogate family, and he the step-child. His sexuality prevents him from connecting fully to the group, as he is unable to reveal to them his true feelings. It becomes obvious in the novel that Neville realizes how sequestered he is when he begins attacking his society for its self-satisfaction, a feeling Neville is unable to share because of his sexual inversion. Ultimately, Neville's inversion leaves him alone in his room waiting for the arrival of the lover who never comes, and it is this scene which best portrays Neville's isolation as it is directly connected to his inversion.

Though the central characters in the novel are not isolated in their rooms like Neville, the two central protagonists of *Nightwood*, Dr. Matthew O'Connor and Robin Vote, are both sexual inverts who are alienated from their lovers and from their society. O'Connor is a seemingly omniscient transvestite; readers witness his sad, lonely journey in the novel. Robin, a female sexual invert, has a child but abandons her social position as mother to seek the companionship of women, with whom she also fails to connect. O'Connor, too, experiences alienation because of his sexual inversion; his case, Krafft-Ebing would say, is one of androgyny, as he dresses and looks like a woman at times. The severity of his inversion leads to further isolation, as even Nora, a fellow invert, is dismayed when she first discovers his cross-dressing.

In their works, these authors reveal the pain felt by sexual inverts. They delve into the psyches of the sexual inverts, an effort the sexologists mimicked in their published

works, dominated by case study explanation and subsequent personal assertions formed from analyses of the case studies. The literature of inversion then has two distinct schools, one artistic and the other scientific. The literary works rely upon an understanding of sexual inversion provided by sexological theories and studies. This dependence is apparent in the character development and interaction within the works. Specific scenes highlight the relationship between the two schools. Forster's portrayal of Lasker Jones in *Maurice* highlights the relationship. Jones, a professional hypnotist, who claims the ability to cure homosexuals, provides a link to the *Psycopathia Sexualis*, which suggests multiple times throughout that inversion can be curtailed, if not cured, through hypnosis. Woolf's characterization of Neville as frightened regarding his friends' reactions to his sexuality brings to mind Havelock Ellis's desires for his society to begin understanding rather than condemning inverts. Finally, Barnes's construction of Matthew O'Connor shows the influence of sexological discussion. O'Connor's cross-dressing and frequently repeated desire to be a woman speak directly to Krafft-Ebing's classifications of sexual inverts, especially his fourth category for male inverts, androgyny.

* * *

E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, and Djuna Barnes clearly utilize some aspect of the sexological theories proposed by Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, and Sigmund Freud, but what exactly were these scientists of sex saying? These three men authored works which became cornerstone pieces for the study of the sexual invert. Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing published his work, *Psycopathia Sexualis*, originally in 1886, but he made multiple revisions to this work. What remains throughout these editions is also his biggest contribution to the study of sexual inverts, his attempts to

classify sexual inverts. This effort made understanding sexual inversion seem more manageable, as it seemed to provide structure to a vague concept. Responding to this assertion, Havelock Ellis used his work *Sexual Inversion*, published in 1901, as a means to debunk what he considered an almost mythic construction of the classes of sexual inverts. Following both these men in publication, Sigmund Freud released his *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* and provided a fresh interpretation of the invert, one he linked with his Oedipal complex. Freud's work is not as original in its classifying sexual inverts, revealing how vital the thought was that sexual inversion manifested as a result of influence rather than biology.

One of the earliest sexologists to use the term "sexual invert" is Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing (many early sexologists were German) who studied what many during this time thought to be deviant sexualities. First published during the year of 1886, Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* presents 237 case studies in deviant sexualities. The subjects of these case studies are extremely varied; they include studies of inversion; necrophilia; bestiality; transvestism; rape; mutilation; sadism and masochism, terms coined by Krafft-Ebing; exhibitionism; and other psychosexual proclivities. At once a deeply disturbing and engrossing work, the medical book not only presents the case studies; it also provides reflections on the studies and makes claims about their potential causes. Approximately half of the work focuses on sexual inversion, also referred to by Krafft-Ebing as "antipathic sexuality," a phrase used to express the revulsion sexual inverts feel toward the opposite gender (54). The following excerpt from the book is the definition provided by Krafft-Ebing:

Antipathic Sexuality is the total absence of sexual feeling toward the opposite sex. It concentrates all sexuality in its own sex. The physical and psychical properties of persons of the same sex alone exercise an aphrodisic [sic] effect and awaken a desire for sexual union. It is purely a psychical anomaly, for the sexual instinct does in no wise correspond with the primary and secondary physical sexual characteristics. In spite of the fully differentiated sexual type, in spite of the normally developed and active sexual glands, man is drawn sexually to the man, because he has, consciously or otherwise, the instinct of the female toward him, or vice versa. (54)

Two points of clarification are necessary following this excerpt. First, when Krafft-Ebing says that antipathic sexuality does not correspond with the primary and secondary sexual characteristics, he is referencing his types of sexual inversion, which he will later identify in full. Second, Krafft-Ebing asserts that the invert possesses the psyche of a woman. Krafft-Ebing argues that when a man is a sexual invert, he is a male body with the behaviors and emotions of a woman. The final line of the above quotation reaffirms this point: Krafft-Ebing suggests that the man with an antipathic sexuality has the sexual instinct of a female.

Krafft-Ebing devotes entire sections of this book to the study of the invert, and in the most detailed section, appropriately labeled “Antipathic Sexuality,” he attempts to lay out an explanation of what causes sexual inversion: “Inversion appears spontaneously at times and at others is a result of an injured sexually developing psyche. Even in latter cases, the predisposition was already there” (285). Krafft-Ebing lays out two types of

cases of sexual inversion in this passage, and he maintains them throughout the five-hundred-page entirety of this work. In the first type of case, sexual inversion appears without cause as the result of a predisposition that developed organically into sexual inversion, but in the second type, Krafft-Ebing says there is an influencing factor that causes the person to become a sexual invert. Even though in the second type of case there is an influential factor which incites the sexual inversion, a natural predisposition to become an invert is present.

It is this distinction between the two manners in which one becomes an invert that leads Krafft-Ebing into the next part of his discussion, which establishes the difference between perversion and perversity, terms which are used frequently throughout the book. Perversity is the action of two men who are not inverts engaging in homosexual acts together. Examples provided include sexual relations between men on boats and in prison, relations engaged in during the absence of women. Perversion is the mental condition that makes a person attracted to his own gender; it is the mental anomaly that produces sexual inversion. Krafft-Ebing mentions this difference in order to argue that “[n]o case has yet been demonstrated in which perversity has been transformed into perversion i.e., into an inversion of the sexual instinct” (288). To conclude the section, Krafft-Ebing assigns blame for perversity on youthful masturbation, a problem which leads, he says, to a weakening of the nerves; he calls this disorder “neuroasthenia” (287).

In the next section, Krafft-Ebing researches the potential signs of the “neuropathic taint” (339). The first sign is that “[t]he sexual life of individuals thus organized manifests itself, as a rule, abnormally early, and thereafter with abnormal power” (339). The assertion that sexual inverts hold an abnormally powerful sex drive is not

uncommon, though Krafft-Ebing makes no effort to explain why the drive is so powerful. The next sign is that “[t]he psychical love manifest in these men is, for the most part, exaggerated and exalted in the same way as their sexual instinct is manifested in consciousness, with a strange and even compelling force” (339). Though he provides no explanation for this sign, Krafft-Ebing does later present an entire category of inverts who epitomize this sign: Urnings. Virginia Woolf’s character Neville provides readers with a solid literary example of this type of sexual invert. Neville yearns desperately in silence for Percival while the man is alive, and when Percival passes, Neville continues to pine for him. Neville’s attraction to Percival is inhibitive and symptomatic of this category of inverts. A final sign is particularly noteworthy as it draws attention to family and heredity, both of which reaffirm the belief in a necessary predisposition: “In almost all cases where an examination of the physical and mental peculiarities of the ancestors and blood relations has been possible, neurosis, psychoses, degenerative signs, etc., have been found in the families” (340).

The goal in this connection is to prove a link between the physical condition of the body and the psychical condition of the mind; linking these two suggests a genetic component for sexual inversion, and Krafft-Ebing supports such a suggestion. The provided list of signs that occur in sexual inverts comes right before Krafft-Ebing’s most daring and idiosyncratic section: the labeling of different types of inverts. This placement is purposeful as he attempts to provide some general signs which apply to all inverts.

The first type of invert labeled is the one who would in contemporary times be known as a bisexual: the psychical hermaphrodite. Krafft-Ebing claims that “[t]he characteristic mark of this degree of inversion of the sexual instinct is that, by the side of

the pronounced sexual instinct and desire for the same sex, a desire toward the opposite sex is present; but the latter is much weaker and is manifested episodically only, while homo-sexuality is primary. . . .” (352). Description of the contemporary bisexual points out that bisexuals have existed alongside homosexuals for many years and have been grouped among them because their sexuality is not purely heterosexual.

Krafft-Ebing makes suggestions as to how to reinforce the heterosexual side of the psychical hermaphrodite’s sexuality: “The sexual instinct toward the opposite sex may be strengthened by the exercise of will and self-control. . .by moral treatment, and possibly hypnotic suggestion. . . by improvement of the constitution and removal of neuroses. . .but especially by abstinence from masturbation” (352). This section provides one of many links to Forster’s character Lasker Jones in its proposal of hypnosis as a viable treatment for sexual inversion. That there are suggestions as to how to further the heterosexual side of the individual’s sexuality and suggestions as to how to suppress the homosexual side reveals the obvious preference, even by a scientist. Krafft-Ebing warns also of the possibility that homosexual desires will become dominant in these individuals if they engage in sexual activity or masturbation, which sheds a problematic light on his theory. What kind of sexuality is one which cannot be acted upon? Those who Krafft-Ebing labels “psychical hermaphrodites” seem to be inverts who are fighting their sexuality rather than true bisexuals, a point upon which Havelock Ellis will later touch.

The next type of invert that Krafft-Ebing identifies is the Urning. To identify this group, Krafft-Ebing compares it with the other groups, asserting that this one differs from the previous group in its exclusive attraction to the same gender and from the following group in that it is only the sexual life that is affected by the inversion (364). In

a somewhat surprising move, Krafft-Ebbing says that the sexual lives of such inverts are “entirely like that in normal heterosexual love” (364). In an almost poetic tribute, Krafft-Ebbing writes, “The urning. . . is capable of the greatest sacrifice for him [the loved one], and experiences the pangs of unhappy, often unrequited, love; he suffers from the disloyalty of the beloved object, and is subject to jealousy, etc.” (365). It is simple to see Woolf’s Neville in this description, Neville, the man who sacrificed all of his emotional life in search of fulfilling love from another man. These points draw attention to Krafft-Ebbing’s somewhat sympathetic understanding of the homosexual’s plight. When one considers that the work was written in the late 1800s, a time during which Victorian sensibilities still held sway and homosexuality activity was punishable by years in prison, it becomes clear that Krafft-Ebbing is a progressive man, quite capable of understanding the painful position of inverts. One of the chief differences between this group of inverts and the next group is that this group still wishes to be the penetrative partner during sex, whereas the next group desires to be the passive partner, a desire looked upon by Krafft-Ebbing as symptomatic of further degeneration.

Respectively, the third stage and fourth stage of sexual inversion are known as “effemination” (382) and “androgyny” (389). The chief difference between the second and third stages is that in the effemination stage, only the feelings and inclinations of the invert are affected by his or her sexuality. Krafft-Ebbing has provided one example already of this shift: the desire to be the passive partner during sexual activity, a feeling revelatory of a sexual inclination affected by the sexual inversion of the individual. Other desires that are less sexual but suggestive, nonetheless, are the wish to spend time with girls rather than boys; the desire to play with dolls; a wish to spend time about the house

with the mother; the enjoyment of cooking, sewing, knitting. The final stage of sexual inversion, androgyny, takes this mirroring of the female further. In this stage, the invert begins to look like the opposite sex, men who have large, rounded hips; high voices; fine frames (389).

Krafft-Ebing next addresses sexual inversion in women, but most of his comments on the sexual inversion of women are simply those made about men reversed. For women, he also lays out four categories, each subsequent one representing further degeneration. These stages represent the same basic categories, but he does change the name of the last two to specify them for women. Rather than effemination, women experience viraginity and instead of androgyny, they experience gynandry, in which the “genital organs are the only feminine quality” (399). Krafft-Ebing presents his most important description of the female invert when he says she possesses, “The masculine soul, heaving in the female bosom. . .” (399). This line relates the female invert to the male invert and thereby links her to all that has been said before of the male invert. Barnes’s Robin Vote presents readers with an invert who falls somewhere between the third and fourth categories. Certainly, she has physical traits which are feminine, but Barnes is sure to clarify that some of Robin’s most defining traits are her masculine ones, and her mind is not that of a typical female, as her actions in the novel reveal. Her identity complicates Krafft-Ebing’s categories, as she does not fit exactly one or the other. Though the two share many aspects and mirror one another in many ways, to project the female invert as the female version of the male invert is reductive and strips the female homosexual of an identity apart from man.

To round out his discussion of the sexual invert, Kraft-Ebing takes on the legality and morality of sexual inversion, and his conclusions are affirmatively and negatively judgmental. The following passage represents well the affirmation Kraft-Ebbing bestows on sexual inversion:

This abnormality must not be looked upon as a pathological condition or as a crime. . . . it may proceed with the same harmony and satisfying influence as in the normally disposed, a further argument in favour of the assumption that antipathic sexual instinct is an equivalent for heterosexuality. If ethical and intellectual defects are present, they may be looked upon merely as complicated anomalies resulting from the taint.

(446)

Though he calls sexual inversion an abnormality, there is no negative judgment behind this description. He points out the fact that, numerically speaking, sexual inverts are abnormal. In referring to sexual inversion as the result of a taint, he presents a negative judgment towards inversion, but even here, he attempts to remove blame from the individual inverts and place it on their tainted heredity, rendering the inverts morally irreprehensible in regard to their sexuality.

Three pages from this defense of sexual inverts mark a complete shift in tone from that of his study. Krafft-Ebing says that a boy who is sexually inverted “should be rigidly excluded from all public educational institutions and sent to a hospital for nervous disorders” (449). In addition to this plan of sequestration, he further states that “there is more hope for eradicating the evil in its earlier stages” (449). The evil to which he refers is sexual inversion in young boys who seem to be on the path of degeneration. To

describe sexual inversion as evil betrays a moral tone of judgment out of line with his earlier sentiments. Despite this tone, Kraft-Ebbing concludes by presenting a progressive view of sexual inversion under the eyes of the law, asserting that the law should not punish sexual inverts for their sexuality, as long as they act within the limits set by their sexual instinct. He also concludes that society should pity and not despise inverts as many are already full of self-doubt and self-hatred (573). An objective man on a scientific quest to gain knowledge of human sexuality, Krafft-Ebing presents a work that is undergirded by understanding and sympathy. In this sense, he is akin to Havelock Ellis, another influential sexologist whose most prominent work, *Sexual Inversion* (1897), deals exclusively with sexual inverts.

Co-authored with John Addington Symonds, Havelock Ellis's *Sexual Inversion* presents readers with another medical textbook including multiple case studies, but unlike *Psychopathia Sexualis*, this book focuses solely on sexual inversion, its history, its causes, and its ramifications. Ellis begins the work by providing his definition of sexual inversion: "sexual instinct turned by inborn constitutional abnormality towards persons of the same sex" (1). Immediately, readers of both texts see a divergence from Krafft-Ebing in the proposal that sexual inversion is by definition an inborn trait. Though Krafft-Ebing asserts that some inverts are born as such, he also states that an acquired form of sexual inversion exists. Ellis will later challenge and dismiss this belief; indeed, he begins to lay the groundwork for doing so from the book's beginning. Using the first sections of the study to discuss the history of sexual inverts, Ellis names famous characters from history who he claims to have been inverts, including Leonardo de Vinci and Michelangelo (32). He uses this history to set up comparisons between those of ancient Greece, Rome, the

Renaissance, and the contemporary time period. This comparison allows him to discuss the full impact of sexual inversion in contemporary Europe and America. He says:

In these countries [England and the Unites States], all our traditions and all our moral ideals, as well as law, are energetically opposed to every manifestation of homosexual passion. It requires a very strong impetus to go against this compact force which on every side constrains the individual into the paths of heterosexual love. That impetus. . . can only be supplied by a fundamental--usually, it is probably, inborn--perversion of the sexual instinct, rendering the individual organically abnormal. (59)

This passage is rife with information, social commentary, and ideological departures from Krafft-Ebing. Here Ellis provides a scientific argument for the natural occurrence of sexual inversion. His discussion of the impetus which drives the invert to move against the grain of social morality draws attention to the fact that sexual inverts do not choose to place themselves in dangerous, precarious positions. Rather, these situations are placed upon them by an inborn impetus which drives them to act against the values of their society. Ellis's assignment of a biological reason for sexual inversion as well as his comparing past views of inversion to current views (for his time) suggest his questioning of England and the United States' values.

After this section, Ellis begins taking to task the theory of acquired sexual inversion. Stating his views directly, he opines that acquired sexual inversion is rare with the exception of two cases, "old men with failing sexual powers" and "younger men exhausted with heterosexual debauchery" (80). Even in these cases, though, he clarifies that he would not be surprised to find, with more exact study, a "congenital element"

(80). The use of the word *congenital* is significant for *Maurice* because Lasker Jones labels Maurice's condition using this precise word, highlighting the prevalence of its currency among the scientific community. Ellis's suggestion directly challenges the theory of acquired sexual inversion laid out and espoused by Krafft-Ebing in *Psycopathia Sexualis*, and Ellis's challenges to Krafft-Ebing's theories on sexual inversion do not end here.

The next aspect of Krafft-Ebing's theories which Ellis disputes provides a crucial distinction between the theories of the two men: the classification of the sexual invert. Perfectly aware of the sexologists who have come before him as well as their theories, Ellis knows which theories at which to take aim: "The classification of the varieties of homosexuality is a matter of difficulty, and no classification is very fundamental. The early attempts of Krafft-Ebing and others at elaborate classification are no longer acceptable" (82). This reference to Krafft-Ebing reveals Ellis's well-read background in his field as well as his ability to interact critically with these theories. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of Krafft-Ebing as a seminal figure in the study of sexual inversion. To dismantle further the classifications of sexual inverts, Ellis criticizes the concept of a "spurious invert" (86). The spurious invert is the man who engages in homosexual acts in the absence of women, those who sell themselves to men for money, and those who allow themselves to be desired by other inverts (86). Ellis challenges the validity of each group as spurious inverts, the first by asserting that these men have both heterosexual and homosexual impulses (a true heterosexual, he claims would not engage in inverted actions regardless of the situation), the second by asserting that many male prostitutes are in fact inverts, and the third by claiming that many do not possess a

“vigorous heterosexual impulse” (87). After breaking down these classifications, Ellis presents his own set of categories, ones that look quite familiar to the contemporary reader: homosexual, heterosexual, and bisexual (88). This reasonably simple division of sexuality continues to be used today, and it is Ellis who first presented the categories in this unique triad.

Ellis not only takes on Krafft-Ebing, a man who came before him, but he also chooses to take on a contemporary theorist who ultimately became more influential than Ellis himself, to the chagrin of many: Sigmund Freud. Before delving into his discussion of Freud, Ellis first sets himself at odds with Freud by dividing into two camps those who discuss inversion. He claims that there are those who push the theory of acquired inversion, a camp into which he places Freud, and those who push the theory of predisposition, into which he and Krafft-Ebing fall (302-3). Ellis cites Freud’s central argument about inverted men and their alleged shunned sexual attraction to their mothers. He does not entirely disregard Freud’s theory, but he finds fault by pointing out some discrepancies between Freud’s views and the actualities presented to Ellis during his case study experiences. Chief among these discrepancies is the fact that many male sexual inverts are close to their mothers (307). The ostensibly healthy, positive relationship between the two stands in contrast to the jilted one presented in Freud’s theory.

Cutting off the Freudian suggestion of sexual attraction at the pass, Ellis clarifies that it is not sexual attraction which generates this healthy relationship between mother and son. On the contrary, it is the invert’s own feelings of “feminine disposition” that make the relationship between the two so congenial (307). The closeness of this relationship does not suggest the presence of a sexual attraction, but the absence of one,

just as “the association of boys among themselves . . . is proof of heterosexual rather than of homosexual feeling” (307). To understand fully what Ellis is attempting to counter in Freudian thought, a more thorough examination of Freud’s theory of sexual inversion is necessary.

Sigmund Freud discusses sexual inversion at length and in depth in his a collection of three essays entitled *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*, first published in 1905. His treatment of sexual inversion occurs during the first essay called “The Sexual Aberrations.” In this essay, Freud makes many moves that set him in opposition to Ellis. One of these places Freud in line with Krafft-Ebing: he returns to classifying sexual inverts, an action that Ellis regards as fruitless. Freud defines three types of inverts: absolute inverts, those who are attracted solely to their own sex; amphigenic inverts, bisexuals, or the psychical hermaphrodites that Krafft-Ebing identifies; and contingent inverts, those who engage in homosexual acts when the opposite gender is not present (136). Freud then discusses the two camps, those of inborn sexuality and acquired sexuality. The discussion is quite similar to Ellis’s, but he ultimately dismisses both camps as too set on their own opinions to see the truth: that both influence of one’s surroundings during youth and genetics play a role in sexual inversion (141). In attempting to merge the camps, Freud steps away from both Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis, choosing instead to present himself as a middle ground between the two camps.

If this position were truly Freud’s, it would be forward-thinking and inclusive; however, though Freud may seem to have adopted this position, his true alliance lies with the camp of acquired inversion, as this camp allows him to advance his own

psychoanalytical theory regarding the son's relationship with the mother. In his theory, Freud claims that future inverts "pass through a phase of very intense but shortlived [sic] fixation to a woman. . .they identify themselves with a woman and take *themselves* as their sexual object" [original emphasis] (143). Freud's desire for young men to express this desire towards a woman early in their lives rests on his own Oedipus complex, in which young men desire their mother. Freud's understanding of male sexuality is rooted in this complex, which sexual inversion violates. To salvage his postulation, he finds a way to maintain the beginnings of his theory, and he then modifies it to accommodate sexual inverts. His theory of sexual inversion is based in narcissism. After men experience a break with the female, they take themselves as the sexual object and then search for an image of themselves in other men. Though Freud observes an element of genetic persuasion, he refuses to abandon his modified Oedipal complex, and, in sticking with it, he is unable to avoid aligning himself with the camp of acquired inversion.

One final belief that separates Freud from Ellis and Krafft-Ebing is his stance on the female soul in the male body or the female mind in the male body. Both Ellis and Krafft-Ebing hold this belief. Freud, on the other hand, takes issue with this belief in male sexual inverts. He asserts that male inverts often search not for masculinity, but for femininity, providing as examples male prostitutes who dress as a woman and the Greek appreciation for boys' modestly and humility, what Freud label female traits (143). If male inverts were simply women in the bodies of men, they would not look for femininity in their sexual partners. They would search out masculinity, and some do, Freud acknowledges, but not all. Barnes's O'Connor and Forster's Maurice prove Freud's point. Maurice is a masculine young man who falls in love and desires sexually

another masculine young man. Although Clive is physically smaller than Maurice, he certainly does not adopt feminine clothing, whereas Barnes's O'Connor does adopt the clothing of women to find satisfaction with his identity and love. Interestingly, Freud says this behavior does not typify female sexual inverts, who display "masculine traits, both physical and mental, with peculiar frequency" (144). These same women "look for femininity in their sexual objects" (144). That Freud acknowledges this difference is productive because the experiences of the two groups are not always the same, but, ultimately, this acknowledgment is yet another form of reduction. Surely, not every female invert of Freud's time exhibited masculine traits.

The term *invert* evolved from the late 19th century into the early 20th century. Many voices helped to craft what became known as the sexual invert, not all of them scientific. As Richard Von Freiherr Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, and Sigmund Freud fanned the flames of sexological discussion in Europe, authors such as E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, and Djuna Barnes began exploring sexual inversion in literature, leading to some groundbreaking works for the representation of sexually inverted, or gay, characters. These authors broke barriers as they revealed inverted characters' struggles with alienation.

Chapter One: E.M. Forster's *Maurice*: Social Segregation and Sexological Study

E.M. Forster crafts a narrative of sexual inversion in his novel *Maurice*, using as the focal point a man after whom the novel is named, a Maurice Hall whose journey as an invert guides the novel. Without a doubt, Maurice stands as an individual character in this novel, but for the Modernist movement and for gay characters in the works of this movement, Maurice is more than just an invert; that is, he is a tool through which Forster can reveal the conditions experienced by inverts during the Modern years. Through Maurice Hall, Forster shows readers the judgment, fear, oppression, and most importantly, the isolation inverts faced. In all other ways, Maurice is an ordinary man. He attends a nice school, continues to Cambridge, acquires a job in working with stocks, yet his desires force him to live as an outcast. As Forster states in the novel's terminal note, Maurice's inversion is an "ingredient that puzzles him, wakes him, torments him, and finally saves him" (250). All of these reactions stem from Maurice's experiences with isolation, and though the root cause of his isolation is his sexuality, those forces which drive the isolation are multitudinous. The alienating forces faced by Maurice and other inverts during this time period include the dominant culture (as well as its representatives), the church, and science. Maurice, and at times Clive, deals with each of these forces, and enables readers to witness the isolation of the sexual invert.

One of the most powerful, oppressive and alienating forces with which Maurice must wrangle throughout this novel is society and those beings, both human and nonhuman, who represent it. The most useful manner of tracing his interactions with his culture is a chronological reflection, as it most accurately reveals the cumulative effects

of social pressures on Maurice. Maurice's societal experiences begin with a man by the name of Mr. Ducie, a senior assistant at Maurice's preparatory school. Realizing that Maurice is leaving the institution and going to public education, Ducie decides to warn Maurice about his decision, but the conversation soon becomes less a warning about the dangers of receiving public education and more an attempt to instruct Maurice in the ways of manhood. Though Maurice expresses some curiosity regarding the lesson, readers are allowed to see that ultimately this cultural indoctrination does not find favor with Maurice.

After drawing sand figures that are supposed to elucidate the "mystery of sex" to Maurice, Ducie turns to a discussion of the "ideal man" (13, 14). It is here that Maurice comes into contact with one of the first cultural visions which call for him, yet deny him as he is. The ideal man of whom Ducie speaks is defined in contrast to "Woman," who must be protected, loved, and served (14). To conclude his sermon of socialization, Ducie claims that the order of God's plan hangs upon this union of man and woman (15). Failing to understand thoroughly what is being told to him, Maurice remains mostly unaware of how greatly the connotations behind these words will affect him as he ages; however, Maurice does have one moment of clarity which foreshadows his inversion and alienation: he reacts to Ducie's speech by thinking, "Liar, coward, he's told me nothing"(15). This reaction, though juvenile and superficial, allows readers to see that Maurice does not believe what Ducie has said about men, women, and sexuality. The reason for this absence in comprehension is primal. Instinctively, Maurice dismisses what Ducie has said as untrue, the reason being that Maurice does not find himself in the

images drawn on the sand. Maurice is not the ideal man, “chaste with asceticism” (14). He is a child on the cusp of manhood, and he is a sexual invert.

The expectations of the manhood Maurice is growing into present themselves clearly when readers are exposed to one of Maurice’s greatest fears as a child: his shadow, more particularly his shadow reflected in the looking glass (19). At first glance, this fear seems simple enough. Maurice, a young child, has a fear of the dark, and his shadow seems to be an ominous figure, but the specification Forster makes in describing the details of Maurice’s fear suggests that a greater issue is at work here. Just two pages earlier in the novel, Maurice breaks into tears when his mother explains that the reason he is withdrawn from a private institution and placed into a public one is that the institution Maurice will soon enter is the one his father attended. His mother explains to Maurice that he will attend this school “in order that you may grow up like your dear father in every way” (17). At this explanation, Maurice begins to cry, and this reaction is connected to his fear of his shadowed reflection. Maurice feels the shadow of his father leaning over him, pressuring him to be like the patriarch loved by everyone, yet when Maurice sees this presence, he sees it through the looking glass, so the shadow is distorted, strange to Maurice. The reason Maurice sees this reflection as strange is that he is already aware of his difference from his father, that he cannot become the man his mother suggested he become. Maurice’s mom serves as a heteronormative agent while the shadow reveals the effect this agency has already begun to take on the impressionable Maurice. Though not consciously aware of the exact nature of his feelings, Maurice begins his dealings with heteronormativity in this section of the novel, and these dealings will arise time and time again throughout the novel.

When next readers are exposed to explicit societal pressure placed upon Maurice, Maurice is on track to attend Cambridge and giving a speech at his preparatory school. Catching Maurice in an effort to interrogate and congratulate him is Dr. Barry, a neighbor of Maurice's family and the societal representative who brings with him heteronormativity. Jealous of Maurice's youth, Barry comments that "youth" is "irresistible in love as in war" (27), but Maurice does not understand what Barry is implying. Maurice's slow wit angers Barry, who responds with "'Oh, you young fellows! Butter wouldn't melt in your mouth these days. Don't know what I mean! Prudish of a petticoat! Be frank, man . . . I'm a medical man and an old man and I tell you that. Man that is born of woman must go with woman if the human race is to continue'" (27-8). Not grasping the meaning at first, Maurice quickly sees what Barry is saying when he hears this tirade. In response, he looks at the headmaster's wife, suffers a "violent repulsion" and begins to blush as he remembers the diagrams Ducie drew in the sand (28). Along with these physical reactions comes a mental realization, a conscious dawning of difference in Maurice. Readers see this awareness begin when Forster writes that "trouble--nothing as beautiful as sorrow--rose to the surface of his [Maurice's] mind, displayed its ungainliness, and sank. Its precise nature he did not ask himself . . . but the hint was appalling . . . Dr. Barry went on lecturing him, and under the cover of friendly manner said much that gave pain" (28). One wonders briefly why Maurice is given much pain by what Barry says to him about men, women, and the manner in which the two should and could act, but when one considers that this moment recalls the earlier scene on the seashore, Maurice's inversion becomes the clear culprit in his pain. It is Maurice's inversion which separates him from the world of which Barry speaks. What Barry reads

as feigned naiveté in Maurice is alienated ignorance. Maurice does not see the world as Barry does, so he is initially confused by Barry's accusations. Once he understands, though, Maurice feels sadness because he realizes that Barry presents a worldview into which he cannot fit. That he is a misfit begins to creep into Maurice's mind.

What Barry and Ducie both bring to Maurice's attention is heteronormativity, a concept yet to be named during Forster's time. However, the concept's lack of naming did not preclude it from being an active force in the lives of inverts and heterosexuals alike, as Maurice's interactions thus far in the novel make clear. Michael Warner discusses the theory of heteronormativity in the introduction to *Fear of a Queer Planet*. Most of his focus on this theory centers on its political and social implications, and at one point he makes an important call-to-action statement: "Social theory, moreover, must begin to do more than occasionally acknowledge the gay movement because so much of heterosexual privilege lies in heterosexual culture's exclusive ability to interpret itself as society" (8). Though the first part of this statement is true (Maurice's experiences certainly validate it), there are concerning issues which lie mostly in the second part of Warner's assertion--that is, that heterosexuals have a claim on the essence of what society is and that their privilege comes from possessing this monopoly on the constitution of society.

It is clear to an observant reader that Warner's concerns play out in the interaction between Maurice and Dr. Barry. That Maurice is unaware consciously of his difference until this moment at the age of eighteen reveals the power of the heterosexual definition of society. Maurice simply assumes that he fits well into society, as he is presented with only one view, the heterosexual one, yet this scene shows Maurice's assumptions as they

begin to topple. That Barry can accuse Maurice of being licentious towards women and that Maurice does not even have the words to deny this accusation or to voice his truth confirms Warner's claim regarding heterosexual privilege.

Another event further reveals the ubiquitous presence of heteronormativity and heterosexual privilege: Maurice's affair with Clive Durham. Maurice meets Clive Durham, ostensibly another sexual invert, during their time at Cambridge. Searching specifically for another young man by the name of Risley, but searching generally for community (Maurice suspects that Risley shares his sexual condition), Maurice discovers Clive examining pianola records. Within a term, the two become intimately attached, not sexually, but platonically. The burgeoning relationship between these two continues to grow as their time at Cambridge rolls on, but it also serves to further alienate Maurice from the society into which he wants to assimilate. Two scenes highlight this alienation well. The first scene, pastoral and provocative, presents Maurice and Clive as they ditch lectures and chapel among other academic obligations to spend an afternoon together alone in the countryside. Forster's portrayal of this idyllic afternoon suggests that love between men is possible and even scandalously similar to the love between man and woman. Nonetheless, one element identifies the relationship as different from that of a man and woman, the necessity of seclusion and secrecy. Maurice and Clive must take to the countryside if they wish to have open air, both literal and metaphorical, in which they can express themselves. This fact is made apparent when Forster describes the journey of Clive and Maurice: "They became a cloud of dust, a stench, and a roar to the world, but the air they breathed was pure, and all the noise they heard was the long drawn cheer of the wind. They cared for no one, *they were outside humanity . . .*" [emphasis added]

(76). Here, outside humanity, Maurice and Clive are able to act, talk, live, be as they like, as their sexuality asks them to. The chapter describing this platonic, yet emotionally charged tryst ends with two important descriptions. One labels the day the two men spent together as “ordinary,” which normalizes the relationship of two sexually inverted men (78). The other description is ominous and foreshadows difficulty for Maurice and Clive: “Yet it [the day] had never come to them before, nor was it to be repeated” (78). Though not obvious, this reference alludes to an upcoming societal intrusion.

Mr. Cornwallis, the Dean of Cambridge in the novel, is upset when Maurice ignores him as he attempts to stop Maurice and Clive from leaving campus to spend an afternoon in the country. On the surface, this rebellion is Cornwallis’s reason for chastising Maurice, but the truth is that Cornwallis has “always suspected such friendships” (79). He feels the friendship between Maurice and Clive is “not natural” because “men of different characters and tastes should [not] be intimate, and although undergraduates, unlike schoolboys, are officially normal, the dons exercised a certain amount of watchfulness, and felt it right to spoil a love affair when they could” (79-80). Here, readers see Cornwallis’s true motivation: ending what he feels is an unnatural love affair between two undergraduates who have class differences. Strangely, it does not seem that the relationship would be as bad if the men had similar interests and tastes. Cornwallis reveals himself to be an elitist separatist.

Because of Cornwallis’s prejudice, Maurice is told he will not be returning to Cambridge unless he writes a letter of apology to the Dean. No one can better represent the powers of society than the Dean of Cambridge, and Cornwallis’s clear motivation, to the readers at least, in exercising the powers of his position is to alienate Maurice from

Clive for two reasons: that he feels there is a love affair between the young men, and the second, and he believes that the men do not share tastes and interests. Maurice does not escape this focus on what is socially proper, as Clive becomes an upstanding member of society, upholding its expected interests, tastes, and views on sexuality.

Clive's abandonment of Maurice and transformation into a "normal" state of being, as he calls it, alienates Maurice further (116). Before Clive leaves for Greece, in what is a coordinated effort to escape Maurice, Clive and Maurice have a conversation about love, their relationship, and its future during which Maurice reveals much about his own alienated status as a sexual invert. Clive pontificates on the nature of death and predicts wistfully (and melodramatically) that he will "never have so clean an experience as death" (113). Responding to this statement, Maurice says that if "either of us goes, nothing's left for both" (113). Maurice's feelings about being separated from Clive are clear. He feels that without Clive he will have nothing, and he assumes that same feeling beats within Clive. Maurice's inversion is setting him up for agonized isolation. Societal silence about sexual inversion and the inversion itself place Maurice in a dangerous position. Without Clive, Maurice is truly alone, and this fact is a result of the society around the two men.

The culturally propagated absence of communication regarding the identity of the sexual invert undoubtedly furthers Maurice's social alienation, as readers can see in this scene. Maurice is unable to see beyond his connection with Clive because his identity has been veiled even from him. Silence has hidden it. He does not know how to be an invert, as he does not know what the traits that define his sexuality are, and this ignorance is certainly not Maurice's fault; he is immersed in a culture that does not want to consider,

much less discuss, homosexuals. In the fear and shame that hold Maurice's tongue, he comes to resemble Neville from Woolf's *The Waves*, another male sexual invert who has trouble vocalizing his sexual attractions to his friends. This silence speaks to the great importance of Krafft-Ebing's and Havelock Ellis's early works, both of which speak openly and frankly about sexual inversion. Though Krafft-Ebing advocated the treatment of inversion, his willingness to speak about sexual inversion began to empower the real-life parallels of Maurice and Neville.

The stifling of expression is to blame for Maurice's floundering efforts to discover his sexual identity and to be able to imagine an existence without Clive. In his book, *The Wilde Century*, Alan Sinfield notes that Maurice's central problem in the novel's nascence is "not in coming to terms with his sexuality, but in finding out what it is" (140). If Maurice were able to understand himself more and able to understand that he and Clive are not the only sexual inverts in England, then his dependence on Clive would be lessened, if not eliminated, and the alienation into which he is soon to spiral would not present so much danger.

When Maurice discovers that Clive has stopped loving him, he ascribes the change in Clive's attitude to a lingering case of the flu, one which he believes has begun to affect Clive's mind. Maurice insists that Clive return home for treatment, but Clive ignores Maurice's feelings, thinking only that he "has stopped loving Maurice and should have to say so plainly" (117). The conversation between the two men after Clive returns to England presents readers with yet another revelation regarding the alienated status of the sexual invert. In this conversation, readers are made aware that though Maurice may be slow to absorb information at times, his views on his sexuality and societal position

are keen. When Clive tries to convince Maurice that he has changed, that he is now sexually attracted to women, Maurice asks, ““Can a leopard change his spots?”” (127). Though asked in good humor, this question exhibits deep ramifications about the essence of sexual inversion. That Maurice sees his sexuality as natural and that he does not believe that he can change his sexuality highlight Havelock Ellis’s argument that sexual inversion is inborn, just like the spots of a leopard. That Maurice holds these views is very important because he later suppresses them in an effort to appease society, a point to be discussed soon. Maurice’s ideological confession reinforces the isolation that readers are about to see displayed by the two men’s conversation.

Revealing first that he believes sexuality to be both immutable and unchangeable, Maurice then points out to Clive that they “are outlaws” (127). Maurice recognizes his position in society, and in this humbling moment readers are able to understand that Maurice knows how alone he is. They are allowed to understand the fear that courses through Maurice as he attempts to win over Clive again. Nowhere is the fear better portrayed than when Maurice acknowledges that: ““All this’--he pointed to the middle-class comfort of the room-- ‘would be taken from us if people knew.’” Maurice holds a mirror to his own fears and hopes that by showing the reflection to Clive, he can pull Clive back to him. Because Maurice is so genuine and honest in this scene, readers can feel the pressure that Maurice and Clive feel to be dignified, to be normal, to be civilized, all options which are precluded by sexual inversion.

Focusing on this exclusionary standard in his book *Heroes and Homosexuals: Education and Empire in E. M. Forster*, Quentin Bailey argues that one of the largest contributing factors to this standard was an imperial nation’s fear of contamination (327).

He lays out statistics to back his claim: “In the year 1913 (the year that *Maurice* was written) the British Empire encompassed approximately 20 percent of the world’s land area and 25 percent of its population. The residents of Britain accounted for slightly less than 8 percent of the imperial population--some 30 million out of 400 million” (329). He provides this information to give readers context, allowing them room to understand why residents of Britain would worry about their identity being affected by other members of the same Empire.

Bailey links this argument to *Maurice* by claiming that homosexuality was seen as a type of contamination, a cultural one: “To put it bluntly, cultural alienation (conceived largely in terms of an ‘unspeakable’ sexuality) constantly replaces the anxiety created by geographical displacement. . . .” (327). One issue replaces another, and the replacement strikes at home, not in a distant country. What the residents of the British Isles fear in the society surrounding *Maurice* is alienation from the ideal of their own country. They fear that a “non-Western consciousness” will infect their society and thereby separate them from the idolized version of their country. To alleviate this fear, the citizens cordon off that which could contaminate their culture--the sexual invert. Readers see in *Maurice* the effects of what Bailey discusses in his article. To be an invert is not to be British, yet *Maurice* resides in Britain. He passes as an average British man each day, all the while living with the anxiety of alienation expressed to Clive in this conversation.

After this dejecting conversation with Clive, *Maurice* begins to understand that Clive is serious about no longer being together as anything more than friends, and this understanding leads *Maurice* to see a doctor in an effort to treat his inversion, more specifically to cure his inversion. He sees that Clive has changed and wishes to rid

himself of the one aspect of his identity that is causing him so much pain. Hence, it is at this point in the novel that Science becomes a significant, powerful representative of the culture which has exiled Maurice. In his effort to discover which type of doctor to see, much less which individual, Maurice asks a close acquaintance if he has ““come across unspeakables of the Oscar Wilde sort?”” (156). His friend’s response is terse and telling: ““No, that’s in the asylum work, thank God”” (156). Krafft-Ebing refers to the practice of institutionalizing inverts as a “monstrous idea” (460), but his opinion was not shared by everyone in the medical community, as Maurice’s friend makes clear. Bailey’s point is again reinforced. The invert must be locked away, secluded in an effort to protect society at large, and thus begins Maurice’s experiences with the scientific community and sexual inversion.

Next, Maurice decides to turn to a family friend, Dr. Barry, the same man who earlier repulsed Maurice by making him think of Ducie’s drawings in the sand. Again, Barry serves as an oppressive force of society. When Maurice tells Barry that he has problems sexually, Barry assumes that Maurice has acquired a sexually transmitted infection, but Maurice quickly clarifies that he has no problem of that sort. Rather, his problem is that he is “an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort” (159). For Maurice, Barry’s response could not be worse. He calls Maurice’s sexual inversion “an evil hallucination,” “rubbish,” and a “temptation from the devil” (159). However, the worst aspect of the response is that Barry completely refuses to discuss inversion with Maurice. Desperate for some answers, Maurice explains that he “has been like this” since he could remember and asks if he is “diseased” (159). These comments lead readers to the core of

Maurice's concerns, the factor motivating him to investigate, and attempt to eliminate, his sexuality: loneliness.

After questioning whether he is diseased, Maurice draws attention undeniably to this factor by pleading, "If I am, I want to be cured, I can't put up with the loneliness anymore, the last six months specially" (159). Losing Clive sends Maurice into a tailspin, further isolating him from the world and exposing Maurice to a loneliness he did not feel when he and Clive were together. With Clive gone, the tenuous string which linked Maurice to the conservative society around him is broken. As this scene reveals, Maurice begins to connect his sexual inversion with his isolation. His pleas to Barry highlight the fact that Maurice believes that if he is cured of his sexual inversion, then he will also cease experiencing the loneliness that haunts him.

Maurice's loneliness does not end, though, and neither do his attempts to find a cure in science. Not long after this scathing and embarrassing experience with Dr. Barry, Maurice seeks another professional, this one more removed from Maurice's life, chosen thus purposefully in an effort to find a detached figure who can work objectively. This man is named Mr. Lasker Jones, and his profession is hypnotism, a technique through which Maurice hopes he can be cured, and one which Krafft-Ebing praises (450). Lasker Jones is the first character within the novel to give name to Maurice's condition; he refers to Maurice's condition as "congenital homosexuality" (180). Also, Jones cautiously tells Maurice that many of his patients, the majority in fact, are of Maurice's kind and that, furthermore, many of them are cured by their sessions: "I'm afraid you may possibly retain the prejudice after trying, Mr. Hall. I cannot promise a cure. I spoke to you of my other patients--seventy-five per cent--but in only fifty per cent have I been successful."

(181). These numbers, as they are intended, serve to reassure Maurice, but Maurice does not follow in the path of these “cured” patients.

While under hypnotism, Maurice makes clear that his inversion is not going to be altered. Having lulled Maurice into a trance, Jones begins a series of questions. He asks Maurice to identify an imaginary picture on the wall. Unable to follow, Maurice repeats Jones’s question, and Jones leads by saying the woman in the picture is ““Edna May”” (182). Maurice quickly elaborates this statement into ““Mr. Edna May”” (182). That Maurice, even under Jones’s hypnotic spell, attempts to make the person in the image a man suggests how deeply he yearns for a loved male figure in his life, but the conversation does not end there. Jones then asks Maurice ““Isn’t she [Edna May] beautiful?”” (182). Both men laugh at Maurice’s response, but the implications are not to be dismissed. Maurice says in response to the question of beauty, ““I want to go home to my mother.”” (182).

Maurice wants to return to the stage of his life during which sexuality was not an issue which he had to address; Maurice wants to juvenilize himself in order to escape the loneliness and pain his sexuality is causing him. To return home to his mother is to return to safety and community, both aspects of Maurice’s life which are denied him by his inversion and society. Responding to Maurice’s focus on his childhood, Jones brings adult sexuality to the forefront by claiming that Edna is “not only beautiful, she is attractive” (182). Immediately, Maurice denies that she is attractive, and when Jones tries to convince Maurice by focusing on her hair, Maurice points out that he likes “short hair best” (182). The obvious implication of Maurice’s statement is that he prefers men. After the exchange regarding hair, Maurice breaks into tears, and readers see that hypnotism

does not seem to be the panacea for Maurice's inversion. Nevertheless, Maurice has not seen the last of Mr. Lasker Jones.

When next he encounters Jones, Maurice has met and slept with a young man named Alec who works for Clive at Penge, the Durham family home. This encounter, in fact, is what drives Maurice back into Jones's scientific embrace. Unhappy that his previous session did not prevent him from engaging in sexual acts with Alec, Maurice rushes into the office on his arrival and demands to be hypnotized, but when he cannot fall under hypnosis, readers are offered another piercing glance into Maurice's mind. To explain Maurice's inability to fall under the trance, Jones says that Maurice is "less suggestible" than he was during their last meeting (210). Frustrated, Maurice responds with "I don't know what that may mean, not being an expert in the jargon, but I swear from the bottom of my heart I want to be healed. I want to be like other men, not this outcast whom nobody wants--"(210). Again, readers see clearly the connection between Maurice's sexuality and his status as an exile, an alien in his own society.

Don Gorton argues in his essay "Maurice and Gay Liberation" that what Maurice is truly searching for in these attempts to be cured is the same thing he was searching for when he attempted to keep Clive in his life romantically, and that which he is about to discover in accepting his feelings for Alec. Gorton claims that "the theme of *Maurice* can be described as essentially the search for a compatible social construct by which the protagonist can understand himself and go on to self-actualization" (19). As a sexual invert, Maurice is not provided his construct by society, unlike Clive and Alice, the newlywed couple. Forster describes the comparison as follows: "Beautiful conventions received them [Clive and Alice]--while beyond the barrier Maurice wandered, the wrong

words on his lips and the wrong desires in his heart, and his arms full of air” (165). This description lends credence to Gorton’s point. The “beautiful conventions which receive Clive and Alice light their way; they provide the couple with a guide. In stark comparison, Maurice has no guide, no conventions to receive him, yet he sees those which Clive and Alice have, and he wants to have them as well for two reasons: he wishes to embrace an accepted structure by which to live and he desires community. It is important that Maurice’s arms are full of air, highlighting his isolation. These desires lead him directly into the office of Dr. Barry and Mr. Lasker Jones and send him fleeing from Alec, an ironic turn of events considering Maurice’s final interactions with these three men. With Dr. Barry, Maurice feels shamed and oppressed, and with Jones, Maurice feels dismissed. In comparing the two men of science, Forster says of Jones: “He was not shocked like Dr. Barry, but he was bored, and never thought of the young invert again” (214). Maurice feels dismissed by Jones, yet Alex, the figure from whom Maurice runs, soon becomes the figure in whose arms he finds some peace.

When finally he decides that he will accept his feelings for Alec and allow Alec into his life, Maurice faces alienating barriers from his happiness. Mr. Ducie, the creator of the sexually illustrative sand drawings at the novel’s beginning, finds Maurice and Alec as the two men are engaged in a heated discussion about Maurice’s treatment of Alec in the British Museum. Mr. Ducie is unable to recall correctly who Maurice is, labeling Maurice with the name “Wimbleby.” (223). Maurice’s response to this inaccuracy shows readers how he has changed since his first encounter with Ducie, the man who, for the purpose of the novel, first exposes Maurice to the heteronormative expectations that oppressed him throughout the novel. Forster describes Maurice’s

thoughts as follows: “To his own name Maurice would have responded, but he now had the inclination to lie; he was tired of their endless inaccuracy, [sic] he had suffered too much from it” (223). The endless inaccuracy described by Maurice refers obviously to more than simply Ducie’s addressing him by the wrong name. Rather, what Maurice really means is that he is tired of lying about his inversion, tired of the alienation-derived suffering that the mislabeling has caused him. Provided with an opportunity to identify himself to Ducie, Maurice instead chooses to adopt Alec’s nickname, Scudder, a decision with two implied ramifications. The first of these ramifications is that Maurice exhibits a growing acceptance of his own inversion, as he decides to link himself to a man with whom he has engaged in sexual acts and for whom he is developing feelings. The second ramification is not as positive, however. Because he denies his identity to a man who clearly represents the surrounding culture, Maurice further alienates himself from that culture.

The scene in the British Museum leads Alec and Maurice to spend the night together, but when the morning comes, Alec says he must be on his way. Maurice, upset and confused, tells Alec they should stay together in England. Having asked Alec to stay with him and having been denied, Maurice goes to Penge to see Alec off to his new job in Argentina, and it is here that Maurice meets one of the most antagonistic and alienating characters in the novel, the Reverend Borenius, who wants Alec to be confirmed in Argentina. The fear Maurice feels when he sees Borenius is completely apparent. Maurice cannot even utter “two or three normal sentences,” and his “underlip tremble[s] like an unhappy boy’s” (236). This fear incites Borenius to make passive accusations towards Maurice that highlight his awareness of the relationship between the two men.

Borenus hides his judgments in ostensible concern for Alec, but his real feelings are not disguised for long: “To speak frankly, I am far from easy about young Scudder. . . .the fact being that he has been guilty of sensuality” (237). Borenus purposefully pauses after this statement in an effort to frighten Maurice, but he soon continues:

In time, Mr. Hall, one gets to recognize that sneer, that hardness, for fornication extends far beyond the actual deed. Were it a deed only, I for one would not hold it anathema. But when nations went a whoring they invariably ended by denying God, I think, and *until all sexual irregularities and not some of them are penal the Church will never reconquer England.* [emphasis added] (237)

Borenus leaves little to the imagination regarding his stance on how sexual inverts have affected and will continue to affect England. He blames them, along with other fornicators, for the Church’s loss of control over the nation, and his suggested resolution is to make the “sexual irregularities” punishable by law. Borenus would have all sexual inverts locked in prison, which is simply isolation by another name.

What makes Borenus’s espousal particularly thorny and cruel is that he is cognizant of Maurice’s feelings and the potential relationship developing between him and Alec. He wants Maurice to know how alone he is, as he assumes that Alec will sail away. This interaction with Borenus furthers Maurice’s sense of isolation and harks back to a much earlier section of the novel which highlights why Maurice has avoided religion and men like Borenus: “[I]n all creation there could be no one as vile as himself. . . . if known as he was, he would be hounded from the world” (30). Though Maurice has matured since this thought, both the fear of being exposed and the sense of being isolated

from religion remain. For Maurice, the church consists of men and women like Borenius, perceptive beings who could discover his shame and harm him with it. When Alec does not leave on the boat, though, the power of the situation shifts, and Borenius is left befuddled, having been certain that the men would not be reunited. Maurice views Borenius as “silly” after that moment (239), and this view draws into focus the shift in power. Though Borenius may have been conquered, one figure yet remains for Maurice to confront, Clive Durham, a painfully ironic confrontation considering that Clive is the man who introduced Maurice to love between men, but now stands at the pinnacle of that society which wishes to dismiss and exclude Maurice.

The final scenes of the novel pit Maurice against Clive, the former man attempting to tell the latter of the developing relationship with Alec, and it is here that readers see how heteronormatized Clive has become. Earlier, Forster says that “Clive had become quite the squire. All his grievances against society had passed since his marriage” (170). Marriage, then, has clearly brought Clive into the clutches of the same heteronormative society that rejects Maurice, and their final interaction presents the two men as resigned and ideologically divided. In coming to Clive, Maurice’s only goals are to find closure in the relationship shared between the two men and to tell Clive that he has found a new love, Alec, who is Clive’s gamekeeper; the position Alec holds for Clive provides another reason for Maurice to reveal the truth to Clive.

When the two men begin speaking, Clive arrogantly assumes “it must be the love affair” that Maurice wants to discuss (241). Maurice quickly asserts that he is in love with Clive’s gamekeeper, a statement that confuses Clive as he asks if Maurice means Mrs. Ayres (242). When Maurice says it is Alec whom he loves, Clive says “[w]hat a

grotesque announcement” (242). This reaction alone reveals the shift in Clive’s views on love between men. What was once to be admired and sought desperately has since become grotesque, the “since” here being that moment at which Clive entered refined society through marriage. Clive’s comments do not end there. He calls Maurice’s inversion “morbid,” for he “had assumed that Maurice was normal during the last fortnight” (242). The application of the description *abnormal* or *atypical* suggests Clive’s true feelings for sexual inversion, and it suggests an earlier passage in the novel during which Forster says of Clive: “He hated queerness, Cambridge, the Blue Room, certain glades in the park were--not tainted, there had been nothing disgraceful--but rendered subtly ridiculous” (175). If Clive hates that which is queer and if he believes that Maurice is abnormal, then his feelings for Maurice’s sexual inversion are not to be questioned. Clive continues to call Maurice’s feelings an obsession for which he pities Maurice, but when Maurice tells Clive that he and Alec have consummated their feelings for one another, Clive leaps up “with a whimper of disgust” (243). Immediately, Clive wishes “to smite the monster, and flee, but he was civilized” (243). This description of Clive’s reaction is rife with implication and revelatory of the society he wishes so desperately to preserve and promote.

Clive views Maurice’s sexuality as monstrous, a beast to be smote, but Clive’s reaction is not violent because he is civilized, a true English gentleman, and this fact of Clive’s status clarifies the viewpoints of his fellow civilized companions, those unlike Maurice and Alec. Clive may, in fact, win a position of public office, a true testament to a his relatable persona. Hence, Forster uses Clive to represent the conservative society that alienates Maurice. His “civilized” repulsion suggests the repulsion that Maurice would

face were he to live his life openly among his fellow Englishmen and Englishwomen. Nonetheless, Clive feels that “[h]e must rescue his old friend” (245). The feeling of heteronormative, condescending “heroism” which overtakes Clive leaves him speaking to himself, as Maurice has no desire to be saved and instead disappears into the evening with Alec.

This dissolution of Maurice and Alec into the Greenwood is what Forster himself calls a “happy ending” (250). He says himself in his terminal note to *Maurice* that a happy ending was “imperative” (250). Furthermore, he says, “I was determined that in fiction anyway two men should fall in love and remain in it for the ever and ever that fiction allows, and in this sense Maurice and Alec still roam the greenwood” (250). This happy ending that leaves Maurice and Alec roaming the greenwood together is called “the Greenwood idyll” by Matthew Curr in his article “Recuperating E.M. Forster’s *Maurice*” (58). In his article, Curr attempts to rebuff both formalist critics of the early and mid-20th century who labeled *Maurice* inferior to Forster’s other novels because of its aesthetic flaws, poor structure and the intrusion of autobiography, as well as from gay critics of the later 20th century who have labeled *Maurice* cowardly for not pushing boundaries further. In defending the work particularly from the latter group, Curr makes a point which highlights sexual inversion’s alienating effect upon Maurice and Alec. Curr claims that this closing scene, far from cowardly, is “the detonator of Forster’s explosive social revision” (60). This revision lies in the fact that the voice readers hear at the novel’s end is Forster’s own and that it “comes from another country, from an Italy of expatriation, because the country of his birth, he knew, would not know him” (60). Maurice and Alec must become exiles from the society of their birth in order to live

comfortably with their sexualities, and Forster, by using a distant voice in the novel's conclusion, purposefully demonstrates the inequality and isolation meted out to sexual inverts.

Society is multifaceted; it establishes and fosters community for those who accept its boundaries and restrictions. For those who acquiesce to the demands of society, camaraderie and protection are promised, but for those who do not meet these expectations, exclusion is guaranteed, though its forms are varied. For sexual inverts like Maurice, two of these exclusions are presented to him by his own friends and acquaintances: the asylum and jail. Though it is true that each of these locations offers its own unique defining features, both are the results of sequestration. Unable to "change his spots," Maurice cannot meet the civilized demands of his society and must, therefore, be silenced or expelled. Certainly, readers can empathize with Maurice's individual plight as a sexual invert, but the greater message to be understood implicitly within this work is that during Maurice's time, sexual inverts met with forces of segregation from all corners, each condoned by an oppressive society fearing moral corruption.

This fact is not only true for Maurice, but it is also true for Neville in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*. Like Maurice, Neville experiences extreme isolation from his friends, which places a strain on tenuous relationships. Unlike Maurice, though, Neville is more willing to hide his sexuality, and because he is willing to meet the heteronormative expectations of his society, he is rewarded with a scholarly position as a professor. Maurice and Neville represent potential divergent paths for sexual inverts during the Modern period. The latter refuses to hide his sexuality, and because of this refusal is alienated entirely from his society; the former becomes an introverted figure,

obsessed with language and a singular male figure on whom he waits throughout the novel. Though both characters are alienated because of their sexualities, each experiences this alienation uniquely.

Chapter Two: Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*: Alone Among Friends

In her work *The Waves* (1931), Virginia Woolf fashions six characters, and it is around these characterizations that the novel revolves, as the insights into the characters push forward the novel. As the characters' lives progress, so does the novel, and as the novel progresses, the characterizations become more complex. Nowhere is this complexity revealed better than in the character of Neville, a male homosexual. Throughout the novel, Neville's identity as a man and a homosexual becomes increasingly important to his characterization, as his desires for men and for love come to occupy much of his thoughts, and because these desires become one the Neville's chief motivations as a character in the novel, readers begin to see how isolated his character is, even among lovers and friends.

In considering why Woolf chooses to develop Neville as she does, one turns to her own manifesto on writing novels, "Modern Fiction." In this work, Woolf urges authors to "[e]xamine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day" (2089). Her use of the word *ordinary* set in juxtaposition with her study of Neville in *The Waves* produces broader implications for homosexuals during this time period. What is ordinary for a sexual invert during Neville's lifetime? Is the isolation he experiences to be expected? Because Neville's experience as a sexual invert is complex, the novel's answers to these questions must also be complex, revealing a Neville who seems connected but who readers see, upon closer inspection, is deeply alienated.

Woolf asks, "Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration and complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible?" (2089). The novelist must not be

afraid to reveal the spirit of life, the spirit of a character, with honesty and accuracy. For Woolf, “everything is the proper stuff of fiction” (2092). Neville, then, in the multitudes of his character is all proper for fiction; no aspect of his identity is not to be touched, including his sexual inversion and those aspects of his life which flow from it.

Insightful readers must grasp themselves what it means to be a marginalized character, what it is to represent a marginalized human being. Furthermore, readers need to understand that for Neville isolation is the biggest contributing factor to his marginalization. According to Everett V. Stonequist in his work *The Marginal Man: A Study in Personality and Culture Conflict*, “The marginal man...is one whom fate has condemned to live in two societies and in two, not merely different but antagonistic cultures” (xv). To be marginalized is then to be set at odds with oneself, finding one’s personality, one’s individual self, and one’s motivations, operating against the grain of the surrounding culture. Neville’s actions and thoughts in *The Waves* clearly place him within the confines of Stonequist’s definition; readers see Neville struggle with his sexuality. Neville’s personality is set against the expectations of the culture around him, forming a problematic social matrix that forces him time and time again into a marginalized, isolated position.

The earliest substantial example of Neville’s isolation appears in the childhood narrative of the six characters. The six children are in a classroom learning how to conjugate Latin verbs when readers are allowed into Neville’s mind. He says, “Each tense. . . means differently. There is an order in this world; there are distinctions, there are differences in this world, upon whose verge I step. For this is only beginning” (21). Although sexuality is not explicitly mentioned, Neville’s nascent understanding of his

differences comes across clearly in this section of the novel. The cultural boundary lines on which Neville verges to step refer to sexual moral boundaries, and this introduction to Neville's character lays out a blueprint, albeit vague, for his development throughout the work: a fascination with order in language, a sexual self-awareness, and a divergence from the traditional sexual code which carries consequences.

As Neville ages, readers see that sexuality begins to factor more openly into his thoughts and actions. When the boys, Neville, Bernard, and Louis, enter chapel for a sermon, each reveals a different reaction to his environment and to the religious procession around him. Neville becomes annoyed at Dr. Crane, the man reading the lesson, as he feels Dr. Crane is unimaginative and a "brute" (35). Neville chooses to distract himself by watching Percival, another student at the school. Percival is an integral figure in the book, described as a "mediaeval commander" with "magnificence" (37), a "hero" (127), and "a God" (136). For Neville, he represents that which is unattainable, and it is here in the chapel that readers see Neville's inversion clearly for the first time. Neville says of Percival: "[H]e flicks his hand to the back of his neck. For such gestures, one falls hopelessly in love for a lifetime" (36). Into place falls another piece of the blueprint for Neville's life, as Neville loves Percival for the entirety of the novel, yet his love is a solitary one, for Percival never returns the affection.

The continuance of this love begins to weigh on Neville as the young boys begin to become young men, and Neville wishes to tell someone of his feelings for Percival. Neville tires of hiding his feelings. Unable to reveal his love to anyone, Neville feels alone and overwhelmed. In an effort to alleviate these feelings, Neville begins

considering to whom he can speak about Percival. His central consideration is Bernard, and he reflects:

Bernard's stories amuse me. . . at the start. But when they tail off absurdly and he gapes, twiddling a bit of string, *I feel my own solitude*. He sees every one with blurred edges. Hence I cannot talk to him of Percival. I cannot expose my absurd and violent passion to his sympathetic understanding. It, too, would make a "story." [emphasis added] (51)

When Bernard weaves a tale aloud to Neville and the group, Neville loses himself in the story, but when Bernard's stories begin to taper off, Neville begins to feel alone again. Bernard provides Neville an escape from his isolation, an isolation brought on by Neville's inability to tell anyone of his feelings for Percival. Neville does not want to confess to Bernard because he does not feel Bernard will react the way he wishes his confidant to act. Bernard will react with sympathy, Neville thinks, and Neville wants a dramatic reaction, as he himself feels his feelings toward Percival are absurd and violent. It is not only his feelings for Percival that Neville wants to confess.

Neville has at this point developed a rather astute view of himself and his own motivations. Analyzing himself, Neville says that "[n]obody guessed the need I had to offer my being to one god; and perish, and disappear" (52). This god to whom Neville wishes to offer himself is Percival, but it is not simply Percival, the man, but what Percival is, a man. Neville wishes to offer himself to a man with whom he is in love, an essentially sexual desire and one which Neville carries with him throughout the rest of the novel. Neville's inability to find a suitable ear to whom to confess leaves him emotionally constrained, forcing him to lock away his desires. Neville's sexual inversion

prepares for him an uncomfortable bed in which to lie, but he tolerates his situation, pushing forward in the hope that he will find the god to whom he can offer himself.

As the young men prepare to depart from their preparatory school for summer holiday, Neville ponders the fate of his relationship with Percival, and he comes to a conclusion which is ostensibly negative: “He [Percival] will forget me. He will leave my letters lying about among guns and dogs unanswered But it is for that I love him. I shall propose meeting--under a clock, by some Cross; and shall wait, and he will not come. It is for that I love him” (60). Readers wonder what exactly it is about Percival that Neville loves, his absent-mindedness, his forgetfulness, his cruelty? All of these options seem believable, but none are presented as a clear answer. Rather, readers understand that Neville loves any aspect of Percival presented to him, and that the polish of unattainability makes Percival the perfect object of affection.

As the god to whom Neville wishes to offer himself, Percival can do no wrong, but Neville is not sure that what Percival gives him will sustain him, predicting that he will want more later in his life. He says that he “will always push through curtains to privacy, and want some whispered words alone” (60). Neville foresees that he will want intimacy in his life, and he knows that he will not receive that intimacy from Percival. The knowledge of these two facts creates a tension which makes Neville “apprehensive of intolerable pain” (60). Again, though, Neville pushes forward, “dubious, but elated” in the hopes of finding love and connection (60).

When readers are next exposed to Neville’s mind, they witness a particularly bitter, revelatory stream of thoughts, the bitterness and revelation both stemming from Neville’s sexual inversion, especially as Neville begins attempting to meld himself with

his society. After conjecturing on how Bernard is able to mingle easily with all kinds of people, Neville finds himself surrounded by people with whom he cannot connect or relate, “horse-dealers and plumbers” (70). Wondering why he cannot relate to these people, Neville is initially satisfied with a simple dismissal: “I have no power of ingratiating myself” (70). However, this answer does not satisfy him for long. He probes deeper into his own psyche for answers. Looking closer, Neville decides he would like to “be honest, to denounce this piffling, trifling, self-satisfied world” (70). Becoming angered by the common men around him whom he believes to be entirely content with their banal lives, Neville continues, “I could shriek aloud at the smug self-satisfaction, at the mediocrity of this world, which breeds horse-dealers with coral ornaments hanging from their watch-chains” (70). Though abrupt, this sudden eruption of near rage is not surprising as Neville is wrangling with his placement in a grander societal scheme, and the placement Neville sees for himself is not satisfactory. Hence, he is angered by those who represent the society which he predicts will stifle him.

As Neville further analyzes himself and explains his thoughts, it gradually becomes clear that jealousy lies at the core of Neville’s distaste for these men. Though he wishes to challenge these men, these incarnations of oppression, Neville concedes, “No; they are immortal. They triumph. . . . They will drive me in October to take refuge in one of the universities, where I shall become a don” (71). The sense of defeat suggested in this passage comes to complete fruition when Neville reveals his true fear, “It would be better to breed horses and live in one of those red villas than to run in and out of the skulls of Euripides like a maggot, with a high-minded wife, one of those University women. That, however, will be my fate. I shall suffer” (71). Here, readers see the real

contention Neville has with the horse-breeders: he envies the satisfaction they have with their lives, with the plainness, the normalcy. The dismissive appositive “one of these University women” points out just how mundane the lifestyle Neville sees for himself is. The women are legion and, therefore, indistinguishable, as will be Neville. Neville becomes angry with the men because they have the ability to be satisfied with that type of life, whereas he does not. A sexual invert, Neville is unable to live happily the lives of these men; unhappily, though, is another option, as his vision suggests. Neville cannot connect with these men because these men represent a life Neville does not want but one that he sees forced upon him. Neville’s awareness of heteronormative expectations makes him perceptive, but it does not free him from their grasp.

In the next section of the novel, the characters have grown into their teenage years, and Neville has still not found anyone with whom he can share the truth regarding his sexuality. As readers saw in the previous section of the novel, an integral part of Neville’s distaste for the life he sees for himself is the wife, as she stands for the type of man he cannot be. As readers rejoin Neville, they see that his feelings for women have not improved; he continues to look upon them with an aversion. This distaste for women Neville shares with Maurice, as readers see when Forster labels both Clive and Maurice “misogynists” for their beliefs about women, especially their mothers (Forster 100).

Waxing on the value of appreciating beauty in its spontaneity, Neville looks upon a group of young men eating bananas (82), but a moment like this of “purest exaltation” is ruined by the presence of women (86). Neville says, ““When there are buildings like these . . . I cannot endure that there should be shop-girls. Their titter, their gossip, offends me; breaks into my stillness and nudges me, in moments of purest exaltation, to

remember our degradation” (86). The bitterness Neville feels toward women is a direct result of heteronormativity. Women are the figures to whom Neville is supposed to be drawn, but he recoils because of his sexual inversion. Social pressure makes monsters of women; they become the enemy for Neville, symbols of a system that isolates him. Neville’s use of the term “degradation” in relation to sex is also worth noting here, and I will return to it soon.

Another poignant example of the marginalization and isolation Neville faces is found when Neville attempts desperately to question Bernard about the consequences of sexual attractions to one’s own gender: “I [Neville] am trying desperately to expose a secret told to nobody yet; I am asking you (as I stand with my back to you) to take my life in your hands and tell me whether I am doomed always to cause repulsion in those I love” (88). In this situation, it is Neville’s sexuality that taxes him, and the gravity of this attempted revelation to a close friend displays to readers how vastly Neville’s sexuality separates him from others. It is no mistake that Woolf also highlights parenthetically Neville’s position in relation to Bernard as he tries to make his confession. Having his back turned to Bernard, Neville furthers the divide between himself and a heterosexual signifier of cultural normalcy. To find approval in Bernard would suggest hope for approval from society at large. However, as the scene plays out, readers find that Neville does not ask his question to Bernard and continues to find himself in a space of marginalization and isolation.

When next readers encounter the group reunited, it is at a dinner for Percival who is leaving for India. Neville makes quite the statement as he sits and waits for Percival’s arrival: “But without Percival there is no solidity. We are silhouettes, hollow phantoms

moving mistily without a background” (122). This assertion suggests more about Neville and his own mental state than it does about the actual condition of the group sans Percival. Importantly, if one claims that there is no solidity, one must also recognize that there is an absence of connection, but, again, this reality reflects only Neville’s viewpoint, not the objective reality of the group. Neville feels disconnected from the group, and the source of this lack of connection lies in his sexuality. Percival, the object of Neville’s love, makes Neville feel the group is connected.

At this same dinner, Neville asks those around him to say what is on their minds, but he does so largely in an effort to have a reason to say what is on his own mind. He begins, ““Now let us say, brutally and directly, what is in our minds. . . . Our isolation, our preparation, is over. The furtive days of secrecy and hiding, the revelations on staircases, moments of terror and ecstasy”” (124). When all six characters are together, their narrations often become shorter and more direct, and although Woolf ingeniously weaves one narrative into the next, each character’s concerns remain uniquely his or her own, and that fact is clear in this narration of Neville’s. Neville openly expresses his isolation in this section while tying it to secrecy and hiding. This connection is significant because it is his sexuality which he is hiding, and Neville himself links this concealing of his sexuality to his isolation.

At this juncture when he is surrounded by his six closest friends (one of whom he is in love with), Neville seems to be prepared to seize his opportunity to establish connection, to break free from the chains of his isolation and connect with those around him. He is brimming with memories to share, both good and bad. Briefly after this section, readers return to Neville as he describes himself as ““like a hound on the scent””

(129). Neville amends this statement immediately by adding that “I shall never have what I want. . . .” (129). What Neville wants is connection, but he cannot attain it, though he searches for it constantly, as this meeting with his friends and his yearning for Percival make clear.

In reflecting on his early arrival to see Percival and on Jenny’s resplendence, Neville says that “I shall have riches; I shall have fame. . . . I fail before I reach the end and fall in a heap, damp, perhaps disgusting. I excite pity in the crises of life, not love” (129). Readers recognize that Neville feels his own body serves as an antagonist to his happiness. This body cannot be separated from the sexuality it manifests, as readers see when Neville comments that “the person is always changing, though not the desire” (129). This allusion to sexuality again connects Neville’s impediment to happiness directly to his sexual preferences. Though the body may change, there is no hope for growth, only alteration.

Soon after this meeting, Percival leaves for India where he meets a sad fate: he is thrown from the back of his horse, breaking his neck and dying soon after. Without a doubt, this death sends ripples throughout the group of friends, Neville being one of the friends most affected. After learning of Percival’s death, Neville becomes momentarily dolorous and through his sadness readers see how vulnerable and alone Neville truly is. He says, ““From this moment, I am solitary. No one will know now”” (152). It is necessary to clarify that Neville is not making a statement of intent; these lines do not mean Neville is inspired by Percival’s death to choose a life of emotional alienation. On the contrary, the lines tell readers that Percival’s death imposes this life of solitude onto Neville. In Neville’s mind, Percival stood as his one true chance to embrace his sexuality

and feel connected. As a result, when Percival dies, Neville feels that he will always be alone.

Neville's relationship with sexuality is complicated, and it is understandably so as he lives in a time period during which homosexuality was just beginning to be discussed. When Neville discusses sexuality, he displays an internalized sense of guilt regarding his own sexual feelings, and, perhaps surprisingly, Neville's interest in the Latin language, which he develops at a very early age, exposes this sense of guilt. Neville finds comfort in the "exactitude of the Latin language" (31). He comments on the "austere quadrangles" that themselves provide "a noble Roman air" (31). The language and the shapes that Neville connects with it meet with approval from Neville because they are "never obscure or formless," and, therefore, reliable and admirable (32). Neville's fascination with these shapes presents readers with a deeper suggestion, asking them to discover why shapes appeal to Neville's mind. The reason Neville finds himself drawn to lines of demarcation is his own social status as a marginalized and therefore isolated figure. The shapes Neville admires suggest to him lines he can control, unlike those social lines which excise him from his society.

The process of placing people into margins relies heavily on the creation of spaces, some for the privileged and others for those not admitted to those spheres. Highly aware of his status as outsider, Neville finds comfort in the precision of Latin and the austerity of quadrangles, as he can exhibit some form of control over these forms, some form of control of his own insertion into these spaces, unlike what he faces culturally. In "Heteroglossia, Monologism, and Fascism: Bernard reads *The Waves*," Gabrielle McIntire discusses Neville's desire not to be forced into cultural spaces which he does

not wish to occupy; she argues that Neville “fears the constriction of being told and conceived by others” (36). This fear is a result of Neville’s cognizance of his status as a potential social outcast. He fears being placed into the space of social pariah. Woolf’s focus on Neville’s outsider status and his attempts to find community emphasizes Neville’s human desire to discover himself among others of his kind, to find social acceptance.

Considering what he wants from life now that Percival has died, Neville extols the virtues of the Latin language while simultaneously reminiscing on physical, sexual beauty. Speaking to a lover, Neville remarks, “I cannot tumble, as you do, like half-naked boys on the deck of a ship, squirting each other with hose-pipes. . . . I want some one to sit beside after the day’s pursuit and all its anguish. . . .” (180). The sexual imagery presented through the partially clothed boys who are squirting each other with phallic objects proves that sexuality is entrenched in Neville’s thoughts; however, guilt is an equally strong current. Neville’s sexual thoughts serve as an impetus for his guilty ones, the previous thoughts leading into the following ones: “Everything must be done to rebuke the horror of deformity. Let us read writers of Roman severity and virtue; let us seek perfection through the sand” (180). Neville connects the severe with the moral, and he turns to the reading of Roman authors when he feels the guilt of having indulged in sexual thoughts.

The deformation of which Neville speaks clearly alludes to sexual deformation. Neville sees social patterns around him, as discussed earlier, and he knows that he is different from the sexual social patterns. In his mind, then, his sexuality is a deformation, an aberration from the norm. His admiration of the Roman authors he continually

references pays homage to his desire to be normal, not to be an invert, but to fit into those patterns around him. The conclusion of this section reveals how Neville tries to reconcile his desire to be rigid and ordered with his sexual inversion. He says, “Yes, but I love to slip the virtue and severity of the noble Romans under the grey of your eyes, and dancing grasses and summer breezes and the laughter and shouts of boys at play--of naked cabin boys squirting each other with hose-pipes on the decks of ships (180-81). In this passage, Neville reveals an effort to merge his sexual love with his love of order, all in an effort to find companionship.

Companionship and isolation are central to Neville’s character throughout the work, and the latter is obviously integral to his marginalization. Throughout the novel, readers are reminded of a “hallucination” that Neville experiences (199). In this hallucination, Neville revisits a moment of his past and hears footsteps on the stairs outside the room in which he waits for his love, the one love who will be all that he desires, one who can bring fulfillment to Neville’s life. However, as the novel’s wording reveals, this love is a delusion, a fabrication of Neville’s mind, and readers never witness the arrival of this fulfilling figure. Nonetheless, readers are allowed to see how the expectations of this arrival further isolate Neville. Neville’s sexuality leaves him stunted by the desire for a same-sex savior, the mysterious man who can create “the one sound I [Neville] wait for” (199). Neville waits for only one sound; this point reaffirms how profoundly significant sexuality is in Neville’s characterization. Neville reduces the concerns of one of his sensory perceptions to the sound of an approaching sexual partner. No other character in this novel faces such a problem: Bernard and Susan marry; Jenny remains single of her own volition; Rhoda and Louis find intimacy in one another but

explore it too late. Unlike these characters, Neville is forced into a pining situation, wishing desperately to return to a moment from his past.

That Neville chooses to focus on a particular moment is noteworthy because it suggests a potential moment of contentment and relays the reader to a scene in which Neville and a lover attempt to silence “the ticking of time’s clock” (181). This section ends with what soon becomes the mantra of Neville’s old hallucination, “Come closer” (181). At this point, Neville is speaking to an actual person and attempting to find sexual fulfillment as well as escape from time. However, at a later point in the novel, after Neville has aged, he revisits the harkening of his partner with a hollow repetition of the phrase (199). Here, there is no one to respond to the phrase, yet Neville continues to repeat it, emphasizing the moment to which he attempts to return. Despite his efforts to revisit this time, Neville asserts “I am alone” (199). This terse statement reflects a deep truth about Neville’s status: he is alone, and in this loneliness, he is an individual, alienated from his friends and from the surrounding society. Though Neville means only that he is without a sexual partner, his brusque statement of self-reflection reveals far more to readers, highlighting his mental entrapment, his fascination with a previous moment in his life that leaves him further marginalized as it prevents him from fully engaging the present moment and instead forces him to return repeatedly to a lost scene.

In this same section, readers also note that Neville’s only real companionship stems from his interactions with poetry. The voices Neville hears arise from the poetry he is reading, and these voices become his connections, his comrades, not actual people. Even the temporary lover from earlier in the novel has disappeared at this point, leaving him with only his poetry and those voices which emanate from it. Neville is aware of this

solitude, though, as readers see when he comments on the poetic voices that keep him company. He says, “Now I have listened to them talking. They have gone now.” (199). Once the poetic voices stop speaking, Neville acknowledges that he has no one. The hallucination to which Neville clings so desperately has inhibited him; it has left him with only the desiccated hope of camaraderie. His sexual inversion has prevented him from forming new, lasting attachments.

In “Virginia’s Woolf’s Two Bodies,” Molly Hite looks at Rhoda’s character within the novel and discusses two types of bodies: the social body, that body which is for others, and the visionary body, a body for oneself. For her discussion of *The Waves*, Hite asserts that Rhoda is a lesbian but that Rhoda is unable to identify that aspect of her being because society does not provide her with the same information provided for Neville. Using Neville as a counterpoint to Rhoda, Hite forms some sometimes insightful and sometimes misleading arguments. Her first point about Neville is accurate. To show why Rhoda is unable to actualize her sexuality, Hite points out that “Neville’s homosexuality can claim an honorable classical tradition at Cambridge” while “Rhoda lives in a world where female homosexuality is unnamed and apparently unrecognized” (28). Clive does broach the subject of homosexuality with Maurice by discussing the traditions of the ancient Greeks, recommending Maurice read Plato’s *Symposium* (Forster 51). The existence of this tradition, Hite suggests, helped male inverts find identity, whereas female inverts did not have such a luxury. However, there was discussion of the female sexual invert, as I have discussed previously in my introduction. Edward Carpenter, Havelock Ellis, and Sigmund Freud each discuss the issue of female sexual inversion.

Hite's next assertion regarding Neville is misleading, and it undermines the suffering readers see Neville experience in the novel. Again juxtaposing Rhoda and Neville, Hite says that Rhoda is "maladjusted" and "inadequate" while Neville is able to "celebrate his own adjustment to the conditions of everyday social reality" (30). But Neville is not adjusted to the conditions of everyday social reality. His hallucination of the approaching loved one speaks to how poorly adjusted he is to his reality. Certainly, Neville is adroit at appearing to be well adjusted, but this skill is meant to act as camouflage and does not suggest more than that, appearance. The passage Hite uses to justify her claim is a question Neville asks, "Why ask, like Louis, for a reason, or fly like Rhoda to some far grove and part the leaves of the laurels and look for statues?" (197-98). Just one page before this remark, though, Neville discusses how dispassionate he has become, how removed he feels (196). Rather than live in his surroundings, Neville escapes into fiction: "Argument, laughter, old grievances--they fall through the air, thickening it. I take a book and read half a page of anything" (197). These are not the actions of a well-adjusted man. Neville is just as much an escapist as Rhoda when she drifts into her mind. Neville and Rhoda simply take different means of escape. Both are undoubtedly isolated, and both seek refuge in the imagination.

During the final section of the novel, Bernard alone speaks, and he gives Neville the most consideration. Bernard visits each of his friends, but, interestingly, his interaction with Neville is the most discussed. Bernard notes Neville's alienating fascination with this figure from Neville's past when he remarks that Neville "[f]rom the myriads of mankind had chosen one person, one moment in particular" on which to focus (273). This reflection on Neville comes during Bernard and Neville's discussion of

literature, a conversation immediately stifled by Neville's distraction. Bernard says of Neville, "He who had been thinking with the unlimited time of the mind, which stretches in a flash from Shakespeare to ourselves, poked the fire and began to live by that other clock which marks the approach of a particular person" (273). Neville's ability to speak intelligently is altered by this old hallucination. It steals from him his ability to connect even to Bernard, his closest friend.

Significantly, Neville is given agency in deciding to choose this person and moment; however, in this situation, choice does not allow Neville freedom from the margins, as he is choosing from a base that will marginalize his status regardless of the ultimate decision. Neville could choose any man and face restrictive consequences, whereas a heterosexual man would face consequences based upon some factor besides the gender of his partner. Because Neville has chosen this one person and one moment, Lisa Marie Lucenti argues that what starts as a love for Percival establishes a pattern for Neville which is "to isolate one specific other and to designate him as a beloved object through whom he can then center himself" (83). This argument observes that Neville is caught in a cycle of isolation. The figure from his past, to whom Neville wishes to offer himself, prevents him from forging connections, and as this final scene reveals, inhibits his ability to connect even with friends.

Through Neville, a male sexual invert, Virginia Woolf creates a character whose alienation stands as a prominent aspect of his identity. Woolf adheres to an assertion she makes in her own manifesto "Modern Fiction," Woolf: "The proper stuff of fiction' does not exist" (2092). Through Neville, Woolf presents readers with a harrowing, yet truthful representation of a sexual invert during the apex of modernism. Though Neville

takes lovers, his sexual inversion prevents him from forming connections that are meaningful and sustainable. His sexuality creates in him the delusion of the returning lover, caging him both emotionally and mentally. It is through Bernard's eyes that readers last see Neville, still locked away and still listening for the footsteps of the man who never comes. In this sad scene, Woolf finalizes the character of Neville, a sexual invert who is alone yet ever hopeful that he will find community.

The two central inverts in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (1936), by contrast, lack hope for finding community. Dr. Matthew O'Connor and Robin Vote are both sexual inverts, and both are alienated by their inversion, however their similarities to Neville mostly end there. Whereas Neville becomes a professor, a culturally esteemed profession, both O'Connor and Vote are unable to mold themselves into socially acceptable forms. O'Connor dresses as a woman and uses the services of male prostitutes; Vote abandons her child and embraces her sexual attractions to women. Barnes's bleaker portrayal of sexual inverts' lives sets her apart from both Forster and Woolf.

Chapter Three: Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*: Inversion and Beyond

Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* represents homosexual characters, both male and female, in intriguing manners. Some of these characters defy modern definitions of heterosexual and homosexual and thus call into question the gay/straight binary. By refusing simple classifications, Barnes creates characters who are ahead of their time; however, a close inspection of the work reveals that ideas of Barnes's time are most certainly at work in the characters' personalities, descriptions, and interactions, and the most influential ideas that seem to have been infused into the characters are those of prominent contemporary sexologists, like Sigmund Freud, namely ideas on sexuality and specifically those on sexual inverts, a term used in reference to homosexuality.

This complex concept became common among sexologists during the late 19th and early 20th century, and though it now carries a negative connotation, it was not once meant to be a tool of judgment, but rather a means by which to classify sexual abnormality. The influence of Freud's "Three Contributions to the Sexual Theory" can be seen clearly in Barnes's construction of Dr. Matthew O'Connor and Robin Vote, two characters whose identities are linked by their sexual inversion and who both face alienation as a result of their sexualities. A common theme to the Modernist movement, alienation is not escaped by gay characters within Modernist works, but the alienation faced by these characters is unique to their experiences as homosexuals, and Freud's understanding of the sexual invert colors the Modern understanding of the homosexual's representation and isolation. Both characters reveal aspects of the sexual invert which Freud chooses to discuss first and at length in "Three Contributions to the Sexual

Theory,” and these aspects highlight the alienation that each character faces throughout the novel.

Dr. Matthew O’Connor is a strange character. At times, Barnes’s descriptions of him do not even seem to fashion him as human. At one point, he is described as carrying his hands “like a dog who is walking on his hind legs” (Barnes 36). Conjuring the mental image of this picture reveals a man whose walk is described at once in a manner that is distinctly effeminate. Matthew’s appearance is one that Barnes spends a fair amount of time on, whether through the direct description of the narrative or indirect description of the characters who witness the doctor. What stands out about him is his difference; he is defined by being queer, not in the sense of being homosexual, a problematic label for the doctor, but in the sense of being abnormal, of not seeming to fit his own mold, a feeling the doctor affirms multiple times throughout the story. At the center of this divergence from the normal lies the doctor’s sexual inversion. As Laura Doan clarifies in her *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture*, the sexual invert is a person whose sex roles have been swapped (26). This figure finds pleasure and enjoyment in acting inversely, in acting out those roles assigned to the opposite gender. The sexual invert, which Dr. Matthew O’Connor clearly comes to represent, is a man or woman whose constitution aligns with that of the opposite gender, a definition that sounds strikingly similar to the contemporary definition of a transsexual; however, this term did not exist during Barnes’s time, nor during Freud’s, so homosexual and transsexual were lumped in the same category of sexual invert.

The inversion Barnes builds into O’Connor’s character is important for his characterization for two reasons. First, it creates within the novel a character whose

sexuality falls outside normative standards. O'Connor's sexuality and sexual identity are still not considered to be within normative contemporary standards, much less those standards of the early 20th century. Second, O'Connor's sexuality, as is also the case for Robin, makes him an alien figure. The connections between Matthew's alienation and his sexuality are sometimes explicit and sometimes subtle. Nonetheless, Matthew's status as an isolated figure is intertwined inseparably with his sexuality.

O'Connor's sexual inversion is revealed multiple times throughout the novel, often by Matthew's own words, which are frequently cryptic, nearly to the point of being indecipherable, yet at other times, his words are brusque and clear. Early in the novel, within pages of Matthew's introduction, the feminization of his character is seen. Felix remarks internally that Matthew's voice when aroused sounds like that of a woman's (18). This comment brings to mind Krafft-Ebing's categorization of sexual inverts, especially the final category of androgyny, in which men begin to take on traits of the female sex (Krafft-Ebing 389). Matthew is the character who speaks the most throughout the work. Since his speeches are often impassioned, he often sounds like a female. That the reader is first introduced to a womanly voice in a talkative man highlights the direction of Matthew's characterization.

Not far beyond this section, the reader is confronted with a private scene in which Matthew displays confusion about his identity, especially his gender. The reader sees Matthew "running a thick warm finger around his throat, where, in spite of its custom, his hair surprised him, lifting along his back and creeping up over his collar" (33). The reader must first question what Matthew finds surprising and then ask why Matthew finds it surprising. It is his hair that Matthew finds surprising. Barnes even emphasizes that the

hair is customarily located where the doctor finds it, so why should Matthew be confused by its presence? The answer lies in a miasmatic jumble of Matthew's sense of self, his identity confusion, and his sexual inversion, each one feeding off the other to surprise Matthew in a moment that should be banal. Matthew is driven to act like a woman. This drive, seated in the desire to be a mother, seems to allow Matthew a sense of deluded identity--that is, he seems to forget his physical form and substitute it for what he feels is there. Nonetheless, Matthew must face the reality of his physical form, one that presents itself to him at this point through hair that would not be as coarse or prevalent on the female form. In citing the tenets of the theory of psychic hermaphroditism, Freud highlights words that ring clearly in relation to Matthew: "The inverted man, like the woman, succumbs to the charms emanating from manly qualities of body and mind; he feels himself like a woman and seeks a man" (35). Matthew, indeed, feels himself a woman, as he does not seem to realize his own manhood until his senses force him to deal with his gendered reality.

Matthew's sense that he is a woman within a man's body is one that he shares with a select few around him. Readers see Matthew's agony as an invert later in the novel when his friend Nora discovers him dressed in women's clothing (85); however, Matthew never allows readers the ability to believe that he can share himself with Nora as she has come to share herself with him. Matthew composes himself, listens to Nora's woes regarding Robin, and begins a series of banter-like monologues in which he makes confessions in an effort to help Nora. Because his speeches are so rife with personal issues, Nora seems unable to derive from them what exactly Matthew's advice is for her. Her responses are limited: "But, what am I to do?" (91), "Yes" (93), "Is that what I am to

learn?" (94), and again "What am I to do?" (99). Between each of Nora's brief questions, Matthew provides lengthy speeches on the night and darkness, of which he claims to be the god (134). The night is full of pain, and Matthew's attempts to explain the benefits of suffering fall on deaf ears, as Nora continues to ask Matthew what she needs to do rather than appreciate what her suffering is granting her. Matthew says, "For the lover, it is the night into which his beloved goes. . . that destroys his heart" (94). Immediately preceding this insight, directed obviously at Nora's current state, Matthew says, "You beat the liver out of a goose to get a pate; you pound the muscles of a man's cardia to get a philosopher" (94).

For readers, Matthew's assertion carries twofold meaning: they see that he is attempting to reveal the good that can come from suffering to Nora, and they see that Matthew has suffered deeply to learn the truth he now espouses. This truth he has learned from his sexuality, from being a man rather than having a woman's womb and soprano voice (97). Matthew's suffering comes from an internal/external discrepancy, and this suffering has acquainted Matthew well with the night, so well that he says "I tuck myself in at night" (97). Emphasized by this sentence is Matthew's suffering, understood synonymously as being experienced with the night, but the action he describes is a solitary one. He tucks himself in; there is no one to help him. Matthew is alone in his suffering, yet he does not wish to be alone. He wishes to reveal connections between all suffering. Despite his attempts to use his own pain to provide Nora with a fount of knowledge, Matthew finds himself alone among company. His attempts to communicate with Nora fall flat. Nora expects Matthew to act as a sort of sin eater for her; she wants to release her problems onto him in a catharsis, while Matthew attempts to make the

moment one of connection and learning. Nora fails to see what Matthew has learned from his sexuality-derived suffering, as it does not pertain directly to her suffering, derived from losing her lover, and this absence of understanding leaves Matthew (and Nora for that matter) alienated from one another even as they sit face to face in Matthew's apartment.

That this alienation stems in large part from Matthew's feeling like a woman has been asserted, but not only does Matthew feel like a woman, he also feels like a specific type of woman to whom I've already alluded--a mother, and as the reader also sees, a wife. Matthew asks Felix, "Why is it that whenever I hear music I think I'm a bride?" (36). Again, the reader observes two central issues with Matthew's identity: gender displacement and its resulting confusion. As he was confused when he discovered his hair, now Matthew appears confused by his desire to be a bride when he hears music, yet his inner relation to the female gender is apparent. Matthew finds himself drawn to the idea of being a bride and mother, two societal spaces reserved for the female gender. Discussing this idea further in the novel, Barnes includes a direct narratorial comment about Matthew's feelings towards being a mother. While Matthew sits and watches a turbulent scene of crossed feelings unfold between Jenny and Nora, the reader is presented with the following line in reference to Matthew: "the doctor had a mother's reverence for childhood" (80). This line immediately flows into Matthew's own comments about his feelings about maternity: "What manner of man is it that has to adopt his brother's children to make a mother of himself. . ." (80). From both these descriptions, readers see clearly that Matthew's identity as a man with reversed gender

role desires is a major concern in both the narrative's portrayal of Matthew and Matthew's own perception of himself.

Matthew's feeling that his identity is skewed becomes apparent also through his ambivalent references to God. Matthew refers to God as a woman "because of the way that "she" made me; it somehow balances the mistake" (159). The mistake to which Matthew refers here is the disparity between his desired position and his physical existence. During the same scene in which Jenny attacks Nora, Matthew reflects upon being questioned by Jenny that "I was saying, madame, that by his own peculiar perversity, God has made me a liar--" (80). What is intriguing about this remark is that Matthew never clarifies what he means by God's making him a liar.

One explanation is that Matthew is referring to his grandiose speeches which span the entire novel during which he holds opposing positions and presents contradictory ideas. These speeches alone make Matthew a liar, but they also make him far more honest than some of the novel's other characters. Matthew's final scene in the novel presents him in conversation with an ex-priest who is attempting to make sense of Matthew's stories and his identity, as it has been constructed through those stories. The ex-priest proclaims, "I've always wanted to know whether you were *really* married or not" (169). To this question, Matthew responds, "Should I know that?" (169). The doctor then goes on to say that he created her in a story, killed her off, and was then reproached for having done so. The ex-priest admits that his reason for asking is his desire to "know what is what" (170). Matthew's response is an admonishment, "Well then, that's why you are where you are now, right down in the mud without a feather to

fly with. . .” (170). This exchange highlights Matthew’s unreliability as a narrator as well as his view on the reliability of a narrative’s ability to relay truth.

That Matthew acknowledges the narrative’s tenuous ability at best to convey truth almost relieves Matthew of the label “liar.” He is not lying when he weaves his tales; he is simply using a faulty tool in an effort to perform a certain task, the exchange of knowledge. Nonetheless, Matthew is a twofold liar and is in both ways isolated from those around him. Highlighting his alienated status, a confession from Matthew regarding his status as a liar conveys an insight into his feelings of implicit loneliness. He asks Nora a question and answers it without giving her a chance to respond: “Do you know what has made me the greatest liar this side of the moon [sic] telling my stories to people like you, to take the mortal agony out of their guts. . . .” (144). This process, Matthew asserts, has made him a liar; it has also made him a loner, unable to connect truly with others around him. Furthermore, Matthew is a liar because of his body, which is not aligned with his inner motivations. As a male, he cannot be a mother or a wife, and, therefore, God’s fashioning of Matthew into a male has made him a walking lie. Matthew’s lies are both verbal and physical.

The chapter entitled “Watchmen, What of the Night” presents to its readers an encounter between Nora and Matthew that further establishes Matthew as a sexual invert. This chapter focuses on the cerebral aspect of Matthew’s sexually inverted nature while also shedding light on Matthew’s physical attempts to match his given form to his felt form, which serve to further his isolation. In this chapter, readers notice the detail paid to the external, represented largely through Matthew’s attire and his surroundings, including his possessions. As Nora enters the room, the reader, too, enters, catching Matthew off-

guard. Importantly, Matthew, as he feels that he has withdrawn from the eyes of society, has abandoned the facades he presents to the world around him. Ironically, to strip away these facades, Matthew adds to his identity, particularly his body: “In the narrow iron bed, with its heavy and dirty linen sheets, lay the doctor in a woman’s flannel nightgown” (85). Matthew’s attempts to reconcile his body with his identity do not stop at the donning of female clothing, however, as the next lines clarify:

The doctor’s head, with its over-large black eyes, its full gun-metal cheeks and chin, was framed in the golden semi-circle of a wig with long pendent curls that touched his shoulders, and falling back against the pillow, turned up the shadowy interior of the cylinders. He was heavily rouged and his lashes painted. (85)

Unprepared for the sight before her, Nora is taken aback, but she quickly questions why she was stunned considering that the doctor has simply “evacuated custom and gone back into his dress” (85).

Matthew, then, is understood by Nora as a being whose natural state is not presented to society at large each day. Rather, Matthew, having left custom at his apartment’s doorstep, has returned to his dress, to a state that satisfies him more than his public persona, and Nora is a character to whom Matthew is willing to reveal a more private identity. Again, Krafft-Ebing’s theory of inversion presents itself, as Matthew’s case appears very similar to a case study in *Psycopathia Sexualis*, in which a man began to call himself “the Countess” and dress in female clothing (333). Matthew’s room provides him a space for freedom, and this portrayal provides a counterpoint to the isolation Neville’s room brings him in *The Waves*. That the two representations are unlike complicates the sources of alienation inverts face.

Isolation provides Matthew opportunities to be true to himself, and this desire forces him to seek isolation, creating and perpetuating a cycle that is motivated by his sexuality. As Laura J. Veltman points out, this scene reveals Matthew as a confessional figure, making parallel Matthew's bedroom and the confessional booth of the Catholic church (210). Veltman highlights the situation as an inverted confessional, with the priestly figure speaking far more than the confessor. But Veltman fails to notice that it is Matthew, not Nora, who is the confessor. Though he spends much of his time telling Nora about Robin Vote's leaving with Jenny Petherbridge, Matthew also speaks very frankly about his identity to Nora in this chapter, revealing much about his body and how he feels in it while Nora listens. Here, Matthew satisfies a cathartic need to reveal a genuine part of himself, and in this sense Nora becomes the priestly figure, and with Matthew the confessor. Adding to the validity of this inversion is also the fact the Matthew is wearing clothes that more accurately express his identity. Matthew, then, is confessing not only with his words to Nora, but also with his body. This desperate attempt to find acceptance for his true self from another person poignantly suggests that Matthew does not fully wish to be isolated. Rather, he wishes to be himself thoroughly and have that self seen and accepted. This inverted confessional scene allows readers to see that Matthew wants to break the cycle of repression, isolation, and dissimulation that renders him a genuine hermit and a spurious public spectacle.

Further discussing his feelings of identity crisis, Matthew presents a possible life he may have lived, a practice of which he seems fond throughout the work. Matthew says that "[i]n the old days I was possibly a girl in Marseilles thumping the dock with a sailor, and perhaps it's that memory that haunts me" (97). In an effort to explain his inclinations

toward the female gender, Matthew turns to tales, a turn he often makes when attempting to express truth, and as his frustration with God is suggested, it is here made clear when Matthew asks, “am I to blame if I’ve turned up this time as I shouldn’t have been, when it was a high soprano I wanted, and deep corn curls to my bum, with a womb as big as the king’s kettle and a bosom as high as the bowsprit of a fishing schooner?” (97). Matthew cannot make any clearer his own feelings about who he is as a person and who he wishes he were, and, for all of his frustration, Matthew finds himself still lamenting his condition as a male. Matthew’s suffering is not all for naught, however, as readers see when he and Nora again engage one another in a deeply philosophical conversation, one in which the significance of gender again is apparent.

“Where the Trees Fall” and “Go Down, Matthew” are the novel’s two most significant chapters in relation to its portrayal of the sexual invert, of both the male and female gender, and it is in these chapters that readers see how deeply connected sexuality and isolation are for Matthew. Within “Where the Trees Fall,” readers are exposed, though through a veil, to Matthew’s homosexual exploits, and in “Go Down, Matthew,” readers are provided with an in-text discussion of the invert, with what it is, and why it is desirable. As Felix Volkbein, ironically named “The Baron,” searches out and discovers Matthew in “Where the Trees Fall,” readers are allowed to see reemphasized the differences between isolated Matthew and observed/engaged Matthew. Discovering Matthew walking down the street, Felix is “shocked to observe, in the few seconds before the doctor saw him, that he seemed old, older than his fifty odd years would account for. . .his knees, which one seldom noticed. . .sagged. His dark shaved chin was lowered as if in a melancholy that had no beginning or end” (117). When Felix calls out to Matthew,

the doctor throws “off his unobserved self, as one hides, hastily, a secret life” (117). This life is one the doctor can maintain only when he is not being watched. Again, readers see that Matthew can be a truer self when he is isolated, and as the subsequent conversation between Matthew and Felix reveals, it is his sexuality that forces Matthew to embrace isolation in order to express himself freely.

Readers come to see that the source of Matthew’s melancholy, which he quickly attempts to hide, is that he has just “buried an excellent fellow.” (118). The identity of this fellow becomes important for understanding Matthew’s sexuality. The doctor says, “He was the only one I ever knew who offered me five francs before I could reach for my own. I had it framed in orange blossoms and hung it over the whatnot.” (118). This sad revelation presents readers with the knowledge that Matthew often pays for sex. A central implication is that the buyer cannot attain sex without the incentive of money for the other party. Matthew’s desire for sex with men has left him in a situation that demands coin for sex, rather than mutual sexual attraction. The latter interaction prompts genuine connection; the former solicits economical exchange. That Matthew keeps the money offered to him clarifies just how deeply he is touched by the unique occurrence. This “Arab” man’s desire to spend time with Matthew sexually presented Matthew with authentic sexual connection. In this moment, Matthew is sad because he has buried the only man who ever presented him with an opportunity to escape, however briefly, the isolation enforced in large part by his status as a sexual invert. In the death of this man, Matthew loses a rare connection to the world around him.

In a style typical of Matthew, a convoluted, yet eye-opening discussion of the sexual invert arises when Matthew and Nora are speaking about Robin Vote, at this point

a former lover of Nora and, as the conversation clarifies, a being to whom Matthew relates in their sexual displacement. In conversation, Matthew at once addresses Nora's desire to speak of the former agony and ecstasy that characterized Nora and Robin's tumultuous relationship and the sexual invert, cleverly transitioning from the former conversation piece, Nora's interest, to the latter conversation piece, Matthew's interest:

You never loved anyone before, and you'll never love anyone again, as you love Robin. Very well--what is this love we have for the invert, boy or girl? It was they who were spoken of in every romance we ever read. The girl lost, what is she but the Prince found? The Prince on the white horse that we have always been seeking. And the pretty lad who is a girl, what but the prince-princess in point lace--neither one and half the other, the painting of the fan. . . . We were impaled in our childhood upon them. . . . the sweetest lie of all, now come to be in boy or girl, for in the girl it is the prince, and in the boy it is the girl that makes a prince a prince--and not a man. (Barnes 145)

Matthew asserts an intriguing binary in this rather lengthy flourish, pointing out that gender roles are established by their counterpoints. In his example, Matthew says that the prince is defined by the princess and vice versa. They are each the other because they are dependent on one another for definition. Without the other, each part lacks its essence, its validation. The reader will remember at this point that Matthew has expressed multiple times his desires to be a mother and a bride, both of which are feminine gender roles and both of which are defined quite clearly by their social opposites, the father and the husband respectively. The princess in the prince is a condition that Matthew clearly sees

in himself and one that illuminates his isolation. Matthew sees men as others, as those who are different from him. He is removed from the community of men and exiled to the community of prince-princesses. Matthew's sexual inversion and his isolation, are evident in his explanation of the sexual invert to Nora, and Matthew later clarifies that he considers himself a part of the community into which he places Robin Vote.

Though in this section of his discussion with Nora, Matthew does not use the term *invert* as he does earlier, the connection is apparent, and perhaps Matthew's self-identification of sexual inversion is greater here even without the semantic assertion. Again, to keep Nora's attention fixed on his speech, Matthew relays what truly interests him, the invert, to Nora through the lens of Robin; otherwise, Matthew would not be able to confess himself, his sexual identity, and implicitly his isolation, to Nora. Readers are again asked to decipher what exactly Matthew is attempting to say. When speaking of the significance of dolls, he says that "[t]he last doll, given to age, is the girl who should have been a boy, and the boy who should have been a girl!" (157). The two people here referenced are Robin Vote ("the girl who should have been a boy" and Matthew himself ("the boy who should have been a girl"). That he ties himself to Robin is understandable as he later unites himself to Robin's condition by arguing that the connection both he and she have to the doll helps to identify them as members of the "the third sex" (157).

Removing all doubt of Matthew's understanding himself as a member of this group, he asks Nora rhetorically, "Why do you think I have spent near fifty years weeping over bars but because I am one of them?" (157). The discussion held between the ostensibly oracular Matthew and the mourning Nora centers on an invert who deserves further discussion, especially as she plays a pivotal role in the novel, though she

is a character who speaks far less than the other characters. The fact that Robin Vote has already been mentioned in the previous discussion of Matthew's sexual inversion speaks to her unique importance to the novel, and her presence reveals one intriguing portrayal of lesbianism--female sexual inversion--in counterpoint to the portrayal of Matthew, a male sexual invert.

Like Matthew, Robin Vote is characterized within this novel in terms of the sexual invert, in both the descriptions of her body as well as the descriptions of her actions. Her body is detailed as having manly qualities, and her actions reveal that the mind within this manly body does not fit into the traditional mold of femininity. Jean Gallagher argues in "Vision and Inversion" that Barnes's goal in representing a female sexual invert is to show women outside "heterosexual contexts" in an effort to "unsettle readers" of *Nightwood*. To do so, she argues the novel places readers "within a circumscribed visual field shared with the variously gendered and sexual bodies that inhabit the novel" (279-80). Gallagher's focus is largely on the visibility of the text, and she challenges the idea that readers witness the actions of the novel through a sort of peephole, a voyeuristic schema (281). Arguing instead that the scenes are more photographic in their representations of lesbians, Gallagher explores new areas of homosexual representation. Arguably, her most intriguing argument lies in the connection she makes between the static nature of the photograph and the entrapment of the homosexual during the early 20th century. Whereas the peephole provides the homosexual fluidity and freedom, the photograph is final, unerring in its representation. Gallagher's argument bolsters my own in that it suggests an entrapping position for the

sexual invert, especially the female invert, whose identity, Robin Vote reveals, proves challenging in its development and representation.

Robin's body is a text written upon by the author herself, by Nora, and by Matthew. This multiplicity of bodily construction reveals some common threads, one which centers on Robin's masculinized form. Almost immediately upon introduction, readers are given descriptions of Robin that establish her as masculine. Observing her upon entering a Catholic church, those saying prayers see her as "a tall girl with the body of a boy" (Barnes 50). In this description is the implication that the observers understand that Robin's identity clashes with her body. Her internal being does not seem synchronized to her external being, an issue readers see mirrored in Matthew. The description recalls Krafft-Ebing's discussion of gynandry, that stage of female sexual inversion in which women begin to resemble men physically (399). The next description of Robin reads: "Many churches saw her: *St Julien le Pauvre*, the church of *St. Germain des Pres*, *Ste. Clothilde*. Even on the cold tiles of the Russian church, in which there is no pew, she knelt alone, lost and conspicuous, her broad shoulders above her neighbors, her feet large and as earthly as the feet of a monk" (50). The absence of support Robin finds in the church provides a connection between the treatment of sexual inverts by the Church in *Nightwood* and *Maurice*, in which Reverend Borenus serves as an antagonistic force to Maurice's happiness. Robin is further characterized as having manly traits in this section, but in these descriptions, another aspect of Robin's reality is made explicit: the manly traits that she possesses make her an outsider, an alien to those around her. Having feet like a man, especially like those of a monk, and broad shoulders, an attribute attributed to virility, forces Robin into an atypical space, that she attempts to navigate.

Robin is pregnant as she visits these churches, but she lacks any feelings of maternal love. Because readers know this absence exists within her, Robin's representation of difference, of exception and isolation, is amplified by her masculinization

This masculinization is not exclusive to Robin Vote in *Nightwood*, not by any means, and to attain an understanding of the implications for Robin as a character, it is helpful to turn to what others have said about female sexual inverts around the period when *Nightwood* was produced. Freud, one of the most famous (perhaps infamous) figures to comment on lesbianism, asserts in his "Three Contributions to the Sexual Theory" that unlike male inverts, who can be both masculine and feminine, "[t]he conditions in the woman are more definite; here the active inverts, with special frequency, show the somatic and psychic characters of man and desire femininity in their sexual object" (37). In other words, Freud asserts that female sexual inverts, unlike their male counterparts, often look and act like men. This assertion fits well with the portrayal of Robin Vote, a character whose physical attributes make her appear manly.

In fact, Robin Vote could very easily be classified as part of a mythos surrounding lesbians, an idea proposed by Esther Newton in her groundbreaking essay "The Mythic, Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman." In this essay, Newton covers quite a bit of ground, discussing, as her title suggests, the New Woman, the modern woman with desire for manly freedoms; Radclyffe Hall, the lesbian author of *The Well of Loneliness*, written only eight years before *Nightwood*; and the sexual invert. Each of these discussions is highly relevant to Robin Vote, as she is a product of the New Woman, a parallel to the lesbian characters fashioned in *The Well of Loneliness*, and a

sexual invert. Though Newton does not mention *Nightwood* in her work, the discussion she provides regarding the sexual invert is invaluable.

In attempting to reconcile modern feminist lesbians with representations of the sexually inverted female, Newton presents the following descriptions: “mannish lesbian,” “true invert,” “bull dagger,” and “butch” (558). Politically incorrect as many of these terms are currently, each has been used to describe women who are similar to Robin Vote. Stephen Gordon, the female protagonist in *The Well of Loneliness*, finds herself alienated from those she loves because of her sexual inversion, just as Robin is isolated because of her sexuality, as represented through her sexual ambiguity. Newton posits that “gender ambiguity is *positively* associated with autonomy” [emphasis added] (563). The autonomy experienced by Robin in *Nightwood* is not freely chosen, but rather forced onto her. As Robin never accepts her isolation, readers question how much of Robin’s agency has been stripped by her sexuality. Worth noting also in Newton’s article is her succinct recounting of the four lesbian categories theorized by Krafft-Ebing. Though antiquated categories, their existence presents a potential explanation of why Robin’s inversion is presented as it is. Gynandry demands that Robin resemble a man in every sense, both physically and mentally, and as mentioned earlier, Freud claimed that female inverts were much more likely to appear and act like a man. Robin is certainly portrayed as looking manly, and Robin’s appearance plays a central role in her isolation; however, what of her psychic attributes? One must question whether Robin fits the psychic mold presented by Freud and Krafft-Ebing and how her psychic state contributes to her alienation.

One decision stands out above the rest in helping readers determine Robin’s psychic sexual condition: her departure from Felix and her flight to Nora after having

Felix's child. Robin's reaction to having this child is most certainly not one of jubilation. Felix believes at one point that Robin looks as though she may harm the child, but she does not (52). However, she does harm Felix as he comes home one night: "he found her in the darkness, standing, back against the windows, in the pod of the curtain, her chin so thrust forward that the muscles in her neck stood out. As he came toward her [sic] she said in fury, 'I didn't want him!' Raising her hand [sic] she struck him across the face" (53). The anger readers see directed toward Felix is a result of Robin's own feelings of betrayal. She feels betrayed by the man she dates, but also experiences bodily betrayal, a result of her sexual inversion.

Esther Newton cites Havelock Ellis who, in responding to Krafft-Ebing's definitions of the female invert, writes in his work "Sexual Inversion in Women" that the "actively inverted woman" has "a more or less distinct trace of the masculinity" as "part of an *organic instinct*" [emphasis added] (qtd. in Newton 568). I have emphasized some of Ellis's words because they are particularly important to what readers observe when Robin declares her desire not have had her child as well as her next sexual partner. Producing her child with Felix forces Robin to acknowledge her own inversion. She realizes, and readers are privy to this realization, that though her body is capable of birthing a child, her mind is not. She finds no completion in being a mother; in fact, during the birthing scene, Robin is described not as having gained a child or the status of mother, but as weeping like a child who has "lost something" (52). What has been lost is Robin's ability to see herself as mother-woman, a status that Matthew covets. Where Matthew strongly desires the woman role of mother, Robin is brought to a near breakdown when the role is forced upon her.

This realization of identity forces Robin to shift her view of herself, and this sudden shift in identity produces a sort of populated isolation. Robin is often surrounded by others, but she remains alone, a condition in which she finds herself for much of the novel. Having grasped her own sexual inversion, Robin begins to wander, taking to “intermittent travel from which she came back hours, days later, disinterested” (52). The reactions she faces from people as she attempts to deal with her sexual inversion surely do not help her feel connected to others: “People were uneasy when she spoke to them; [sic] confronted with a catastrophe that had yet no beginning” (52-3). These people can sense the turmoil that Robin experiences, and it makes them nervous. They do not want to expose themselves to her frequently, nor do they want her to be a part of their community. Undoubtedly, Robin notices this isolation, as she attempts to combat the alienation by spending time with Nora Flood. For Robin, turning to Nora is an effort to reconcile what she has discovered about herself and what she feels from those around her. Robin’s effort to cope with her own isolation and inversion reveals Nora as a bastion of hope for Robin, a figure with the potential to help Robin in her journey. However, as the novel continues, readers witness a steady decline in Robin’s mental state, a decline driven by her sexual inversion and sense of isolation, that concludes in a chilling scene.

In the novel’s concluding chapter, readers witness the reunion of Nora and Robin, Robin having left Nora and dated two other women during the interim. This reunion is haunting and frightening, as it reveals a bleak image for the female sexual invert, especially as Robin represents this figure. In this final chapter, readers come to understand Robin’s isolation through her reversion to an animalistic state. Mary A. Armstrong argues in “Stable Identity: Horses, Inversion Theory, and *The Well of*

Loneliness,” animals, to sexologists, were “a key figure of sexological comparison, as a complex marker on the intertwined scales of the in/human and the un/civilized” (60). Though Armstrong’s central concern is *The Well of Loneliness*, her assertions about the importance of animals to sexological theory, especially inversion theory, remain true for *Nightwood*, especially for the female sexual invert. The description of Robin’s transformation is frightening: “And down she went, until her head swung against his [Nora’s dog]; on all fours now, dragging her knees. The veins stood out in her neck, under her ears, swelled in her arms, and wide and throbbing rose up on her finders as she moved forward” (179). Robin’s shift from human to animal is remarkable as it alludes to a comment earlier made by Matthew about her. He describes Robin as being “monstrously alone” (155).

Here, readers can see how correct Matthew was in this description. Robin’s loneliness has forced her into a monstrous state, an eerie resemblance of who she once was as a human. The last image of Robin shows her lying with Nora’s dog. Robin chases him around for a period of time, an action that scares Nora’s companion, until she gives up “lying out, her hands beside her, her face turned and weeping; and the dog too gave up then, and lay down, his eyes bloodshot, his head flat along her knees” (180). Robin’s weeping makes apparent to readers that she is in pain, that she is unhappy, and it is worth noting that the dog’s eyes are also described as bloodshot, often a result of crying. This description suggests a parallel between Robin and the dog, linking them. In her final scene, then, Robin’s only true connection is with this dog, not with a human. A point Armstrong makes in her article is particularly relevant to this concluding scene: “Degeneration theory classified homosexuality as *regression*. . . .” [emphasis in original]

(65). Consequently, Robin regresses to an animalistic state brought on by her sexual inversion, and this state of existence leaves her only one companion at the novel's end: Nora's dog. Her inversion leaves her weeping, alienated, and primal.

Both Matthew O'Connor and Robin Vote are sexual inverts in the novel *Nightwood*, and both of them experience a sense of isolation because of their sexualities. The significance of sexual inversion has been studied by scholars for years, but how the sexualities of these two characters makes them aliens from society at large has not been dealt with, in part because some would dismiss Freud's ideas regarding the invert as antiquated and offensive. However, Freud's theories provide a richer understanding of two characters created by an author influenced by the contemporary psychology of her time. To understand why these characters are isolated, readers need to grasp the concept of the sexual invert, and to understand the concept of the sexual invert, readers need to understand what factors influenced the portrayal of inversion within this novel.

Conclusion

Though the term “sexual inversion” is now considered antiquated and gauche, it holds a necessary place in queer studies. Without the development and propagation of this term, contemporary studies of gay characters in literature would be quite different. An undeniable focus on the psychology of sexual inverts in literary works highlights a central connection between the study of the mind and the representation of gay characters. *Maurice*, *The Waves*, and *Nightwood* reveal how closely linked the portrayals of gay characters were with psychology, and the primary reason for this connection is the attention sexologists paid to inversion, establishing a pool of characteristics and experiences into which authors could dip for inspiration and guidance.

Contemporary critical theory bolsters this assertions by making explicit the connection between psychology and sexuality. Michel Foucault, himself a homosexual, produced one of the most influential critical texts of the nineteenth century: *The History of Sexuality* (1976). In the first volume, Foucault’s discussion of repression works to present a clearer image of the connection between psychology and the homosexual: “We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized . . . less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and feminine in oneself” (43). In essence, Foucault describes the birth of the homosexual in Western culture, revealing the homosexual’s attachment to psychology because of his or her deviance from the conventions of Victorian sexuality. Swaddled in phrases like “sexual inversion” and “psychical hermaphrodite,” the homosexual came into the world. With these phrases as companions, the homosexual then began to appear

in literary works which reflected the contemporary understanding of gay men and women.

Authors like Foucault have helped to separate the lived experience of homosexuality from psychological studies, especially those studies focused on deviancy. Foucault's exposure of the implicit connection between psychology and sexuality allowed its dismantling to begin. Rising to prominence in the 1990s, queer theory pounced on the task of breaking down this connection, complicating notions of homosexual identity. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, one of queer theory's most influential voices, challenges Freud, a man whose views on, and assertions about, gay men and women were colored entirely by psychology. In her *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), Sedgwick asserts that Freud's "countervailing, universalizing mapping" of sexuality "implies no presumption that one's sexual penchant will always incline toward persons of a single gender and that [belief] offers, additionally, a richly denaturalizing description of the psychological motives and mechanisms of male paranoid, projective homophobic definition and enforcement" (84). Her motivation for criticizing Freud lies in her desire to subvert Freud's overarching suggestion that people are innately bisexual and, more importantly, in her desire to allow the homosexual distinction from psychological formatting.

As the opinions and speculations of Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, and Sigmund Freud permeated the societies around them and influenced representations of gay and lesbian characters in literature, so, too, can the influence of authors like Foucault and Sedgwick be seen in contemporary portrayals of gay and lesbian characters. Works like Annie Proulx's *Brokeback Mountain* (1997), Michael

Cunnigham's *The Hours* (1998), and Stephen Chbosky *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999) provide just a few examples of how the literary landscape has changed for the representations of homosexual characters in fiction since the end of modernism.

Proulx's allusions to gay bashing and homophobia highlight the struggles gay men and women face in a society with a growing awareness of their presence. Fearing the ramifications of exposure, Jack and Ennis characterize a lifestyle many gay men and women face in more contemporary times. Homosexuality was no longer considered a psychiatric disorder for much of Jack and Ennis's time together; however, sexual, romantic love between two people of the same gender was still considered taboo. Cunnigham's Richard Brown emphasizes a shift in the affliction of the gay community from a disorder of the mind to a disease of the body. Brown is dying of complications from AIDS, a disease which has disproportionately struck the gay community, making it a central concern of homosexuals. Cunnigham's characterization of Richard, though tragic, is predicated on progress. Richard is not a man with a mental disorder. He is a man with a physical ailment. This divergence from the perception of homosexuals as sexual inverts helps to establish distance from the realm of psychology.

Chbosky's novel, an example of adolescent fiction, deals with homosexuality among teenagers in the early 1990s. That the novel is targeted to a younger demographic and that its characters are teenagers themselves speak to the growing acceptance of homosexuality as normal in Western society. Although the novel acknowledges that homophobia is still alive and well, it also presents readers with teenagers who are accepting of homosexuality. The psychiatric cloud seems no longer to hover over

homosexuality in this novel, and the gay relationships, though they have their own unique problems, are portrayed as normal.

Since the end of modernism, gay characters in literature have become more prominent and varied. Authors have created characters that defy stereotypes of gay men and women, and these characters have moved beyond the restrictions of psychological disorders. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to dismiss the importance of sexology to the development of gay characters in literary works. Without sexology, modern authors would not have had a vital resource in fashioning their characters. The influence of sexology on literature can be seen the most clearly through a study of characters like Maurice Hall, Neville, Matthew O'Connor, and Robin Vote. One cannot question the importance of being new to the modern movement. Exploring new styles, finding new forms for expression, forming new words and sounds--all of these were efforts of modern authors to make fresh their works. It was not only in exploring new words and structures that Forster, Woolf, and Barnes excelled. In their works, these three artists explored new material for their stories. They pushed cultural boundaries and helped to carve out a place for gay and lesbian characters in Western fiction.

WORKS CITED

- Armstrong, Mary A. "Stable Identity: Horses, Inversion Theory, and The Well of Loneliness." *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory* 19.1 (2008): 47-78. Print.
- Bailey, Quentin. "Heroes and Homosexuals: Education and Empire in E. M. Forster." *Twentieth-Century Literature* 48.3 (2002): 324-47. Print.
- Barnes, Djuna. *Nightwood*. New York: New Directions, 2006. Print.
- Berni, Christine. "'A Nose-Length into the Matter': Sexology and Lesbian Desire in Djuna Barnes's Ladies Almanack." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 20.3 (1999): 83-107. Print.
- Curr, Matthew. "Recuperating E. M. Forster's Maurice." *MLQ: Modern Language Quarterly* 62.1 (2001): 53-69. Print.
- Doan, Laura. *Fashioning Sapphism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001. Print.
- Ellis, Havelock. *Sexual Inversion*. Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Company, 1915. Print.
- Forster, E. M. *Maurice*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*. New York: Vintage, 1990. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*. New York: The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing, 1910. Print.
- Gallagher, Jean. "Vision and Inversion in Nightwood." *Modern Fiction Studies* 47.2 (2001): 279-305. Print.
- Gorton, Don. "Maurice and Gay Liberation." *The Gay and Lesbian Review* 16.6 (2009). Print.
- Lucenti, Lisa M. "Virginia Woolf's 'The Waves': To Defer that 'appalling moment.'"

Criticism 40.1 (1998): 75-97. Print

McIntire, Gabrielle. "Virginia Woolf's Two Bodies." *Genders* 31 (2000): 1-36. Print.

Krafft-Ebing, Richard. *Psychopathia Sexualis*. New York: Nabu Press, 2010.. Print.

McIntire, Gabrielle. "Heteroglossia, Monologism, and Fascism: Bernard Reads The Waves." *Narrative* 13.1 (2005): 29-45. Print

Newton, Esther. "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Study* 9.4 (1984): 557-75. Print.

Sedgwick, Eve K. *Epistemology of the Closet: Updated with a New Preface*. New York: University of California Press, 2008. Print.

Sinfield, Alan. *The Wilde Century*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. Print.

Sproles, Karyn Z. *Desiring Women: The Partnership of Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006. Print.

Stonequist, Everett V. *The Marginal Man: A Study in Personality and Culture Conflict*. New York: Russell&Russell Pub, 1961. Print.

Veltman, Laura J. "'The Bible Lies The One Way, But The Night-Gown The Other': Dr. Matthew O'Connor, Confession, and Gender in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*." *Modern Fiction Studies* 49.2 (2003): 204-27. Print.

Warner, Michael. *Fear Of A Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory (Studies in Classical Philology)*. Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 1993. Print

Woolf, Virginia. "Modern Fiction." *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Volume F: The Twentieth Century and After*. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt, M. H Abrams, Jahan Ramazani, and Jon Stallworthy. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005. Print.

---. *The Waves*. New York: Harvest Books, 1978. Print