Chapter One was introductory in nature which giving a brief idea of what the thesis wanted to achieve. It traced the history of Indian drama in general and Indian English drama in particular, and located Mahesh Dattani within that history. Giving a brief biographical account of Dattani it listed his plays and also underlined the reasons for choosing Dattani for the present study. After presenting a brief survey of literature which led to the identification of the research gap and its potential, it moved on to present the thesis statement, the approach to it and constructed a working paradigm. It also included a note on the structure of the thesis. The present chapter will focus on the theoretical background needed to undertake the study. It presents an in-depth study of queer theory, highlighting the development of the theory and the contribution of key queer theorists.

Queer theory is a branch of study or inquiry that emerged in the early 1990s out of gay and lesbian studies, and feminist studies. It assumes that sexual identities are a function of representations, and questions the traditional constructions of sexuality. Since its emergence in the English language in the sixteenth century, “queer” (related to the German quer meaning "across, at right angle, diagonally or transverse") has generally meant "strange," "unusual," or "out of alignment". It might refer to something suspicious or "not quite right," or to a person with mild derangement or who exhibits socially inappropriate behavior.
In contemporary usage, “queer” is used as an umbrella term for people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersexual, genderqueer or of any other non-heterosexual sexuality, sexual anatomy or gender identity. Queer is not so much a personal identity as an interpretative stance, one informed by the experience of and commitment to non-normative, modes of sexual and social connection.

Annamarie Jagose, an Australian professor of English, wrote Queer Theory: An Introduction in 1996. Jagose defines the term queer, as follows:

[It] has come to be used differently, sometimes as an umbrella term for a coalition of culturally marginal sexual self-identifications and at other times to describe a nascent theoretical model which has developed out of more traditional lesbian and gay studies. What is clear even from this brief and partial account of its contemporary deployment is that queer is very much a category in the process of formation. It is not simply that queer has yet to solidify and take on a more consistent profile, but rather that its definitional indeterminacy, its elasticity is one of its constituent characteristics. (1)

Jagose describes further a term whose very basis resists definition:

Queer describes those gestures or analytical models which dramatize incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire. Resisting that model of stability—which claims heterosexuality as its origin,
when it is more properly its effect—queer focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire. . . queer locates and exploits the incoherencies in those three terms which stabilize heterosexuality. Demonstrating the impossibility of any ‘natural’ sexuality, it calls into question even such apparent unproblematic terms as ‘man’ and ‘woman’. (3)

Influenced mainly by the works of Michel Foucault, queer theory builds both upon feminist challenges to the idea that gender is part of the essential self and upon gay/lesbian studies’ close examination of the socially constructed nature of sexual acts and identities. Whereas gay/lesbian studies focused its inquiries on "natural" and "unnatural" behaviour with respect to homosexual behaviour, queer theory expands its horizon to encompass any kind of sexual activity or identity that falls into normative and deviant categories. Peter Barry states that “the underlying question in queer theory is whether it is gender or sexuality which is more fundamental in personal identity ... It tends to endorse ‘experimental’ forms of sexuality” (.Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory 143).

The term queer has the most widespread and durable meaning “anti-normative”. This anti-normative discourse rereads the cultural contexts which were earlier heteronormative. In Queer Theories, Donald Hall summarizes this consensus by describing queer theories as “positioned abrasively toward notions of the normal” and queer .texts as those that “explicitly or implicitly denaturalize notions of sexual normality and that provide evidence of the
mutability and variability of human sexual desire and performance in excess of the hetero/homo binary” (149).

Queer theory is not just about homosexual representations in literature; it also explores the categories of gender as well as sexual orientation. Some argue that queer theory is a by-product of third-wave feminism while others claim that it is a result of the valuation of postmodern minoritizing, that is, the idea that the smallest constituent must have a voice and identity equivalent to all others (mini-narrative). Queer theory’s main project is to explore the contestations of the categorization of gender and sexuality. In Literary Theory: The Basics, Hans Bertens remarks that “queer theory questions traditional constructions of sexuality and—especially in its British version—sees non-heterosexual forms of sexuality as sites where hegemonic power can be undermined” (225).

Queer theory offers us a refined critical optic with which to interpret the extant evidence about modern same-sex relationships. In doing so, it begins to open and describe the experiential space between the discursive polarities “homosexual” and “heterosexual” in the erotic culture of India.

History

Teresa de Lauretis, an academic and critical theorist, has been credited with coining the phrase queer theory. She used it to serve as the title of a conference that she organised in February 1990 at the University of California, where she is a Professor of The History of Consciousness. David Halperin in his essay “The Normalization of Queer Theory” mentions how Lauretis coined the word “queer”: 
‘She had heard the word ‘queer’ being tossed about in a gay-affirmative sense by activists, street kids, and members of the art world in New York during the late 1980s. She had the courage and the conviction to pair that scandalous term with the academic holy word ‘theory’. (339)

In 1991, de Lauretis edited a special issue of the feminist cultural studies journal differences titled "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities". She wrote: “the project of the conference was based on the speculative premise that homosexuality is no longer to be seen simply as marginal with regard to a dominant, stable form of sexuality (heterosexuality) against which it would be defined either by opposition or homology” (de Lauretis iii).

In explaining her use of the term “queer”, de Lauretis remarks that she means it to indicate at least three interrelated critical projects: a refusal of heterosexuality as the benchmark for all sexual formations; an attentiveness to gender capable of interrogating the frequent assumption that lesbian and gay studies is a single, homogeneous object; and an insistence on the multiple ways in which race crucially shapes sexual subjectivities, (iii-iv)

De Lauretis suggests that the threefold critique she presents might be drawn together under the rubric of queer theory that makes it possible "to recast or reinvent the terms of our sexualities, to construct another discursive horizon, another way of thinking the sexual" (iv).
Halperin observes that de Lauretis, in her opening remarks at the conference acknowledged that she had intended the title as a provocation. He writes:

She wanted specifically to unsettle the complacency of ‘lesbian and gay studies’ (that ‘by now established and often convenient formula,’ as she called it) which implied that the relation of lesbian to gay male topics in this emerging field was equitable, perfectly balanced, and completely understood—as if everyone knew exactly how lesbian studies and gay male studies connected to each other and why it was necessary or important that they should evolve together. She also wished to challenge the erstwhile domination of the field by the work of empirical social scientists, to open a wider space within it for reflections of a theoretical order, to introduce a problematic of multiple differences into what had tended to be a monolithic, homogenizing discourse of (homo)sexual difference, and to offer a possible escape from the hegemony of white, male, middle-class models of analysis, (340)

The essays published in de Lauretis’ collection work against those reified notions of sexual identity that she finds implicit in the phrase “lesbian and gay.” Incidentally Lauretis abandoned the phrase “queer theory” barely three years later on the grounds that it had been taken over by those mainstream forces and institutions it was coined to resist (Wiegman 17).
Three years after the publication of de Lauretis’s volume, *differences* brought out a second queer issue subtitled “More Gender Trouble: Feminism Meets Queer Theory” with an introductory essay by Judith Butler. The term “queer” was used by the majority of the contributors in this volume. Given de Lauretis’s hope that queer might signify a new self-reflexivity, these authors used “queer” as a self-evident term of nomination in much the same way that “lesbian and gay” has been deployed. Explaining her choice of terminology in *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* (1994), de Lauretis writes: “As for “queer theory”, my insistent specification *lesbian* may well be taken as a taking of distance from what, since I proposed it as a working hypothesis for lesbian and gay studies in this very journal (*differences* 3.2), has very quickly become a conceptually vacuous creature of the publishing industry”(297).

Jagose deftly outlines the influence of four social movements of the past three decades (Gay Liberation, Lesbian Feminism, Queer Nation and ACT-UP) upon queer theory. By the mid-1990s, queer theory began to make its mark on academic studies of sexuality. The notion that sexuality could not be understood through the presumptive binary categories of “homosexual” and “heterosexual” resonated with much earlier sociological constructionism. Queer theory pushed even further arguing that sexual identities, desires, and categories are fluid and dynamic, and that sexuality is inevitably intertwined with, even sometimes constitutive of, power relations.
Background Concepts

Queer theory's main aim is exploring the contestations of the categorization of gender and sexuality. Theorists claim that identities are not fixed—they cannot be categorized and labelled because identities consist of many varied components and therefore to categorize gender and sexuality by just one characteristic is wrong. Queer theory includes a wide array of previously considered non-normative sexualities and sexual practices in its list of identities. Because it is grounded in gender and sexuality, there is a debate as to whether sexual orientation is natural or essential or if it is merely a construction and subject to change. The focus of theorists is the problem of classifying every individual by gender; therefore queer is less an identity than a critique of identity.

Queer literary interpretation is concerned largely with sexual identity, especially "closeted" sexual identity, gay, lesbian and bisexual issues. Queer theory is not simply about studying people whose sex lives are not heterosexual; it is about questioning the presumptions, values and viewpoints, especially those that normally go unquestioned. It is in part about opening and reclaiming spaces, both public and private. In queer theory, sexualities are conceptualized in terms of fluidity, contradiction and indeterminacy; desire is bodily and embodied, but it is also linguistic and discursive; and sex is de-linked from gender such that sexuality is no longer understood within the framework of the heterosexual matrix (Bodies that Matter, 11).
Queer theory builds on social constructionism to further dismantle sexual identities and categories. It recognizes the instabilities of traditional oppositions such as lesbian/gay and heterosexual. Queerness is often used as an inclusive signifier for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, drag and straights who pass as gay.

Gay/lesbian studies, like feminist studies, work to understand how the categories of normal and deviant are constructed, how they operate and are enforced in order to intervene with a view to changing or ending them. But while gay/lesbian studies, as the name implies, focused largely on questions of homosexuality, queer theory expands its realm of investigation. It is a political critique of anything that falls into normative and deviant categories, particularly sexual activities and identities. It concerns itself with any and all forms of sexuality that are "queer" in this sense, and then, by extension, with the normative behaviours and identities which define what is "queer". Thus queer theory expands the scope of its analysis to all kinds of behaviours including those which are gender-bending as well as those which involve "queer" non-normative forms of sexuality.

Queer theory insists that all sexual behaviours, all concepts linking sexual behaviours to sexual identities and all categories of normative and deviant sexualities are social constructs, sets of signifiers which create certain types of social meaning. It follows feminist theory and gay/lesbian studies in rejecting the idea that sexuality is an essentialist category, something determined by biology or judged by eternal standards of morality and truth. For queer theorists, sexuality is a complex array of social codes and forces,
forms of individual activity and institutional power, which interact to shape the ideas of what is normative and what is deviant at any particular moment.

Queer theory recognizes the impossibility of moving outside current conceptions of sexuality. Human beings cannot assert themselves to be entirely outside or inside heterosexuality, because each of these terms achieves its meaning only in relation to the other. The only thing human beings can do, as queer theory suggests, is to negotiate these limits. They can think about the \textit{how} of these boundaries—not merely the fact that they exist but also how they are created, regulated and contested. The emphasis on the production and management of heterosexuality and homosexuality characterizes the poststructuralist queer theory project.

Jagose underscores the strong deconstructionist epistemological premise of the term “queer” and queer theory:

Disillusioned with traditional identity-based forms of political organization and engaged in a radical denaturalization of all identity categories, queer operates not so much as an alternative nomenclature—which would measure its success by the extent to which it supplanted the former classifications of lesbian and gay—than as means of drawing attention to those fictions of identity that stabilize all identificatory categories. (125)

Queer theory begins by challenging the prevailing beliefs about gender and sexual identity. It seeks to shake the existing theories and beliefs, foster the expansion of ideas and understandings, and promote new ways of seeing,
describing and explaining human experience. Queer theory is complex partly because it challenges basic tropes used to organize our society and our language: even words are gendered, and through that gendering an indirect view of the hierarchy of society, and presumption of what is male and female, shines through. Queer theory rejects such binary distinctions as determined and defined by those with social power.

The rejection of classifications of sexual orientation pits queer theory against the core units of analysis in lesbian and gay studies. This position is clearly stated in Butler’s “Imitation and Gender Subordination” in Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories. Noting her objection to "lesbian" and "gay" designations and "lesbian theories" and "gay theories," Butler writes that she is not at ease "with lesbian theories, gay theories, for . .. identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes whether as the normalizing categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression" (13-14). She goes on to argue that heterosexuality itself is an impossible imitation—a compulsory performance that is doomed to failure. As a consequence of this failure, she suggests that categories of sexuality and gender are merely the products of straight men and women "panicked" over the uncertainly of their heterosexuality (23). She writes in Gender Trouble:

Heterosexuality is always in the process of imitating and approximating its own phantasmatic idealization of itself—and failing. Precisely because it is bound to fail, and yet endeavors to succeed, the project of heterosexual identity is propelled into an
endless repetition of itself. Indeed, in its efforts to naturalize itself as the original, heterosexuality must be understood as a compulsive and compulsory representation that can only produce the effects of its own originality; in other words, compulsory heterosexual identities, those ontologically consolidated phantasms of ‘man’ and ‘woman,’ are theatrically produced effects that posture as grounds, origins, the normative measure of the real. (21)

Butler's objections to sexual classifications and to lesbian and gay studies are echoed throughout queer theory. In *Gender Trouble* She deconstructs and dismisses "gay" and "lesbian" identity:

Such a consideration of psychic identification would vitiate the possibility of any stable set of typologies that explain or describe something like gay or lesbian identities. And any efforts to supply one . . . suffer from simplification, and conform, with alarming ease, to the regulatory requirements of diagnostic epistemic regimes. (27)

**Gender**

Gender identity is a person's own sense of identification as male or female. Traditionally, many societies insisted that every individual be categorized as either a man or a woman. Most human beings are considered to be cisgendered, that is, belonging to either the male or female gender on the basis of their biological sex. Prior to the twentieth century, a person's sex would be determined entirely by the appearance of the genitalia. But as
chromosomes and genes came to be understood these were then used to help determine sex. Those defined as women have a genitalia that is considered female and possess two X chromosomes; those viewed as men have the male genitalia and one X and one Y chromosome. However, some individuals have a chromosomal sex that has not been expressed in the external genitalia because of hormonal or other abnormal conditions during critical periods in gestation. Such a person may appear to be of one sex but may recognize himself or herself as belonging to the other sex. These people are known as transgenders or transsexuals.

Sexuality

Sexuality is a composite term referring to the totality of a person’s being. The study of human sexuality encompasses an array of social activities and an abundance of behaviours, actions and societal topics. It is concerned with the biological, psychological, sociological and spiritual variables of life that affect personality development and inter-personal relations. The word “sexuality” initially denoted organisms capable of reproducing sexually. In the early nineteenth-century, it was used to denote a whole array of concepts clustered around sexual expression, sexual activity and sexual powers. Sexuality became a common place word in the late nineteenth century Europe and America when scientific, anthropological and sociological studies of sex flourished. In its earliest scientific usage, sexuality defined the meanings of human eroticism and when marked by a prefix such as “bi”, “hetero” or “homo”, the word came to describe types of person who embodied particular desires.
Binary Oppositions

Binary oppositions are related to each other because they express either the presence or the absence of one and the same thing. Man and woman constitute a binary pair, intimately related yet in a crucial way representing each other’s biological opposite. Levi-Strauss’s basic assumption is that our primitive ancestors deployed this simple model or structure to understand reality. Our ancestors must have categorized their world in basic terms that always involved a presence and an absence—light/darkness, nature/nurture, above/below, soul/body, sacred/profane and so on. Other fundamental oppositional terms include good and evil, truth and falsehood, masculinity and femininity, rationality and irrationality, thought and feeling, mind and matter, and purity and impurity. In Western metaphysics, the first term in each of these binary oppositions has always been privileged.

The most fundamental binary opposition of all is the one involving the division of human beings into men and women on the basis of biological sexuality. Heterosexual activity claims to be the authentic form of sexuality by suggesting that other forms of sexuality like lesbianism or homosexuality are inauthentic. By setting up a binary opposition, heterosexuality turns itself into the centre by relegating other sexualities to the margins.

Identity

Identity is a term used to describe an individual's comprehension of himself or herself as a discrete entity. An individual’s psychological identity relates to his/her self-image, self-esteem and individuation. An important part
of identity is gender identity, as this dictates to a significant degree how an individual views himself or herself, both as a person and in relation to other people. Psychologists most commonly use the term "identity" to describe personal identity. Sociologists use the term to describe social cultural identity, or the collection of group memberships that defines the individual. Identity is made evident through the use of crucial markers such as language, dress, behaviour and choice of space, whose effect depends on their recognition by other social beings.

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation refers to a pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to men/women or both sexes. Sexual orientation is usually classified according to the sex and/or gender of the people who are found sexually attractive. These sexual orientations are generally heterosexual, bisexual and homosexual. Heterosexuality is the cultural normality for both men and women. Bisexuality is the attraction to members of both gender and homosexuality is the attraction to members of the same gender.

In the western context of dichotomization, heterosexuality was opposed to homosexuality, and bisexuality was less talked about as a sexual orientation. Heterosexuality was considered to be the socially accepted and normal sexual orientation whereas homosexuality was considered to be a sin. Sexual identity and sexual behaviour are closely related to sexual orientation. While identity refers to an individual's conception of him/herself, behaviour refers to actual sexual acts performed by the individual, and orientation is linked to fantasies, attachments and longings.
Heterosexuality

Heterosexuality refers to sexual behaviour with, or attraction to, people of the opposite sex, or to a heterosexual orientation. *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Sociology* defines heterosexuality as

The privileged and dominant expression of sexuality in most known societies, which is often regarded as the ‘natural’ form of human sexual desire. In Western culture, heterosexuality has been normalized and prioritized over all other forms of human sexuality via institutional practices, including the law and the social policy. (388)

*Hetero* comes from the Greek word *heteros* meaning "different" or "other", from "one at one, together". The term "heterosexual" was first used in 1892 in C.G. Craddock's translation of Krafft-Ebbing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*. The term "heterosexual" is suggested to have come into use as an opposite to the word "homosexual" by Karl Maria Kertbeny in 1868. Most people in the world are heterosexual; yet there are also minority sexual tastes and inclinations. In every society, heterosexuality is the basis of marriage and family.

Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity is a set of hidden rules and strategies that are consciously as well as unconsciously practised. Discrimination on the basis of gender and sexuality privileges heterosexuality as the norm. Deviant sexualities and genders indirectly categorize the “heterosexual couple” as the
norm. The concept of heteronormativity draws upon Foucault’s theory of “normalizing judgment” (*Discipline and Punish*) and refers to heterosexuality as a social institution with particular forms of practices that demarcate the “normal” from the “abnormal”.

**Homosexuality**

Homosexuality is a broad term which consists of several aspects of same-sex sexuality such as sexual identity, sexual orientation and sexual behavior. Homosexuality refers to sexual identity as a gay or lesbian, with gay denoting male homosexuality and lesbian female homosexuality. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* has listed homosexuality under the title “*sexual deviations*”. Here, homosexuality is defined as “a preference for sexual relations with a person of the same sex” (603). It adds, “Though the most prevalent deviation, its frequency is unknown, largely because its being considered both sinful and illegal in most societies makes people with this preference unlikely to reveal themselves to authorities” (603).

Many homosexuals lead double lives, anxiously hiding from their friends and family a secret world of homosexual liaisons. In modern societies where homosexuality is condemned but still prevalent, homosexuals usually congregate in large cities where urban anonymity permits them to develop underground communities. In recent years, a growing number of homosexuals have accepted their orientation as natural and inherent in their personalities. Some take pride in it and form organizations to promote gay liberation. Homosexual behavior ranges from anonymous sex, promiscuity and prostitution to romantic affairs and life-long relationships.
Homosexuality is among the most ancient manifestation of human sexuality and different societies have reacted to it in various ways, from permissiveness to condemnation. The word “homosexual” was coined in 1869 by a Hungarian doctor Karoly Maria Benkert, who went by the pseudonym K. M. Kertbeny. The first known appearance of the term homosexual is found in two 1869 German pamphlets by K. M. Kertbeny, published anonymously. The term was used in the pamphlet alongside “normosexual”. These pamphlets were published to fight against the criminalization of homosexual sex in the newly formed federation of the northern German states. The prevalence of the concept owed much to the work of the German psychiatrist Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing and his work *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886).

While the term “homosexual” was not created until the end of the nineteenth century, same-sex love has been practised since the beginning of civilization. In ancient Greece and Rome, the pairing of same sex partners during the act of lovemaking was not considered abnormal. The disapproving connotations attached to homosexuality entered the thought patterns of Roman society just prior to the emergence of Christianity. As Christianity flourished, the expression of sexuality for any reason other than procreation was considered sinful, and hence the initial persecution of homosexuals. The legal and social status of people who engage in homosexual acts or identify themselves as gay or lesbian varies enormously across the world, and in some cultures it remains hotly contested both politically and religiously.
In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault dated the birth of homosexuality to Westphal’s article:

We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized—Westphal’s famous article of 1870 on ‘contrary sexual sensations’ can stand as its date of birth—less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility, a certain way of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodisism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species. (43)

In 1976, Foucault argued that homosexuality as an identity did not exist in the eighteenth century and added that people instead spoke of "sodomy", which referred to sexual acts. He further argued that it was in the nineteenth century that homosexuality came into existence as practitioners of emerging sciences and arts sought to classify and analyze different forms of sexuality.

**Gay**

Until the mid-twentieth century, the term “gay” was originally used to refer to feelings of being "carefree," "happy," or "bright and showy". From the early twentieth century, the term has been used with reference to homosexuality. By the end of the twentieth century, the word “gay” was used
to describe people attracted to members of the same sex. The use of “gay” to mean "homosexual" was merely an extension of the word's sexualised connotation of "carefree and uninhibited," which implied a willingness to disregard conventional or respectable sexual traditions. By the mid-twentieth century, "gay" was well-established as an antonym for "straight" (which had connotations of respectability) and to refer to the lifestyles of unmarried and/or unattached people. Gay bashing is an expression used to designate verbal confrontation with, defamation of, or physical violence against people thought to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered (LGBT) because of their different sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Transgender**

Transgender or ‘transsexual’, as defined in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, “is a condition in which a biologically normal person believes himself/herself to be truly a member of the opposite sex, despite anatomical evidence to the contrary” (606). A transgendered individual’s identity does not conform unambiguously to conventional notions of male or female gender roles, but combines or moves between these. In other words, transgender is the state of one's gender identity (self-identification as woman, man or neither) not matching one’s "assigned sex" (identification by others as male or female based on physical/genetic sex). A transgendered individual may have characteristics that are normally associated with a particular gender but whose identity lies elsewhere on the traditional gender continuum or exists outside of it as the "other" or “third gender". Transgender does not imply any specific form of sexual orientation; transgendered individuals may identify themselves as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual or asexual.
The term “transgender” was popularised in the 1970s describing people who wanted to live cross-gender without sex reassignment surgery. In the 1980s, the term was expanded to an umbrella term and became popular as a means of uniting all those whose gender identity did not mesh with their gender assigned at birth. In the 1990s, the term took on a political dimension as an alliance covering all those who have at some point not conformed to gender norms, and the term was used to question the validity of those norms and pursue equal rights and anti-discrimination legislation, leading to its widespread use in the media and academia.

**Performativity**

Performativity is a concept that is related to Speech Act theory. It is the idea that gender is a daily, habitually learned act based on cultural norms of masculinity and femininity. It accounts for situations where a proposition may constitute or instantiate the object to which it is meant to refer, as in "performative utterances". The origin of the term “performative” can be traced back to J.L. Austin’s posthumous *How to Do Things with Words*. The action which performative sentences “perform” belongs to a Speech Act, more particularly, the *illocutionary act*.

Austin gives the examples: “I do (take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife)” as uttered in the course of the marriage ceremony; “I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth” as uttered when smashing the bottle against the stem, and “I give and bequeath my watch to my brother” as occurring in the writing of a will (6). Austin elaborates:
In these examples it seems clear that to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to describe my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it. None of the utterances cited is either true or false: I assert this as obvious and do not argue it.

To name the ship is to say (in the appropriate circumstances) the words 'I name'. When I say, before the registrar or altar, 'I do', I am not reporting on a marriage: I am indulging in it ... I propose to call it a performative sentence or a performative utterance, or, for short, 'a performative' ... it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action—it is not normally thought of as just saying something. (6-7)

Such declarations are performatives, not constatives, because it is by the utterance of the chosen words under certain conditions ("felicity conditions") that that particular act is performed. These statements carry out a certain action and exhibit a certain level of power. The statements are not singular in nature or use and must be used consistently in order to exert power.

According to Butler, there is no prediscursive identity as even our understanding of biological sex is discursively produced. In Bodies that Matter, she describes performativity as "that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains" (2). Women and men continually cite gender norms in their day-to-day behaviour, usually without realizing it. Even the simple act of filling out a form and ticking the Mr. or Ms. prefix is a performance of gender. Butler has used this concept in her analysis
of gender development. This idea, first introduced in 1988 in an issue of *Theatre Journal*, places emphasis on the manners in which identity is passed or brought to life through discourse.

According to Butler’s theory, homosexuality and heterosexuality are not fixed categories. A person is merely in a condition of “doing straightness” or “doing queerness”. Butler extends the sex/gender distinction by arguing that neither gender nor sex is completely natural; they are naturalized through repetition and people’s belief in the correct performance of their designated sex and gender. She claims that there is no authentic, innate man or woman behind or before their entry into culture, society and language.

**Differences between Lesbian/Gay Theory and Queer Theory**

Lesbian and gay movements have been founded on the notion that lesbian or gay identity is a stable attribute, a universal essence. But with poststructuralism came “the troubling of identity” (Seidman 117), for identities began to be theorised not as facts but as acts. Lesbian and gay identity theory was too fixed and narrow to account for a diverse range of sexual identities, practices and values. In the 1980s and 1990s, the theoretical and practical challenges to identity politics led to the emergence of queer theory. According to queer theory, gender identities are not facts but acts; that is, they are not what people are but what they do, and central to the “doing” (performative) of gender identity is discourse (Butler 141).

Whereas lesbian and gay theory focus primarily on the lesbians and gays respectively, queer theory is interested in how the “homo/heterosexual
“definition” shapes the lives of people “across the spectrum of sexualities” (Sedgwick 1). Queer theory takes, what Sedgwick calls, a “universalizing view,” which sees the “homo/heterosexual” binarism as potentially relevant to anyone in contrast to a “minoritizing view” (Sedgwick 1) that sees the binary as relevant only to a fixed minority (homosexuals).

According to queer theory, the straight/gay binarism does more than shape sexual identities. The straight/gay binarism is relevant not only because it shapes dominant as well as subordinate sexual identities but also because it shapes ways of thinking and living. Queer theorists thus see sexual identities as central rather than peripheral to cultural practices and discourses. But they do not see sexual identities as straightforward or even desirable. In *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, Jonathan Culler writes:

> Queer theory uses the marginal—what has been set aside as perverse, beyond the pale, radically other—to analyse the cultural construction of the centre: heterosexual normativity. In the work of Eve Sedgwick, Judith Butler, and others, Queer theory has become the site of a productive questioning not just of the cultural construction of sexuality but of culture itself, as based on the denial of homoerotic relations. (131)

While a lesbian and gay approach challenges prejudicial attitudes (homophobia) and discriminatory actions (heterosexism) on the grounds that they violate human rights, a queer approach looks at how discursive acts and cultural practices manage to make heterosexuality, and only heterosexuality,
seem normal or natural (heteronormativity). A queer approach recognises that sexual identities are not universal but are perceived in different ways in different cultural contexts, and calls for a close look at how identities are produced through day-to-day interactions. A queer theoretical framework may prove more useful than a lesbian and gay framework because it theorises sexual identities as potentially relevant to anyone rather than just to lesbian and gay people.

**Key Queer Theorists**

**Michel Foucault**

Michel Foucault is a key poststructuralist influence on the development of queer theory. Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. I, pioneered queer theory. In this, he provides a persuasive historical narrative of a modern homosexual identity. He argues that homosexuality is a modern formation because, while there were previously same-sex sex acts, there was no matching category of identification. Providing an exact date for the “invention” of homosexuality, he writes:

> We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized—Westphal’s famous article of 1870 on ‘contrary sexual sensations’ can stand as its date of birth—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. (1: 43)
In *The History of Sexuality*, Vol I, Foucault considers, what he calls, “the repressive hypothesis” (1.10): the common idea that sex is something that earlier periods, particularly the nineteenth century, had repressed and which the modern societies have fought to liberate. He raises three doubts about this repressive hypothesis: "Is sexual repression truly an established historical fact?" (1: 10) "Are prohibition, censorship, and denial truly the forms through which power is exercised in a general way, if not in every society, most certainly in our own?" 10; and "Was there really a historical rupture between the age of repression and the critical analysis of repression?" (1: 10).

Foucault does not question the fact of repression. He questions why sexuality "has been so widely discussed, and what has been said about it" (1: 11). He points out that repression, generally believed to have begun in the seventeenth century, not to silence but to "a veritable discursive explosion" (1: 17).

He also argues that censorship is not the primary form through which power is exercised; rather, it is the incitement to speak about one's sexuality (to experts of various sorts) in order to regulate it. Indeed, silence itself can be read as caught up in a larger *discourse* about sexuality. He writes:

> Silence itself—the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers—is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies. . . . There is not one
but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses. (1: 27)

According to Foucault, there have been historically two ways of viewing sexuality. China, Japan, India, Rome and the Arab-Moslem societies viewed it as an *ars erotica* ("erotic art") where sex was seen as an art and a special experience, and not something dirty and shameful. It was something to be kept secret because of the view that it would lose its power and pleasure if spoken about.

In the Western society, on the contrary, something completely different was created, what Foucault calls *scientia sexualis*, the science of sexuality. This happened in the seventeenth century based on a phenomenon diametrically opposed to *ars erotica*: the confession. It is not just a question of the Christian confession but more generally the urge to talk about it. A fixation with finding out the "truth" about sexuality arises. It is as if sexuality did not exist unless it was confessed. Foucault writes:

> We have since become an extraordinarily confessing society. The confession has spread its effects far and wide. It plays a part in justice, medicine, education, family relationships, and love relations, in the most ordinary affairs of everyday life, and in the most solemn rites; one confesses one’s crimes, one’s sins, one’s thoughts and desires, one’s illnesses and troubles; one goes about telling, with the greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell… One confesses—or is forced to confess. (59)
"Coming out" as a concept did not exist when Foucault wrote *The History of Sexuality*, Vol 1. But this act of confessing homosexuality can be interpreted as an expression of this urge to “come out”. There seems to be a compulsion to reveal one's sexuality and sexual orientation to confirm its existence. In *ars erotica*, a very different view is held and people are content to let it remain a secret in the positive sense of the word.

The doctrines on sexuality condemned several "unnatural" sexual behaviours. In the sixteenth century, the focus was on regulating the sexuality of the married couple, ignoring other forms of sexual relations. But, then, other categories were identified: the sexuality of children, criminals, mentally ill and gays. "The perverse" became a group instead of an attribute. Homosexuality was considered a sin that could be committed from time to time. But now a group of "homosexuals" emerged.

Foucault argues that power underwrites discourse to present sexuality as a hidden truth that must be rooted out and specified in all its manifestations. He writes:

The society that emerged in the nineteenth century—bourgeois, capitalist, or industrial society, call it what you will—did not confront sex with a fundamental refusal of recognition. On the contrary, it put into operation an entire machinery for producing true discourses concerning it. Not only did it speak of sex and compel everyone to do so; it also set out to formulate the uniform truth of sex. (1: 69)
Identifying this conflation of sex and truth as the key to the modern invention of sexuality, Foucault refutes the idea that sexuality can be authoritatively defined, focusing instead on the discursive production of sexuality within the regime of power and knowledge. In Foucault's account, sexual categories—homosexual, heterosexual, and the like—are themselves products of particular constellations of power and knowledge. He claimed that the recent historical emergence of "the homosexual" and other sexual types in Western societies reflected a shift in the tactics of power from an emphasis on sexual behaviour to one on sexual personhood. In place of the opposition between natural and unnatural acts, sexual experience would be divided into normal and abnormal identities. Sexuality, therefore, became a central site for the construction of subjectivity.

**Teresa de Lauretis**

Teresa de Lauretis is an Italian-born author and professor of the History of Consciousness at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her areas of interest include semiotics, psychoanalysis, film theory, literary theory, feminism and lesbian and queer studies. Lauretis is widely known for her nuanced analysis of the relationships among representation, gender and subjectivity in film, literature and theoretical discourse. She coined the phrase “queer theory” to serve as the title of a conference that she held in February 1990 at the University of California. In the 1980s, she published two groundbreaking books in which she draws on semiotics, psychoanalysis and Foucault’s work to address fundamental issues in feminist theory. She guest-

In *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (1984), de Lauretis urges feminists to theorise the concept of experience. In *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (1987), she argues that the concept of sexual difference was limiting feminist theory’s ability to explore the construction of female subjectivity across multiple axes of difference, including race, class and sexuality. Drawing on Foucault’s work on sexuality and Althusser’s account of ideology, she elaborates a model of gender as both product and process. Gender, she argues, is a product of technologies such as cinema and discourse including feminist theory.

**Judith Butler**

Judith Butler is an American post-structuralist philosopher who has contributed to feminism, queer theory, political philosophy and ethics. With her influential book *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler took Simon de Beauvoir’s idea of self and other, along with the statement “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman,” and developed an argument underscoring the fluidity of gender. She argued that masculine and feminine, as two opposing and mutually defining positions, were artificial constructs supported by imposed heterosexuality. By subverting gender norms and by refusing the characteristics socially assigned to a particular biological sex, binary gender categories could be deconstructed, and a multitude of possible gender ‘positions’ would then become available (*Gender Trouble* 338).
Butler's understanding of the intersection between desire and social forces is largely taken from her reading of Foucault, who argued in *The History of Sexuality* that the "liberation" of sexuality was not the key to freedom but rather a ruse of power, a means of managing and regulating modern subjects (Butler 96). She has consistently described the difficulties of subjects who live in a world that precedes them and that is not of their own making. She argues that we do not make up the rules of our existence and that we are objects for others before we are ever subjects "for ourselves" (2). We are not the independent authors of our actions; instead, if we are to be recognized at all, we would be forced to cite or repeat pre-existing norms and conventions.

Perhaps the easiest way to grasp this concept in Butler's work is to think of it in terms of language. It is clear that if we are to communicate with others we have to obey grammatical and syntactical rules that predetermine to a certain extent the kinds of things that are possible to say. Butler describes this situation as the paradox of subjection: in order to become a subject, one has to first subject oneself to the rules that govern social existence.

Butler first made this point in *Gender Trouble* (1990). She argues that when we "act like" men and women we are not expressing some inner gender essence or core identity; rather, we are citing pre-existing norms. It is not just what we say but what we do, what we wear, how we gesture, how we walk—that sutures us into a recognizable grammar of gendered behavior (136). Such small acts, repeated quite many times, produce the illusion of a natural ground for gender identity. But, in fact, she argues, no such ground exists.
Furthermore, only by subjecting ourselves to the grammar of gender by answering the question “Are you a man or a woman?” do we become subjects at all. While she does hold out hope for the possibility of subversive performances around the edges of the gender system (drag performance and butch/femme are her central examples), her theory of "gender performativity" does not allow for radical departures from such norms. She reminds us that while we continue to try to change the world we remain deeply tied by desire and the need for recognition in the world.

*Gender Trouble* critically discusses the works of Simone de Beauvoir, Julia Kristeva, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Luce Irigaray, Monique Wittig, Jacques Derrida, and, most significantly, Michel Foucault. Butler's main argument in *Gender Trouble* is that the coherence of the categories of sex, gender and sexuality—-the natural-seeming coherence, for example, of masculine gender and heterosexual desire in male bodies—is culturally constructed through the repetition of stylized acts in time. These stylized bodily acts, through their repetition, establish the appearance of an essential, ontological "core" gender (140). This is the sense in which Butler famously theorizes gender, along with sex and sexuality, as performative.

Butler talks about gender as an imitation for which there exists no original and which comes into play only through the act of repeated performance. In the process, the appearance of originality emerges only as an effect of repetition. This focus on repetition ultimately suggests that there can be no stable gendered or sexual identity.
Butler’s narrow interpretation of male identification as imitation and her psycho-linguistic use of identification allow her to perform the important rhetorical reversal that transforms imitation into the very site of subversion. Practices such as butch-femme role play constitute subversive repetitions of phallic conventions in lesbian and gay contexts. The subversiveness of these practices derive from the way that they replicate “heterosexual constructs in non-heterosexual frames” and thus, bring these frames “into relief” as “utterly constructed” (Gender Trouble 31). Such repetitions, rather than consolidate heterosexism, “may well be the inevitable site of the denaturalization and mobilization of gender categories” (31). Since there is no authentic body, self, or space beyond a heteronormative culture, all that remains, Butler urges, is “to enact an identification that displays its phantasmatic structure” (30-1).

The performance of gender, sex and sexuality, however, is not a voluntary choice for Butler who locates the construction of the gendered, sexed, desiring subject within, what she calls borrowing from Foucault’s Discipline and Punish, "regulative discourses" (134). These, also called "frameworks of intelligibility" or "disciplinary, regimes," decide in advance what possibilities of sex, gender, and sexuality are socially permitted to appear as coherent or "natural" (135). Regulative discourse includes disciplinary techniques which, by coercing subjects to perform specific stylized actions, maintain the appearance in those subjects of the "core" gender, sex and sexuality the discourse produces.

A significant part of Butler's argument concerns the role of sex in the construction of "natural" or coherent gender and sexuality. She explicitly
challenges biological accounts of binary sex, reconceiving the sexed body as itself culturally constructed by regulative discourse. The supposed obviousness of sex as a natural biological fact attests to how deeply its production in discourse is concealed. The sexed body, once established as a “natural” and unquestioned “fact,” is the alibi for constructions of gender and sexuality, unavoidably more cultural in their appearance which can purport to be the just-as-natural expressions or consequences of a more fundamental sex (140).

On Butler’s account, it is on the basis of the construction of binary sex that binary gender and heterosexuality are likewise constructed as natural. In this way, she claims that without a critique of sex as produced by discourse, the sex/gender distinction as a feminist strategy for contesting constructions of binary asymmetric gender and compulsory heterosexuality will be ineffective. She asserts in Bodies That Matter. “If the term queer is to be a site of collective contestation, the point of departure for a set of historical reflections and futural imaginings, it will have to remain that which is, in the present never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from its prior usage” (228).

Bodies that Matter deals largely with interrogating notions of femininity and queer, and the association of these terms with materiality. The book seeks to clear up misreadings of performativity that view the enactment of sex/gender as a daily choice. To do this, Butler emphasizes the role of repetition in performativity. Making use of Derrida's theory of iterability, a form of citationality, to work out a theory of performativity in terms of iterability, she writes in Bodies That Matter:
Performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed by a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. This iterability implies that 'performance' is not a singular 'act' or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance. (95)

The concept of gender performativity is at the core of Butler's work. She takes this formulation further by exploring the ways that linguistic constructions create our reality in general through the speech acts we engage in every day. By endlessly citing the conventions and ideologies of the social world around us, we enact that reality. In the performative act of speaking, we "incorporate" that reality by enacting it with our bodies but that "reality" nonetheless remains a social construction.

Butler concerns herself with those "gender acts" that lead to material changes in one's existence and even in one's bodily self. She sees gender as an act that is repeatedly performed. This repetition is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established. She sees gender not as an expression of what one is but as something that one does. According to her theory, homosexuality and heterosexuality are not fixed
categories. To maintain power, the hegemony of heteronormative standards require our continued repetition of such gender acts in the most mundane of daily activities (the way we walk, talk, gesticulate, etc.). For Butler, the distinction between the personal and the political or between the private and the public life is itself a fiction designed to support an oppressive status quo: our most personal acts are, in fact, continually being scripted by hegemonic social conventions and ideologies (Butler 140).

Butler emphasizes gender's constructed nature to fight for the rights of the oppressed in terms of their identities. She argues people such as these identified do not conform to the artificial rules that govern normalised heterosexuality. She argues that if these rules are not natural or essential, they do not have any claim to justice or necessity (146). Since these rules are historical and rely on their continued citation or enactment by subjects, they can be challenged and changed through alternative performative acts.

**Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick**

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick is an American who has specialised in gender studies, queer theory and critical theory. She is one of the most prominent North American theorists of sexuality. Her compelling and transformative works are fundamental to gay studies and to queer theory. Influenced by Foucault, Butler, Derrida and Lacan, her work reflects an abiding interest in a wide range of issues and topics, including queer performativity and performance and experimental critical writing.

*Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985) is a groundbreaking study of the relations between homosexuality, homosociality and heterosexuality. Sedgwick argues in *Between Men* that insofar as it negotiates and sanctions relations between men, male heterosexuality is importantly situated on a homosocial continuum, the elasticated reach of which also defines in crucial ways its opposite, male homosexuality (24). Consequently, Sedgwick’s centralising of male homosociality insists that the status of women, and the whole question of arrangements between genders, is deeply and inescapably inscribed in the structure even of relationships that seem to exclude women—even in male homosocial/homosexual relationships and that there is a historically variable yet structurally consistent connection between the identity formations of male heterosexuality and male homosexuality. (25)

*Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) is often cited as a canonical text even though the term “queer theory” does not appear here. It has one of gay and
lesbian studies' and queer theory's founding texts. Basically a critical reinterpretation of specific works of English literature, the book opens with a strong claim:

*Epistemology of the Closet* proposes that many of the major modes of thought and knowledge in twentieth-century Western culture as a whole are structured in Western—indeed, fractured—by a chronic, now endemic crisis of homo/heterosexual definition, indicatively male, dating from the end of the nineteenth century. The book will argue that an understanding of virtually any aspect of modern Western culture must be, not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition . . . . (1)

In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick eloquently sums up her basic argument she put forth in *Between Men*:

*[Between Men]* attempted to demonstrate the immanence of men’s same-sex bonds, and their prohibitive structuration, to male-female bonds in nineteenth-century English literature . . . [The book] focused on the oppressive effects on women and men of a cultural system in which male-male desire became widely intelligible primarily by being routed through triangular desire involving a woman. (15)
According to her, the definition of homo/heterosexual has been highly debated because of a lasting incoherence "between seeing homo/heterosexual definition on the one hand as an issue of active importance primarily for a small, distinct, relatively fixed homosexual minority . . . and seeing it on the other hand as an issue of continuing, determinative importance in the lives of people across the spectrum of sexualities"(1). This contradiction between, what Sedgwick refers to as, a "minoritizing versus a universalizing" view of sexual definition is contested by yet another set of incoherent definitional terms; that "between seeing same-sex object choice on the one hand as a matter of liminality or transitivity between genders, and seeing it on the other hand as reflecting an impulse of separatism—though by no means necessarily political separatism—within each gender" (2),

Sedgwick is not interested in judging which of the two poles of these contradictions should be considered more correct. Rather, she makes a compelling argument for the “centrality of this nominally marginal, conceptually intractable set of definitional issues to the important knowledges and understandings of twentieth-century Western culture as a whole”(2). Assuming that “the most potent effects of modern homo/heterosexual definition tend to spring precisely from the inexplicitness or denial of the gaps between minoritizing and universalizing, or gender-transitive and gender-intransitive, understandings of same-sex relations” (47), Sedgwick's attention to the irresolvable inconsistencies of the available models for thinking about homosexuality enables her to denaturalize current complacencies about what it is “to render less destructively presumable 'homo/heterosexuality as we know it today’” (48).
*Epistemology of the Closet* proves that sexual contradictions lead to misunderstandings, that language is a deeply relevant force behind sexuality, and that labeled speech acts are ultimately the proof of the nature of one’s sexuality. Sedgwick’s argument is important in seeking the roots of the modern homo/heterosexual dichotomy.

*Tendencies* (1993), written concurrently with *Epistemology*, is a book of essays—including several of Sedgwick’s most famous ones. In *Tendencies*, Sedgwick “attempts to find new ways to think about lesbian, gay, and other sexually dissident loves and identities in a complex social ecology where the presence of different genders, different identities and identifications, will be taken as a given” (xiii). Queer is a key term Sedgwick uses in *Tendencies* to refer to “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality aren't made (or *can't be* made) to signify monolithically” (8). She also points out that

A lot of the most exciting recent work around ‘queer’ spins the term outward along dimensions that can't be subsumed under gender and sexuality at all: the ways that race, ethnicity, postcolonial nationality criss-cross with these *and other* identity-constituting, identity-fracturing discourses. (9)

*Tendencies* is an exotic collection of essays, with topics ranging from Henry James and lesbianism to John Waters and Divine, from opiate dens and contemporary arguments around addiction to sexualities and nationalism, from
the war on effeminate boys to the activism around AIDS and breast cancer. Throughout, Sedgwick experiments with and transforms many different received forms of writing—the autobiographical narrative, the performance piece, the atrocity story, the polemic, the prose essay that quotes poetry and the obituary. She states, “These essays are about passionate queer things that happen across the lines that divide genders, discourses, ‘perversions’” (*Tendencies* xiii).

Her latest book, *A Dialogue on Love*, is marked by an emphatic turn to the autobiographical but continues her long-standing interrogation of twentieth-century sexual knowledges, the galvanizing fit or misfit between sexual identities and sexual identifications.

**Judith Halberstam**

Judith Halberstam is Professor of English and Director of The Center for Feminist Research at University of Southern California. She is a well-known gender theorist, specializing in cultural studies, queer theory and visual culture. Before joining USC, Halberstam was an Associate Professor in the Department of Literature at the University of California at San Diego (UCSD).

Halberstam focuses on female masculinity. Her book *Female Masculinity* (1998) refutes the notion that butch lesbians are just imitations of “real men” and instead locates gender variance within a lively and dramatic staging of hybrid and minority genders. In this book she observes that “some transsexual folk . . . experience the desire to be trans or queer more strongly than the desire to be male or female” (164). Some queer scholars have taken
her work to be reinforcing heterosexuality and traditional gender roles as well as trying to define the concept of "femaleness". Others have defended her work as groundbreaking in queer theory as it focuses on whether masculinity should be exclusivist.

Her *The Drag King Book* was published in 1999. She is also a participant in the drag king community under the name "Jack" Halberstam. Her most recent publication, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005), looks at queer subculture and proposes a conception of time and space independent of the influence of normative heterosexual/familial lifestyle. This is in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality and reproduction. This book devotes several chapters to the visual representation of gender ambiguity and the emergence of transgender visibility.

This chapter presented an in-depth study of queer theory highlighting the origin and development of the theory. This chapter also traced the contribution of major queer theorists and briefly discussed their notable works for a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical framework used in the present study. The following chapter presents a detailed interpretation of Dattani’s *Night Queen* and *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* which openly present homosexuality.