T.C.

İSTANBUL YENİ YÜZYIL UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE PROGRAMME

EPIPHANIES OF QUEER MELANCHOLIA IN MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM'S *A HOME AT THE END OF THE WORLD*

M.A. THESIS

İLAYDA ŞAHİN

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İSTANBUL, SEPTEMBER 2021

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Asst. Prof. Dr. Javid ALİYEV

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CONTENTS

Page number

TEZ ONAY BELGESİ i
ETHICAL STATEMENT ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii
CONTENTS iv
LIST OF TABLES vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS vii
ÖZET viii
ABSTRACT ix
INTRODUCTION 1

FIRST CHAPTER

1. QUEER MELANCHOLIA 8
1.1. Historical Framework of Melancholia 8
1.2. Theoretical Framework of Queer 14
1.3. Homosexual Freedom: Stonewall 19
1.4. Emotion in Queer Melancholia 21

SECOND CHAPTER

2. QUEER MELANCHOLIC CHARACTERS IN MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM'S *A HOME AT THE END OF THE WORLD* 27
2.1. Jonathan as A Queer Melancholic Character 27
2.2. Bobby as A Queer Melancholic Character: Gender Melancholia 41
2.3. Jonathan and Bobby's Melancholic Family Structure 47

2.4. AIDS Crisis 52
2.5. The Effects of Music on Melancholia 64
CONCLUSION 68
BIBLIOGRAPHY 74
CURRICULUM VITAE 80

LIST OF TABLES

Page Number

Table 1. Table I. 4
Table 2. Albrecht Dürer, *Melencolia I* (1514) 10
Table 3. Table III..... 18

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A Home : A Home at The End of the World

AIDS : Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

HIV : Human Immunodeficiency Virus

ÖZET

MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM'IN *A HOME AT THE END OF THE WORLD* ADLI ESERİNDE QUEER MELANKOLİNİN TEZAHÜRLERİ

Bu tez, Sigmund Freud (1917) ve Judith Butler (1990)'ın görüşlerine dayanarak, melankoli kavramını ve duygulanım sürecini "Queer" melankoli çerçevesinde incelemektedir. "Sevilen bir nesnenin kaybı" queer bireylerin yaşamında melankoliye yol açabilecek etkilere sahip olduğundan, melankolinin queer karakterler üzerindeki davranışsal, duygusal ve sosyal etkilerinin queer bir roman kullanılarak incelenmesi amaçlanmaktadır: Michael Cunningham'ın *A Home at The End of the World* (1990) adlı eseri, 1960'lardan 1980'lere kadar uzanan dönemi kapsar. Romanın kahramanları incelenirken aile yapısından başlayarak üzüntü, hasret, keder ve cinsellik duygularından, hastalığa (AIDS) kadar uzanan bir süreç izlenir.

İLAYDA ŞAHİN, 2021

Anahtar Kelimeler: Melankoli, Kayıp, Queer, Michael Cunningham, A Home at The End of the World.

ABSTRACT

EPIPHANIES OF QUEER MELANCHOLIA IN MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM'S *A HOME AT THE END OF THE WORLD*

This thesis examines the concept and affective process of melancholia in the framework of queer melancholia, based on the views of Sigmund Freud (1917) and Judith Butler (1990). As the "loss of a loved object" has effects that can lead to melancholy in the lives of queer individuals, it is aimed to examine the behavioural, emotional and social effects of melancholy on queer characters by using a queer novel: *A Home at The End of the World* (1990) by Michael Cunningham, spans the period from the 1960s to the 1980s. In analysing the protagonists of the novel, a process, starting from family structure, the feelings of sadness, longing, sorrow, and sexuality, and finally to the illness (AIDS), is traced.

İLAYDA ŞAHİN, 2021

Key Words: Melancholia, Loss, Queer, Michael Cunningham, A Home at The End of the World.

INTRODUCTION

> That is perhaps what we seek throughout life, that and nothing more, the greatest possible sorrow so as to become fully ourselves before dying.
>
> -Louis-Ferdinand Céline

The significance of events in our lives can cause a meaningful change in our behavioural patterns. In the event of the demise of a loved one, an individual takes full responsibility for the cause of the death by believing he/she has done little or nothing to save the deceased. Then follows the dark period of mourning, blaming, and self-pity. Freud insists that understanding how people react to losses is closely connected to the concepts of mourning and melancholia (Freud, 1917, p. 153). He argues that depression is a concept that expresses a very different situation and should not be confused with melancholia. Huge losses in our lives tend to last long in our memory, and painfully too. Freud argues that his article, "Mourning and Melancholia" is a useful guide on how people deal with inevitable losses in their lives, or otherwise, and without proper management, could lead to personal blame, self-pity, withdrawal, pain, and grief (1917, p. 153). However, when managed properly, it can generate a powerful positive energy that leads to creativity as exemplified in the novel by Cunningham, *A Home at The End of the World* (in short *A Home*).

Human beings are emotional, and their emotions can be affected by events that happen in their life in a positive or negative way. The loss that a person experiences in his/her inner world would most likely lead to melancholia. These emotions are generally in the forms of grief, longing for something or someone, sorrow, sadness, and love, which can affect the mental state of mind. These symptoms are also seen in the lives of queer individuals. Nowadays, the concepts of male homosexuality and female homosexuality are more receptive now than in the medieval ages. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, "by the early 21st century, several jurisdictions, both at national and subnational levels, had legalized same-sex marriage…" (Britannica, 2020). Before now, homosexuality in a normative society can cause deep wounds, losses, and melancholia. This emotional disorder affects people negatively, causing

them to withdraw from society as well as condemn secrecy. Freud insists that melancholia leads to a decrease in self-esteem. A reduction in self-esteem makes one feel like a corpse in a grave (Freud, 1917, p. 159).

Another prominent feature of melancholia is eminent in gender identity. Here the freight of homosexual feeling and desire in a person leads to a critical threat to his personality and ego, haunted eternally by the possible interpretation of his situation. The same situation applies to women with strong homosexual desire who are apprehensive of being detested by society for losing their femininity (Butler, 1990, p. 4). Melancholic individuals believe that their passion is unliveable, and therefore is a significant factor that enforces homosexuality and heterosexuality. Butler argues that implementing the prohibition of incest, and enforcing this prohibition, is most likely to force a 'masculine' or 'feminine' gender on a person. Thus, having a homosexual desire that panics the gender. Butler points out in her work *Gender Trouble* (1990) that melancholy stems from the obligatory heterosexuality created by normative society. This thesis examines how the characters in Cunningham's novel were exposed to this obligatory heterosexualism created by normative society and how they reacted to it. The first chapter of this thesis closely analyses the genesis and evolution of melancholia to date. The development of the concept of melancholia, how it affects people, and the relationship between mourning and melancholia. The first known traces of melancholia stars in the Homeric epics which manifests more as a mental disorder than any other thing, until the 18th century when melancholia assumes distinctive perspectives.

Since the 18th century, melancholy has existed in many fields of life, such as modern medicine, psychoanalysis theory, psychology. Depression, mania, manic, mourning, neurosis, lost objects are psychological and medical terms, all of which ascribe to melancholia. Sigmund Freud highlights how 'loss' is one of the main themes of melancholia, that a person in "Mourning and Melancholia" (Freud, 1917). Therefore, a queer melancholic lives life under immense pressure. The norms of a society that originates from cultural practices, religious beliefs, and political institutions outline the things that are acceptable behaviour for its people. Homosexual desire is queer, unliveable, and unacceptable. For the same-sex affair, it leaves the indelible marks of melancholia in them. The Stonewall revolt in New York in 1969

sees a vehement challenge to gender identity and demand for the right of gender expression. This revolt became the turning point in the fight for free gender expression in history.

In the first chapter of the thesis, melancholia refers to the queer theory by Annamarie Jagose (1996). 'Queer' is an umbrella term that gathers all sex under a roof (Jagose, 1996, p. 1). Although the dictionary meaning says strange, weird, eccentric, unstable, worthless, at its inception, the word queer refers to people whose characters and behaviours are against the norms of society to humiliate homosexuals. These rules form the basis for their melancholia which pushes them to pessimism, sadness, and pain. With the loss of a loved object or emotion, self-accusation sets in that manifest in sorrow, grief, and sadness. The results of the research below show the extent to which homosexuality is accepted in different countries of the world, carried out by Pew Research Center in 2020 (see table I) (Center, 2020), the above data also shows that today's society is more tolerant towards sex homosexuals than as previously established. It implies that not all countries welcome change in the acceptability of the group in their society. On closer examination, countries such as Bulgaria, Lithuania, Ukraine, Russia, India, Indonesia, South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria are still clinging to their old practice of alienating them.

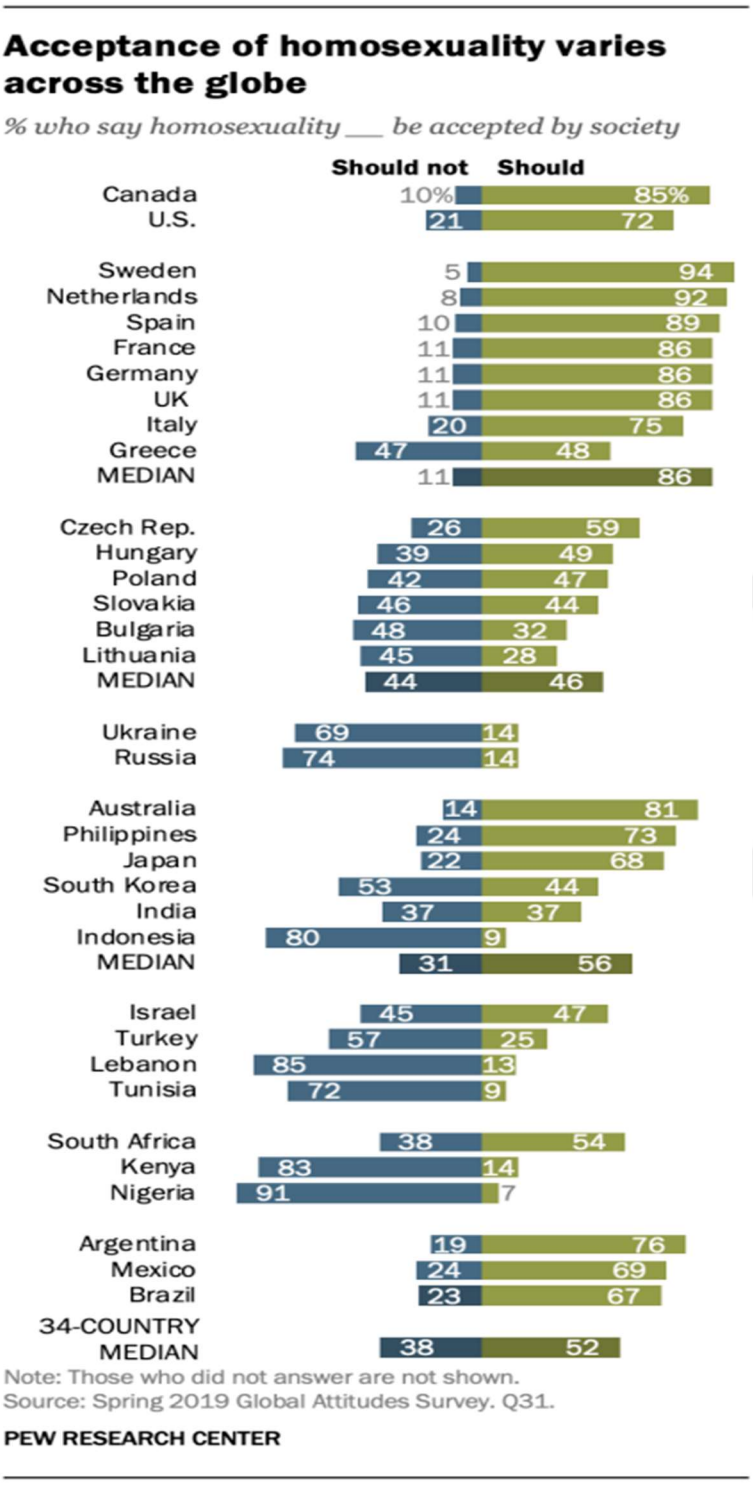


Table I (Center, 2020)

Subsequently, in the second chapter of this thesis, the various topics of interest examined in the 1st chapter, how they affect human behaviour and relationship, and the causes of melancholia, are expressed in the book of this case study, *A Home at The*

End of the World. Here, Cunningham craftily weaves through the principal issue of 'loss'. Freud bases his discussion on how losses suffered by melancholic are products of society and societal norms. The loss could be of a thing or an ego. Either way, melancholia sets in leaving, individuals saddened and devastated. The book portrays Jonathan and Bobby as queer melancholic from how they react to significant events in their lives from their country of origin, Cleveland and New York in the USA.

The characters suffer from psychological depressions, pains, and sorrows from their sexual activities. These penalties were a result of expressing innate sex desire in normative society. The norms of society stipulate how people should behave through rules that emanate from beliefs, culture, and religion. Thus, homosexuality is not encouraged, expected, or acceptable. In other words, the world becomes so complicated for queer individuals who ultimately condemn themselves to live under these pressures. To them, happiness is only a word in the dictionary that bears no relevance to their pathetic situation, like Bobby, Jonathan, and their families.

The family is the smallest unit of society. Society expects people to have a heterosexual orientation they believe in, which is a marriage between two opposite sex. Same-sex marriage is therefore not negotiable earlier than the 20th century in many countries of the world. "In 2001, The Netherlands became the first country in the world to legally recognize same-sex marriage" (Editors O. , 2013, p. 1). Until this time, same-sex marriage is a near impossibility which explains why Jonathan and Bobby could not get married in the late 1900s. As people who suffer from community pressure, they had no alternative but to seek a better life in a foreign land.

The queer melancholic characters, Bobby and Jonathan manifest in different ways in the main events reflected in the novel. Their relationships spark off as they meet accidentally in the queue of the school canteen, and their emotional desire for each other lasts through the story. During this illicit affair, both experience a sense of loss, a beloved object. Bobby has to conform to the norms of society, a compulsory heterosexualism that sees him marry the opposite sex. His melancholia is similar to the theory of gender identity that Butler posits. He remains predominantly through the book as a passive queer character. He tries to manage his loss by opening up a business to take his mind off his loss. The secret is buried deep down in his heart.

Michael Cunningham is a prolific American writer born in Ohio, in 1952. He graduated from Stanford University and the University of Iowa, M.F.A. He had a successful career with Carnegie corporation in New York. His work includes *Golden States* (1984), *A Home at the End of the World* (1990), New York, *Flesh and Blood* (1995), *Crowns: Portraits of Black Women in Church Hats* (2000), *Specimen Days* (2005), *By Nightfall* (2010), *The Snow Queen* (2015) and the Collection of *A Wild Swan: And Other Tales* (2015), and the notification book *Land's End: A Walk in Provincetown* (2002). He was a recipient of a Whiting Award and a Guggenheim Fellowship, with his work appearing in The New Yorker and The Best American Short Stories. *The Hours* (1998) was a New York Times bestseller and the winner of both the PEN/Faulkner Award and the Pulitzer prize in 1999. He lives in New York and works as a senior lecturer at Yale University. His first novel is *A Home at The End of the World* (1990), which he wrote under very difficult conditions (Steven Barclay Agency, 2021).

Again, it is at this time that the deadly virus known as HIV, begins to rear its ugly head, and the seemingly ignorant society of the time assumes it is a direct punishment for incest. Unfortunately for Jonathan and Erich, they were exposed to this deadly disease which adds to their woes and stigmatises them. The loss of ego which these two experiences attest to the theme of loss in the novel. With time, however, this sexually transmitted disease turns out to affect both homosexuals and heterosexuals. In Sontag's *AIDS and Its Metaphors*, she posits that while in the past illness was thought to be a gay illness, today, it is also seen in heterosexual relationships (Sontag, 1989, p. 17). This assumption goes a long way in ameliorating the stigma on same-sex relationships yet continues to cause unrest and psychological problems to all and sundry.

In addition, music which is an integral part of life affects and appeals to people in different ways. According to William W. Austin "To find a true word in music is as lucky as to find true music in words" (Scher, 1967, p. 174). In the book, *A Home*, Cunningham shows how music affects the queer characters positively, hence, the epiphany. This song "Tore down La Rimbaud" by Van Morrison provides succour to melancholia as they listen to lift their spirits to a new level.

This thesis will also highlight the various psychological problems queer melancholic experience in society. I hope that it leads to a comprehensive study on the topic to provide solutions that will help reduce melancholia in our society. The progress made so far in this respect is encouraging but not enough. About twenty-eight countries have recognized ‘same-sex marriage’ around the world as a step in the right direction (Staff C. , 2021, p. 1), I sincerely hope that other countries will follow suit soon enough to achieve total freedom of emotion and gender identity.

1. FIRST CHAPTER

> In mourning, it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia, it is the ego itself.
>
> - Sigmund Freud

1. QUEER MELANCHOLIA

1.1. Historical Framework of Melancholia

Melancholia is a concept of how people deal with or fail to deal with inevitable losses in their lives. This concept has a history, and many of its fundamental features are interpreted differently in different periods of history. Today, melancholia is referred to as a lifestyle, a mental state, and a personality trait that individuals experience in unsafe environments when social unrest increases.

Melancholic individuals cannot always discern things in the sense that their real 'selves' are political products which leads them to live a false life. The usual human ordinarily craves for and desires to determine his/her destiny. Failure to achieve the desire for self-determination leads to melancholia, making them give up on everything and withdraw themselves to doubt and sorrow. The study of this concept started from ancient times through to the present and has also been the subject of medicine, psychology, literature, arts, music, to mention but a few.

In literature, the first example of melancholic characters is in the Homeric epics. Although Homer did not directly mention 'melancholia' in his work, his mythological characters reflect the characteristics of melancholia. For example, Sisyphus's grandchild, Bellerophontes, the famous commander of Trojan wars, Aias, and Agamemnon are the first examples of Melancholy in Iliad, especially, Bellerophontes's sufferings and painful life, a life pattern similar to his grandfather Sisyphus is a narrative of his tragic life (Tait, 1943, pp. 49-59).

The concept of Melancholia reflects a mental disorder as well as body-soul unity as Homer stipulates. This body-soul unity insists that a spiritual change can cause the deterioration of bodily activities and that melancholy results from a change in the middle part of the body. Teber, in his work, thinks that melancholy is the source of the seventh emotion and breath, which has properties that can establish a relationship between the cosmic world and the human body, which surfaces with the darkening of the middle region that involves organs such as the lungs, stomach, and heart. This blackening depends on several factors such as fears, excitement, sadness, anxiety, anger, and boredom. Described as an 'anatomical, physiological, and psychic event', it usually occurs as a result of a reaction to the events rather than organ disorders. The melancholy in the Homeric epics manifest in the loss of the heroes' temper, and the punishment by Gods which lead to loneliness, boredom, meaninglessness, and in some event suicide (Teber, 2001, pp. 89-90).

Once again, after some time, melancholia starts to refer to some diseases. The first medical research on melancholia as a state of mind is by Hippocrates, who sees it as a medicals issue. Melancholia is now a specifier for a subtype of major depressive disorder and is a significant mental health condition with persistent and intense feelings of sadness, hopelessness. The confusion can affect many areas of life. Hippocrates most probably gets his inspiration from the works of Aristophanes and Sophocles, 'The four essence teachings' shows how the four fundamental fluids affect human essence, character, and behaviour. They also affect human existence through the interplay of the elements (Bourin, 2020, pp. 1-2).

However, the interpretation of melancholia gained a radical meaning in the era of Theophrastus and Aristotle, sees it as a superior talent found in humans. These are against the previous negative attributes, like loss, madness, and disease. The probing question of Aristotle, "Why is that all men who are outstanding in philosophy, poetry, or the arts are melancholic?" (Radden, 2000, p. 174), became a turning point in history of melancholia. This new wave of the idea made notable people of the time, including philosophers and artists, appear melancholic in their behaviours.

In addition, another radical change occurred in medieval times from the perspective of melancholy. When Christian theology took the stage is forming societal

norms, they insist that Aristotle's frame of mind to melancholy contradicts with religious understanding and point of view. This religious viewpoint sees melancholia as social hostility, abandoning religion, and a rebel against God. They went a step further to declare it a sin, which makes it more abominable. Also at this time, melancholia began to be ascribed as 'acedia' as an ancient Greek word that means dismissiveness, insensitivity, and grief (Zecher, 2020, pp. 1-2).

Be that as it may, the concept of melancholia as a loss, disease, or mental disorder, was not lost in this process. During the Renaissance period, melancholic people were beginning to find a new arrangement for themselves. Apart from retaining its pre-defined meaning of loss, disease, and psychological disorder, an aesthetic aspect is added, where carvings and paintings are mostly used to portray melancholia. The work of Albert Durer, in the engraving 'Melencolia I' is one of the most leading factors in the prevalent changes of the time. The following picture attests to this.

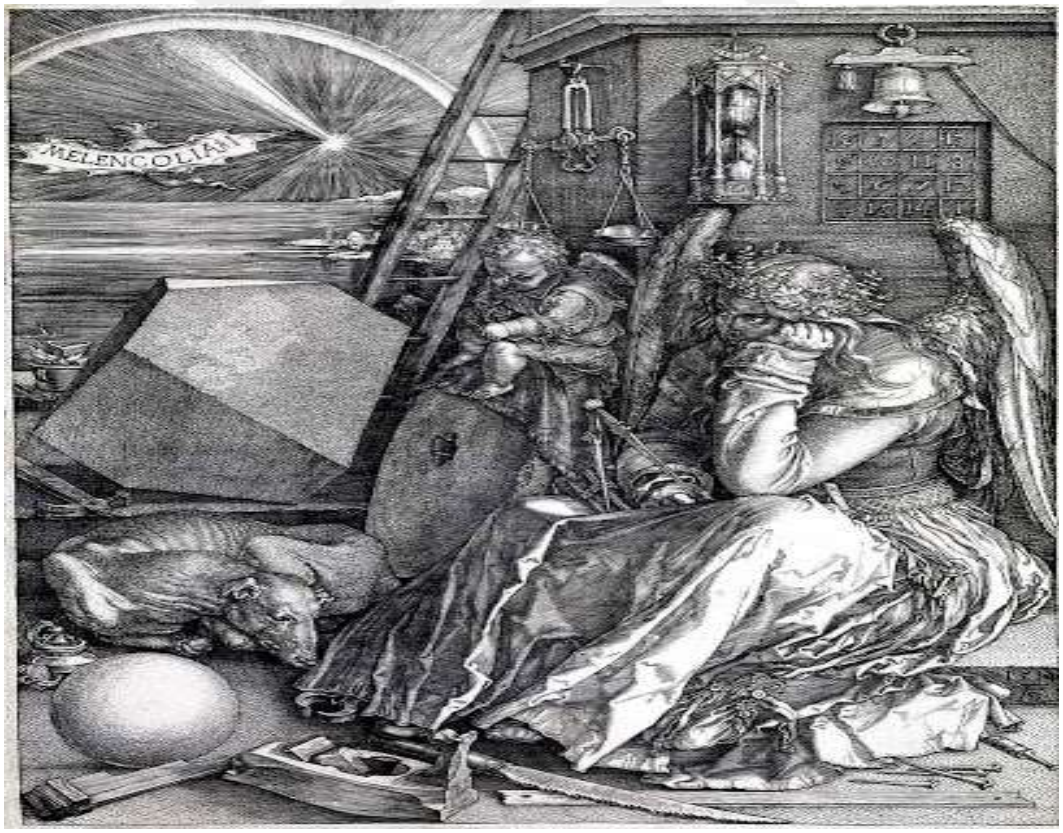


Table 2. Albrecht Dürer, *Melencolia I* (1514) (National Gallery of Art, n.d.)

At this point, Dürer expresses melancholia in images of people and a powerful visual representation of things. A closer look at the painting shows melancholy in a concrete narrative. The stance of a thoughtful woman is indifferent to worldly materials, Money, power, and sovereignty. This master craftsman portrays the theme of melancholia distinctively in both his personality and arts. In this period, the 'acedia' approach continues to show its effect (Zecher, 2020, pp. 1-2). This portrait by Dürer in the 1500s represents most settlements in religious science, philosophy, art, geometry-mathematics, God-virtue-sin. It also contains pinned code-designated signs with the symbols and meanings compiled. This picture goes further than representing the melancholy of that age. The images of technological appliances push if into the future of today's world (National Gallery of Art, n.d.).

The age of reason interprets melancholia as total madness as different from other ages. People with traces of melancholia are confined to clinics and hospitals for medical attention. In later years, melancholia became a medical case with a new naming – depression, mental and neurological disorders. The hand of the law now rests with the doctors and statesmen to decide for the destiny of melancholic, unlike in the medieval times when clergymen were their judges.

After the age of reason, melancholia takes a different status that is associated with 'Utopia'. It stems from the belief that escape from melancholia by being free and happy is possible and achievable. This humanist theory, revolves around a melancholia dream project that protests against the corrupt social order. By this time, strong governments have started taking hold of societies and countries wielding ultimate powers. It is worthy of mention here that the person who initiated this protest of the Utopia was executed by government authorities.

The key features of melancholia in "Mourning and Melancholia" written by Sigmund Freud, suggests that in an event where the loss occurs in a person's life, it leads to melancholia. This loss could be a loved thing or a loved person. The reaction of the individual to this loss is melancholia which expresses itself in various forms. In his article, Freud (1917) makes a distinction between mourning and melancholia and indicates that melancholia arises from the lost object which is loved (Freud, 1917). In the former, he describes mourning as the loss of an object, while the latter manifests

in decreased self-interest, the outside world, capacity to love, self-humiliation, self-blame, and a spiritual collapse with deep emotional wounds. For Freud, the main feature of melancholia is decreasing self-respect. Melancholic sees himself/herself as inferior, worthless, miserable, and blames himself continuously. Freud argues that in mourning, the lost object is known for what it is, however, in melancholia, it is unknown (1917, pp. 153-155). Reflecting on his opinions, Darian Leader who is a psychoanalyst and author states, "We have to distinguish whom we have lost from what we have lost in them" (Leader, 2008, p. 34). He further writes that melancholic who lose the loved object completely identify himself/herself with a lost and directs his/her anger and hatred at himself/herself. Freud states that "when it happens that a person has to give up a sexual object, there quite often ensures an alteration of his ego which can only be described as a setting up of the object inside the ego, as it occurs in melancholia" (1917, p. 29). This new formulation reverses his position on what it means to resolve grief in! "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917). In this essay, Freud assumes that grief could be solved by breaking attachment, as well as the making of new attachments. In "The Ego and the Id" (1921), however, he speculates that there is no breaking of attachment, but, the assimilation of attachment as identification to preserve the object (Freud, 1921, pp. 29-30). Indeed, Butler uses her deliberations to "…explore how this analysis of the melancholic formation of gender sheds light on the cultural impasse of living within a culture that can mourn the loss of homosexual attachment only with great difficulty" (Butler, 1995, p. 166).

The work of Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (1990) is considered as one of the pioneering works of queer theory. According to Butler, gender is performative, can be seen as a kind of identity, and also argues that gender discussion cannot be separated from identity discussion. The way society constructs structures and institutions to impose a particular personality or identity on people, especially gender impositions in the form of 'male' or 'female' identity in a culturally compulsory way, leads to melancholia in individuals' lives. Butler draws attention that a melancholic person identifies himself/herself with the gender, the internalization of the prohibited object as a prohibition causes gender melancholia.

It may at first seem strange to think that melancholia is limited in reach and scope, but let us remember that everybody can experience negative moments in life.

There is enough evidence to show that melancholia exists in psychology and other fields of living over time. Unfavourable events can arise from the 'loss' of loved things or people which happens every day in our lives. Melancholy describes sadness, sorrow, missing, despair, and pessimism. It is the emotional state that arises from the negative situations in people's life (Burton, 1651, p. 370). A melancholic demonstrates the tendency to oppose authority in the quest to live a free life. The painful process of melancholy greatly upsets the ego of the object whose loss is internalized. Melancholic refers to individuals who cannot adapt freely to the norms of society.

Since ancient times music and literature have played significant roles in the social and cultural life of man. Music functions as a tool for motivation, entertainment, mourning, worship, education, spiritual upliftment, and enchantment. Culture and cultural practices are also associated with songs. Throughout history, people have been captivated and inspired by melodies of their time. The interpretation of how music affects melancholia is a relevant angle to the concept. The first known philosophers to examine the place of music in education and life are Plato and Socrates. Since then, music has featured prominently in literary works and the entertainment industry. The power of music to impact mood and spur action is visible in society. Students or military singing their national anthem, or the audience's reaction at a live music performance, are attestations to this. Music is also used in the therapeutic approach "to help people improve their mental health and overall well-being" (Wong, 2021, p. 1).

> Research shows the benefits of music therapy for various mental health conditions, including depression, trauma, and schizophrenia (to name a few). Music acts as a medium for processing emotions, trauma, and grief—but music can also be utilized as a regulating or calming agent for anxiety or for dysregulation (Warren, 2016, p. 1).

As the above research shows, music can serve to process the psychological state of queer characters. The concept of melancholia means different things in different times of history. Scholars have attempted to define melancholic in the light of their period in history to explain how people react in times of loss. It is also worthy of mention that melancholia reflects in all aspects of life. Today, melancholia has lost its attachment to unusual beliefs and is used most commonly as a synonym for depression. This transition in meaning places the concept more as medical terminology

to “be characterized by depressed mood, abnormal motor functions, and abnormal vegetative signs” (Taylor & Fink, 2002, p. 42).

1.2. Theoretical Framework of Queer

The word ‘Queer’ has an interesting history, and many of the commentaries ascribed to it could be traced back to periods in history. The ability of queer to change the meaning and reflect ideological principles and practices makes it one of the most contradictory and contested words in language study. At one time, “the term ‘queer’ was, at best, slang for homosexual, at worst, a term of homophobic abuse. In recent years ‘queer’ has come to be used differently, sometimes… lesbian and gay studies” (Jagose, 1996, p. 1).

Even the dictionary meaning agrees that the word ‘queer’ could be used to represent different things in different situations. In the following sentence, ‘I have a queer feeling that my house is haunted’ to mean strange, or odd. It could also mean to be offensive, and informally, to mean spoil, or ruin, an agreement, event, or situation (Dictionaries, n.d.). Cambridge dictionary acknowledges that the word queer could refer to people not fitting traditional ideas about gender or sexuality, or to identify people, and or in referencing oneself (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). It also conforms to the meaning of the word as strange or odd.

Jagose, in her work *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (1996), states that it is not possible to say exactly what queer is and what it contains. The fact that the word ‘queer’ cannot be confined to a specific idea, culture, group, and feeling, has become its most distinctive feature and perhaps the most attractive aspect. She asserts that ‘queer’ is anti-homosexual and that the queer community does not exist. It was also referred to as the ‘enemy’ and considered to challenge the dominant ideology. This ideology de-neutralizes heterosexuality and emphasizes the construction of all sexual categories (Jagose, 1996, pp. 114-115).

Some writers like Halperin express doubt on the credibility of 'queer theory' as a normative academic discipline to ascribe an appropriate meaning to queer. (Halperin, 1989, p. 41). In support of this notion, Butler also "cautions that normalising the queer would be, after all it's sad finish" (Butler, 1994, p. 21).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the term 'queer' which was previously used as deformation is now being used by lesbians and gays to describe themselves. The queer activism of the period, shaped as a philosophical/theoretical opposition to heteronormativity and normative patterns of sexuality was born. This movement appeared shortly after Butler's critique of essentialist feminism and its foundations, based on *The History of Sexuality* (1976) by Michael Foucault. The theory makes a strong critique of heteronormativity that deals with sexual norms, as well as normativity itself, and deconstructs it.

The deconstruction of heteronormativity distorts the very foundations of queer theory and changes the way people see sexuality and identity. The more people contemplate on the critique to produce a credible answer, the more they see the folly in the meaning of queer theory as propounded. At this time, the term 'queer' began to assume a positive meaning and encouraged different groups to come together to fight a common cause.

The 'Queer Nation' is an organization which was founded by AIDS activists in New York. The four founders of this organization are Tom Blewitt, Alan Klein, Michelangelo Signorile, and Karl Soehnlein. The organization was founded to eradicate homophobia in the face of increasing violence and discrimination against gay and lesbians in the streets of New York (NY, 2016). The birth of queer activism could be traced back to the early 1990s, when the 'Queer Nation' group surfaced for the first time in New York City, in the United States of America. These marked the beginning of queer activism in history. This group was very aggressive and vocal in their quest to make their voice heard. With daring slogan and their much-celebrated chant, "We are here, we are queer, get used to it," they tried to impose the multiplicity of sexualities instead of normative gender and sexuality stereotypes. They fought against assimilation and agitated for normal behaviour and appearance (Stevens, 2011, p. 87).

This new meaning of queer that emanated in the 1990s has rapidly grown to an all-time popularity today. It is used in the USA as a slang that refers to gays, on the part of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender groups, who were directly affected by Butler's discussion of the term 'queer'. Drawing their strength from the above development, they began to practice their sex inclinations freely and to make their sex habits acceptable in society.

A study of this transformation is pertinent in understanding the political potentials of live debates that revolve around queer today. This era probably puts to an end the meaning of queer to refer to same-sex relationships. The terminology of homosexuality which emerged at the end of the 19th century, was closely followed by lesbian and gay in the 1970s. Today, it assumes a different meaning that resonates with the communities of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and trans-genders.

As established above, the change in the use of 'homosexuality', to mean gay and lesbian, which started in the 19th century, was first proposed by a Swedish doctor in 1869. This proposal which was eventually adopted by the famous sexologist, Havelock Ellis, became popular and represented in medical discourse. Since the early 20th century, the classification has been adopted as a positive terminology. It was instrumental in finding a new meaning to homosexual identity in the United States of America. In place of this, the terms lesbian and gay have replaced the queer meaning of homosexual with the positive identification of groups with a same-sex relationship (Zambon, 2020, pp. 1-2).

The work of Butler *Gender Trouble* (1990) is considered as one of the pioneering works of queer theory. According to her, sex is biological and immutable. She states that sex is a social and culturally based construction. Butler's discourse is not just limited to homosexuals alone; it is also seen as an access to fundamental rights of their existence. She insists that sex is the most liberal and egalitarian stance of humanity. Queer people have been subjected to the trouble of significant violence, and Butler presents it as a symptom of the crisis inherent in heteronormative order and strives for hegemonic articulation. It is not a workable solution to queer people with hatred and violence on issues that focus only on them. She argues that this approach is the only way to overcome anger and violence, and describes anger and violence as

things that point to the inner contradictions, dark spots, and tensions of heteronormative society. The inherent crisis in heteronormative groups should be treated as a serious problem requiring urgent solutions so as not to affect everybody (Butler, 1990, pp. 115-119).

The meaning or meanings of a word, how it is effective in areas of application, and the various ways in which it is used or recycled within the matrix of content, could be a stepping stone in its creative-innovative balance. For example, Butler draws attention to the distinction between 'illocution', and 'per locution'. She explains that illocution is the word that performs an act at the moment of utterance, while per locution is the word that the expression shows, and that its effects are felt depending on several factors, and all other words gain meaning as performative (Butler, 1997, pp. 2-4). A typical example is the changing concept of the word 'queer' overtime. Used to describe a homophobic in the past, queer has gained a new meaning and adopted by homosexuals to reflect positivity. The insulting meaning of the word has disappeared. A hurtful statement has become a fertile and productive politics (Sbisà & Turner, 2014, p. 41).

The fact that the word refers to constructs such as anatomically constructed role, desire, and identity has raised the concern of triggering different sexual orientations. The Vatican believes that this new term will shake the foundations of motherhood by producing lesbians that subvert heterosexuality. This school of thought portrays homosexuality as giving up the act of being male or female to establish a new gender. To them, the word gender means giving up masculinity and or femininity (Garbagnoli, 2016, pp. 189-190).

It is believed that queer theory marked the beginning of a discourse on the natural reality of sex and sexuality by breaking the sex and gender binary. Gender is said to be a product of society and is like a cover for sex. People's beliefs, characters, and behaviours, are moulded by the norms of society. These affect the way they react to issues, like relationships, and sexuality. The high expectancy from the community to conform with heterosexuality is an attestation to the fact that gender is a social product. Sex is a natural reality that does not depend on normativity. However, queer theory questions the essence of the biological affair by developing a new gender in

people. In Foucault's historical analysis, he explains that the body has no pre-cultural nature of truth. He maintains that the only truth about sex and body is established historically (Foucault, 1976, pp. 125-127). According to Butler, gender ideology creates a pre-cultural natural gender through the duality of nature-culture. She argues that this naturalizes a non-natural concept. In a nuts shell, what allows gender to be seen as a pre-cultural natural reality is the concept of gender itself (Butler, 1990, pp. 13-15).

It is also believed that the umbrella term was attributed much meaning. Gayle Rubin, in her 1984 essay, identified what she calls 'hierarchies of sexual value – religious, psychiatric and popular', which separated 'good, normal, natural, blessed' sexuality from that which was perceived as 'bad, abnormal, unnatural, damned' (Stevens, 2011, p. 84). Rubin describes the relationships between the hierarchies, opposing behaviour, and sexuality that are sanctioned and prohibited according to a set of opposing binaries (see table III) (2011, p. 84).

Table III (Stevens, 2011, p. 84)

Heterosexual	Homosexual
Married	Unmarried
Monogamous	Promiscuous
Procreative	non-procreative
Non-commercial	Commercial
In pairs	Alone or in groups
In a relationship	Casual
Same-generation	Cross-generational
In private	In public
No pornography	Pornography
Bodies only	Manufactured objects

Vanilla	Sadomasochistic

From the table above, it is clear that the term queer has no specific definition, and those sexual identities are expressed in contrast to show that individuals are neither entirely queer nor perfectly normal. Steven argues that queer does not describe the identity which is accepted or mutual to all. This particular theory deconstructs the categories of sexuality, its contrasts, and equivalences that constitute sexual intercourse, which raised eyebrows to the issue of queer tradition or gender identity (Stevens, 2011, pp. 84-85).

This theory also strengthens the reasons behind the new meaning of queer. Queer does not describe the collective identity; it is used to describe a community that shares an out-of-norm state of being in sexuality. In other words, it covers everybody whose sexual identity is not seen as natural. As Jagose puts it, "Perhaps the most controversial deployment of Queer is as an umbrella term for dissimilar subjects, whose collectivity is underwritten by a mutual engagement in non-normative sexual practices or identities" (Jagose, 1996, p. 112).

Finally, the history of the term 'queer' has led us through the different meanings ascribed to it in different times in history. The study of this concept has helped to lighten up one of the most critical issues in the history of humanity. We now know that queer theory calls for cultural diversity that transcends the notion of identity. The adaptation of a pluralistic approach that goes beyond the reductionist and normative patterns of identity politics, questions their already accepted propositions and shakes the ground on which the hegemonic centrism of heterosexuality is based.

1.3. Homosexual Freedom: Stonewall

In the 1960s and 1970s in New York City, there were little or no bars and public places where homosexuals could socialize without attracting society's anger. Those, who are brave enough to socialize, are criticized and humiliated (Editors, 2017, p. 1).

Those who dared to venture out are raided and castigated by police. The frustrating situation in which they found themselves put them at the mercy of police and society under intense pressure. These marginalized sections of the populace would naturally seek freedom and emancipation from public repression.

In 1969, at the peak of police raids carried out against lesbians and gays in New York, Stonewall Inn was opened. On the 28th of June that same year, a police raid was targeted at homosexuals hanging out in the gay and drag bar called Stonewall Inn. This raid was met with stiff resistance that resulted in a whole weekend riot (Editors H. , 2021). The ensuing riot was remarkable and marked the first time gay people were bold enough to resist their freedom constrain and brutal oppression. Commentators at the time described the Stonewall riot dramatically as "the shot heard round the homosexual world" (Cruikshank, 1992, p. 69), or more importantly by the New York Mattachine news teller as "The Hairpin Drop Heard Round the World" (Jagose, 1996, p. 130).

All over the world, this symbolic day is remembered and celebrated as Stonewall Day, and the day of the formation of lesbian and gay identity. The widespread public attention got from the reporting of journalists, helped them gain support and sympathy among the public. After the incident, Stonewall Inn managed to stay open and gained a dual role as a place for homosexuals to gather, and socialize, and a place where they can freely express themselves and agitate for freedom and right of existence. Stonewall riot also marked the beginning of the revolutionary movement of homosexuals for self-emancipation.

Towards the end of 1960, another movement or organization known as Homophile was born that is not militant by nature but is a group of homosexuals determined to make their voices heard. They agitate for the equal right to dignity and status as heterosexuals. They were known as "gay liberationists and challenged conventional knowledge on matters as gendered behaviour, monogamy, and the sanctity of law" (Jagose, 1996, p. 31). Although the constant police raids and social oppression meted out on the lesbian and gay community did not stop with the protest of the Stonewall raid, they were met with resistance and verbal protests expressed in slogans from homosexuals, customers, and barmen. Homophiles seek acceptance in

society and displayed random homosexual images to the public. They hope that this will help society understand that gender and sex roles oppress everybody. The gay liberation movement "…sought not only the recognition of homosexuality as liberation for a minority population, but also to 'free the homosexual in everyone'" (1996, p. 40). Homosexual liberation does not imply that everybody will be a lesbian or gay in the future but they demand for freedom of all to express their sexuality freely and confidently. They argue that if society accepts homosexuality as a natural course of life, the gender problem for all would have been solved.

Some other ways of protest arose in the form of a march. On the 28th of June, 1970, the first Pride March was organized in New York and Los Angeles (Fitzsimons, 2018, p. 1) and turned into a date that is celebrated in many countries of the world as a Pride day.

1.4. Emotion in Queer Melancholia

Humans are associated with feelings deriving from circumstances, moods, or relationships with others. It is natural for a child reprimanded for wrong behaviour to fall into a sullen mood, or for a gay person constantly stigmatized or oppressed to be depressed. The inherent feelings that we express giving the circumstances, mood, or relationships with others, are described as emotion. Hence, its importance in human characterization is emphasized.

This study aims to analyse the concept of melancholy as it affects the emotion of queer individuals in society concerning their lost loved object. It also criticizes the oppression, constraints, and marginalization directed at lesbian and gay communities. Emotions that have crucial functions, just like the mind, are another building block that provides tools for reaction in prevalent situations. The mind performs multiple mental and spiritual functions such as love, falling in love, crying, sadness, compassion, and longing. Sadness, pain, longing, despair, pessimism can be closely identified with melancholy, as an emotional state which arises from people's reaction to negative situations.

As established above, the emotional feelings generated from the loss of a loved object can lead to sadness. Queer melancholia tries to get over this mood by invoking pleasant memories and experiences from their past to miss the present, thereby changing his/her present emotional status positively. Passionate attachment to the past can cause the melancholic to miss the present. Victor Hugo describes "melancholia is the happiness of being sad" (Hepburn, 2019, p. 1). This process is therefore considered as a permissible process of suffering.

Indeed, recalling beautiful experiences or memories from the past could actually lead to the loss of the present. The question remains how far this exchange can be attached and identified with an object. Kristeva, in her book, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (1987), analyses melancholy via the study of the human subconscious. Borrowing from Freud and other psychoanalysts, she states that "By knowingly disinheriting the thing, the depressed wander in pursuit of continuous disappointing adventures and loves; or else retreats, disconsolate and aphaise, alone with the unnamed thing" (Kristeva, 1987, p. 13). This attempt to displace the thing may not achieve the desired result. Kristeva insists that the 'thing' in Freud's melancholy is caused by the object (lost object) and is now lost in one's imagination. This is the expression of the determination that what the object is in the concrete world, cannot actually be known. As stated previously, a melancholic person does not know what he/she has lost. Freud suggests that this situation is considered to be the most distinctive feature of melancholia and mourning (Freud, 1917, p. 7). In the case of mourning, the object is dead, while it is not dead in melancholia.

Modern medicine has benefited from the studies of melancholia by classifying the main factors of melancholy under the following order; biochemical-genetic, spiritual, and environmental factors. Melancholic people are known to have been affected by biological, spiritual, and environmental structures. Any of these could take a melancholic into an emotional state. In the book, *A Home*, traces of spiritual melancholy could be found in the protagonists, mostly arising from the mentality of the people and the environmental realities. Melancholia has been a subject of interest by psychologists, pathologists, and sociologists. It has also been discussed politically in terms of its relationship with loss.

Moreover, the fact remains that melancholic still battle with various societal problems, which pitches them against social structures, political structures, family structures, and environmental structures. All things considered, it is their fundamental right to agitate for freedom and liberty as well as gain acceptability within society.

Today, homosexuals are not treated as badly as they used to be, however, they have not been fully accepted in society. Families who have children that are gay or lesbian find it difficult to deal with their situations. The idea of a heterosexual family consisting of father, mother, and children remains strongly rooted and promoted in society. Lesbians and gays will have to hide their identities when they apply for jobs. The number of places they could go to socialize is limited in number and size. Countries and Governments are not quick enough to respond to the changes in accommodating gays and lesbians in society, bypassing laws; such as same-sex marriage. The fact remains that melancholic individuals are still marginalized, oppressed, and stigmatized even in modern times.

The family structure is so crucial to the study of melancholia and in queer people's lives in particular and people's lives in general. From one generation to the other, the dogma of family structure is embraced, encouraged, and practiced religiously. Even children had outside wedlock are stigmatized and tagged to be queer. The members of a family as society promotes are; grandmother and grandfather, mother and father, brother and sister, uncle and aunt, niece and nephew, stressing the opposite genders inherent in the system. In my culture, marriages are celebrated and are sources of pride to families. All these and more are geared towards discouraging any idea that goes against this system. Homosexuals are then placed at the mercy of normative society, prone to melancholia, and are left to continuously hide their sexual personality.

Another angle of discourse on melancholia is gender roles essential for an individual's subjectivity and socialization. The social order which ascribes gender identity to people was meant to realize the expectation of dominant values. These pre-determined roles, tagged as 'masculinity' and 'femininity', have no room or tolerance for homosexuals, intersexuals, and transsexuals in society. They tend to draw a normative line on sexuality and sexual practices. These norms are not in line with the

fundamental principles of human rights manifested in freedom of expression. They only serve to promote heteronormativity in the most inexpressible emotional investments, melancholy, and relationships established with loss (Gedro & Mizz, 2014, pp. 449-450).

To understand sexuality as a way of life and as the establishment of ego, as it relates to melancholic, it is essential to examine the affective process that shows its effect as "loss" (Freud, 1917, p. 6). Relationship with the lost object can reveal the extent to which human soul is wounded and explanation of emotional state. To discuss the object of this loss, relationship with loss, and mourning process, make it possible to see the circle in which the individual has been imprisoned with all sides (1917, p. 3).

A close look at how queer individuals suffer in cases of lost love will probably tilt our sympathy towards them. Melancholia usually attains an emotional state inner wards that could lead to self-accusation. When this occurs, the melancholic feel responsible for the loss, and the cause of the negative situation by resorting to personal blame as he mourns his/her love. When a queer individual loses a same-sex loved object, he/she reveals in sorrow, despair, and longing. He/she thinks the loved object will come again, accuses himself/herself of the loss, and goes into great expectations that drag him/her to misery. As previously established, melancholy is inevitable in society. It is to be expected that with the Stonewall revolt, homosexuals started to agitate for their rights and New York became a more suitable place for that. Homosexuals who live outside New York have no other choice than to migrate to and settle there. For them, at least little awareness has been created where queer people could at least express their thoughts, and at least live their lives freely separate from their family members. Jonathan in *A Home at The End of the World* by Michael Cunningham is a typical example.

Heterosexual norms are geared to inhibit people from living their queer lives freely. The understanding that heterosexual relationships and sex have been fed to people and engraved in their minds, would explain why people are hostile to lesbians and gays. It is therefore a reality that society drags people to do unwanted things, does not consider the happiness of queer people, love, sorrow, and or their sadness. To be a

Queer person means to live life in secret, to be restricted, and to be denigrated by family and society. A queer person assumes a powerful stance, after experiencing and overcoming all negative emotional feelings emanating from his loss. However, not very many of them are capable of achieving this feat.

In addition, loneliness is one of the hallmarks of melancholia. This retreat may provide the solitude and time to develop spiritually with the intent of overcoming negative emotional feelings reclusive in them. In essence, though they live in a different world, they are prone to oppose authorities in protest of their denied freedom. The concentration of people in a particular area by migrants in search of a less oppressive society could stress the social structure of the place and may lead to the reduction of interpersonal relationships. This can ultimately lead to loneliness and resignation to fate. It makes sense to say that individuals seeking to move away from the societal norms, push their self-ego to loneliness, and these individuals resort to mourning for the lost objects. Unable to identify their loss with something concrete, they condemn themselves to abject misery and loneliness.

In early history, the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome was seen as an illness but more importantly, as a punishment from Gods for queer individuals. This is mainly born out of ignorance for when more information was released showing that people are exposed to this disease through sexual intercourse. This is possible for both homosexuals and heterosexuals (Sontag, 1989). For queer characters, however, HIV goes beyond illness and is also related to loss and ultimately to melancholia.

> The conflation of AIDS with gay identity serves to place AIDS in a metonymic relationship with queer. Having with AIDS may not make you gay, but it did make you queer; even an association with AIDS –participating in AIDS activism, for example –could make you queer. Further, in these representative texts, it is not just AIDS that makes one queer, but illness that is both associated with sexual identity and is considered, as AIDS is considered (or imagined) to be, both chronic and manageable (Pearl, 2013, p. 59).

As is previously established, the loss experienced by melancholic cannot be pinned down to a thing. Therefore, it is difficult for queer characters to identify loss in a thing or a person. HIV/AIDS activist Douglas Crimp, states that when queer people learn of their partners' illness, it becomes a great source of worry for them. The fear of being exposed to the disease or the partner not willing to continue the relationship,

and the reaction of society upon discovery, rank primary in the list. These fears push them to melancholia and complicate their lives (Crimp, 2002).

Finally, melancholia is a concept of interest that examines its effect on people and queer people and the various ways they are affected by it. It could affect them psychologically, spiritually, medically, and politically. The normativity of society triggers negative reactions by people towards lesbian and gay societies. The unacceptable behaviours affect their emotional feelings and relegate them to depression. In recent years, homosexual individuals have tried to make their voices heard through protests and marches, especially in New York City. As a result, more and more queer people have migrated to the city in search of freer lives away from their families. This in itself could pose the problem of isolation that nourishes melancholia. The traditional understanding of the family unit that further stresses the existence of the same sex-relationship is not helping matters for these minorities. They believe that sexually transmitted diseases as seen with HIV/AIDS, are limited to homosexuals, show the extent to which society exerts pressure on them. All these and more are enough to cause serious mental distress on queer characters whose sexual inclinations are neither accepted nor respected. The right kind of music could be one effective solution for melancholic in their frantic struggles, wish and hope that might help them gain the freedom of expression for the benefit of all.

2. SECOND CHAPTER

2. QUEER MELANCHOLIC CHARACTERS IN MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM'S *A HOME AT THE END OF THE WORLD*

2.1. Jonathan as A Queer Melancholic Character

This part of the thesis analyses Jonathan as a queer character, based on the views of Sigmund Freud (1917) and Judith Butler (1990), and the emotional, behavioural, and societal effects of melancholia, are discussed. In the formation of queer melancholia, discrimination, bad stigma, illness, and fears, which are considered the names of grief in society, play a significant role. Throughout the novel, Jonathan is reflected as a character who experienced several losses in his life –both emotional and societal. The social environment, which plays a significant role in human life and emotions, makes the melancholy process of homosexuals much more difficult. It is observed that this process causes different effects and different losses in each individual. In addition, the rate of tolerance towards homosexuality varies from year to year.

The differences in tolerance percent are shaped by the economic development of countries, the age, education level, gender, and religious views of individuals (Center, 2020). It is noticeable that more educated, younger, and less religious respondents as well as female participants showed greater tolerance of homosexuality than the others. Pew's study showed substantial changes in public opinion in the United States, for example, 72% today want homosexuality to be acceptable, a sharp increase from 46% in 1994 and 51% in 2002 (Center, 2020). Among other countries showing major increases in public acceptance of homosexuality since 2002 are as follows (Center, 2020):

- South Africa with an increase of 21%
- South Korea with a rising acceptance of 19%

- In both Japan and Mexico, nearly 7 in 10 respondents in today's study now approve.
- And India with an increase of 22%.

It is clear that these data give meaning and substance to migration which has featured prominently in human history. Over time, people have had to move from town to city, from city to city, from region to region, and from country to country for many reasons. Cunningham shows this natural human activity using the scene of Jonathan leaving Cleveland for New York City. Bobby, at one time, also had to join forces with Jonathan in a faraway land. One of the reasons queer characters migrate is to search for self-identity. They could also move from being oppressed and marginalized by society for their queerness.

Another relevant instant would be after the Stonewall protest in New York, where melancholic individuals started surging into the city. In the novel, the exodus of Jonathan and Bobby ensured the continued development of the plot. It was in the new city that Jonathan and Erich met and this meeting ensured Jonathan's continued queer melancholia, sexuality, and ultimately, his exposition to the deadly HIV/AIDS disease that threatened the unity of the family in which they found themselves.

Accordingly, it is to be expected that in this 21st century, people would at least be allowed to exercise their fundamental human rights in terms of self-expression and freedom. Unfortunately, this is far from being the case. The very fundamental ethics that drives people to melancholia still haunts us today. For many, the quest for self-identity persists with seemingly no light at the end of the tunnel.

The characters in Cunningham's novel tried profusely to discover their identity. At the inception of the novel, Jonathan lived in Cleveland with his family, Alice, Ned. Alice, Ned, and Jonathan exhibit all traces of a normal family that embraces traditional roles. Therefore, it could be seen that his parents, by constantly instructing him on how to behave in conformity with the existing system, thereby imposing heterosexuality on him. Jonathan, however, is not cut out for this. He feels different and acts differently. Just like Bobby, he could not entirely understand where he fits in "As he worried over that small imperfection, I saw that he inhabited his own flesh as fully and with the same mix of wonder and confusion that I brought to my own" (Cunningham, 1990, p.

47). The quotation could be interpreted to mean Jonathan's declaration of love for Bobby. It could also mean that both Jonathan and Bobby are constantly in search of their 'selves'.

The relationship between Jonathan and Bobby started at the school cafeteria. They made acquaintance while waiting in a queue and since then, have become close to each other. The friendship that started ordinarily later took a different dimension that saw them spending most of their time together and Bobby moving to Jonathan's family house. In their melancholia and seclusion, they resorted to bad habits and sexual relationships. Again, it appears that Jonathan was fully determined to live out his sexual inclination and in secret. Although he understood that his illicit relationship is not acceptable in his society, he was willing to live it out as long as it lasts.

This is a queer love story that can cause loss, sorrow, longing, and melancholia. Bobby and Jonathan started their relationship at the age of ten which could be described as the starting point of their melancholia. The relationship between them was so special. They were close friends, and that made Jonathan's mother, Alice, worried about their relationship because of her pre-knowledge of Jonathan's homosexual inclinations, which she refused to share with anybody. In her attempt to prevent the inevitable, she assumed that spending more time with them might distract them and keep them occupied. Jonathan, however, did not welcome this intimacy as it is both disturbing and discomforting to him. This unwelcomed behaviour prevents him from having affairs freely with Bobby and pushed him to melancholia.

Alice is another melancholic female character in the novel. She is still married to Jonathan's father, Ned but, she is not happy with him. Her melancholia is not directly related to the 'loss of a loved object' but could be described as a lost love. This is one of the aspects discussed in Sigmund Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia", and suggests that the loss of a loved object can be interpreted as an emotional intensity that is directed on the self and generates negative feelings. A melancholic individual does not know what he/she has lost in himself/herself. It can be considered as an emotional loss.

A certain feature of an exaggerated representation can be found in Jonathan. At the age of 15, Jonathan and Bobby were caught masturbating in a car by his mother

Alice, “In a tone of quivering control that cut through the music like a wire through a fog” (Cunningham, 1990, p. 89), he exclaimed ‘get out of here’, ‘How dare you...’ as if he was in control of the situation. The incident was a great source of worry and concern to him thereafter, and further complicated his anxieties. It turned out, however, that Alice has been suspicious of her son’s sexual inclinations for time and lamented that the incident did not come as a surprise and that she had never believed that her son would not get married to a girl and have a family like hers. Also, Jonathan hardly ever talked about girls but behaved as one himself. Jonathan had no other friends but Bobby and rejected suggestions by Alice to make more. He seemed secretly determined not to grow into conventional manhood with a heterosexual orientation. Alice’s reaction by smacking him resulted in Jonathan’s alienation from her, showing his determination to live out his sexual life at the expense of his family. His relationship with Bobby, however, continued secretly without further interruption from Alice. They resorted to hanging out away from the watchful eyes of family and society. At some point, Jonathan felt guilty and resorted to self-blame for the loss, he was experiencing by alienating his mother. His melancholia was a result of this sense of loss, and he constantly reproached himself. “For Freud, the melancholic’s self - reproach is, in fact a reproach to the lost loved –one” (Leader, 2008, p. 39).

Significantly, the exposure of his secret life, which further alienated him from his mother as well as his inability to fit into society, made Jonathan uncomfortable in Cleveland. He decided on several plans that will take him to another city. Jonathan applied for admission to many universities and was accepted to study at Oregon University in New York, as he continues in search of his identity.

When Alice, Ned, and Bobby’s father, Burt Morrow, attended Jonathan and Bobby’s high school graduation ceremony, no one in their class recognised them or associated them with Jonathan. The incident indicates that these queer characters were secluded from society and pushes them to melancholia. It is evident that the sense of void that exists between utter solitude and social existence as described in melancholic subjects can sometimes lead to a particular experience. The person generally elects to become invisible to others. This quest for what she called ‘banality’ would allow her to disappear, as if to embrace the world of simulacra (Leader, 2008, p. 179). Jonathan has chosen to disappear from his society that offered him no hope of existence and as

a result of the meaninglessness caused by his emotional loss. He found the solution is going to live in New York. There, he will be unknown and alone in his rather complex world. Also, there were gay bars in New York at the time where he could socialize and probably feed his sexual ego. It was not going to be easy since Jonathan still feels something special for Bobby and what they had together. Bobby in turn was unwilling to move with Jonathan to New York at first resulting in a loss for both of them. Jonathan played his last card when he came for the funeral of Bobby's father. At this time, Bobby was broken and devastated from his loss and is in great grief and so Jonathan had to console him throughout his stay.

Traditionally, music plays a significant role in people's lives and is sometimes known to be used for medical therapy. It represents different things to different people. In the novel, readers can find moments when the queer characters listened to and danced to lyric music. Researchers believe that listening to music and going to cinema also represents a form of cultural investment, innovation, and transformation. Music also freshens the human soul and leads to peace, even if momentarily. Even Alice began to change positively after listening to music in the company of Jonathan and Bobby by developing sympathy towards her husband, Ned. As cherry puts it, "music relaxes the mind, energizes the body, and even help better manage pain" (Cherry, 2019, p. 1).

Music can also serve as a means of enjoyment or entertainment. The novel presents queer melancholia in a lighter mood when listening and dancing to music. It was supposed to have affected the passion of Alice, who now looks softly on the way, Jonathan was taking her overbearing presence as shown from her comments, "I wasn't a fool –I knew no fifteen-year-old boy would welcome his own mother's participation in his social life" (Cunningham, 1990, p. 81). Alice recognizes that Jonathan was not pleased with her dancing with them. Perhaps the presence of Alice and her avowed closeness was responsible for his mental stress and melancholia. Jonathan started to imitate Bobby by growing his hair like him and wearing an eye embroidery jacket. Although his mother did not want to make her feelings obvious, she was seriously worried about Jonathan. As made clear in her above comments, Jonathan was able to find temporal peace and solace by listening to music to forget his loss. This momentary peace quickly changes after the music, leaving the melancholia to his grief.

On a symbolic level, the fact that Cunningham's novel employs the word 'home' could evoke this fluctuation between a queer and identity search. The title of Cunningham's novel reveals the importance of the search for a home. As is well known, the term 'home' is a noun that refers to a place where a person or animal lives and uses the same word to imply that a person is emotionally attached to the place he lives and feels a sense of comfort. What 'home' seems to suggest in Cunningham's novel is a place where homosexuals like Jonathan retreat, find peace, and live out their sexual inclinations in private. It could also suggest the search for the home as a place where a person is emotionally attached to, live, and feels a sense of comfort. Jonathan had to go in search of this home as he did not find it in his family home in Cleveland. The word 'home' in this fiction is also relevant to the development of the plot and the narrative that spans between different cities in the United States of America.

Another symbolic point worthy of mention is the frequency at which the word 'night' was employed in Cunningham's fiction. The word night is a noun that refers to the period of darkness between sunshine and sunset, it could also suggest the nocturnal activities of criminals. What 'night' seems to suggest in this novel is the effects of normative society on queer characters. In other words, since the people are not in approval of Jonathan's sexuality, he had to live it out outside the watchful eyes of the people, hence, at night. It is also true that it was at night that he had his first experience of homosexuality and spent much time with Bobby his love. In the novel, the 'night' might have been used to compare Jonathan and other normal people, as in the difference between Jonathan and other students is night and day, as seen during the graduation ceremony where Cunningham stresses that, unlike other students, little or nothing, is known of Jonathan.

It is important here to state the role of structures and institutions in this novel. In the novel, Cunningham makes a clear distinction between the family in a normative society, which would consist of a man, woman, and children against the family as desired by homosexuals that advocate for same-sex marriage. This will account for one of the main conflicts in the narrative that reflects in the relationship between Jonathan and his family on the one hand and on the other hand the composition of Jonathan's family structure in New York comprising of himself, Clare, Rebecca,

Bobby, and Erich. It is to these discrepancies in family structures that the tensions in this novel in part, owed their origin.

In addition, the use of institutions like home and school by Cunningham to show that Jonathan could not find a place suitable for him to socialise and express himself. The book does not refer to any positive contribution by the two schools attended by Jonathan to his life. The high school was however, relevant in providing him with partner Bobby for his sexual satisfaction and love. This is an evidence of how melancholic find it difficult to socialise in the existing institutions created by normative society, and also the extent of acceptability by society of queer people. All these possibly seem to suggest in Cunningham's novel that the pain and loss suffered by queer people in the forms of alienation and loneliness are caused by the various structures and institutions created by normative society.

Jonathan's adventure and quest for freedom and self-identity are full of intricacies and complications. Even in New York City which was attractive to gays and lesbians at the time, could not help Jonathan meet with his dream life. The social oppression, and constant raids by police, as evidenced in the famous Stonewall raid and consequent riot, did not help matters. Unable to find peace and freedom of sexual expression from his new home, Jonathan decided on some form of conformity to the social norms by moving in with Clare. There could not have been any other possible explanation for this move evident in the fact that Jonathan was not attracted to her sexually and did not have sexual intercourse throughout his stay with her. His new life seems to fit in with the expectations of society on the composition of a heterosexual family. Clare herself used to be a lesbian and ready to conform to heterosexual practices of society. Central to this point, it provided Jonathan with a home, privacy, and solitude to deal with his melancholia as opposed to his previous abode in the dormitory that he felt lost and alone in his world. From the sanctuary of this new home, he was able to carry out his nocturnal activities with Erich, his secret lover whom he met in a gay bar. What materializes is a process of melancholic incorporation that resists the idea of a clear-cut sense of identity (Cunningham, 1990, p. 114).

Therefore, Jonathan is shown as a queer person and sinister character in the novel. In the circumstances of melancholia, Judith Butler discusses the painful nature

of those who suffer from what she calls ‘refused identification’ (Butler, 1995). Throughout the novel, Jonathan constantly struggled with identifying himself as he could not fit into the structures of normative society or have a cordial relationship with the people around him as he is queer. His relationship with his family is nothing to write home about. At an early age, he was the opposite of what his family wanted and showed no conformity to normal family life. He saw his dad as a bully and representative of the society that holds no hope or future for him. He was repulsive of his mother Alice for trying to school him into a living system contrary to his and saw her as an obstacle to his homosexuality. Cunningham, in the novel, used the incident of Bobby’s father’s death to show that Jonathan only came to the funeral because of his love for Bobby, thereby stressing a strained relationship even with Bobby’s family.

Bobby is Jonathan’s first love and was instrumental in realizing his sexual disposition in the novel. This made their relationship cordial and intimate, which at some point Jonathan did not mind leaving behind. It will not be the last time Jonathan would leave Bobby behind for his selfish interest. He is presented to be selfish and inconsiderate and was partly responsible for making Bobby feel a deep loss. Jonathan was also jealous of Bobby’s relationship with Clare because of his deep-rooted love for him. Although he was having a relationship with Erich, he would insist that Bobby should be only for him. Jonathan's happiest moments were, however, spent with Bobby. In their second meeting, they were for some reason, or the other refusing to talk about their love and deep feelings. At the end of the narrative, his epiphany was achieved in the company of Bobby and Erich.

Another interesting relationship in the novel was that one between Jonathan and Clare. Ordinarily, one would think that Jonathan would not want anything to do with the opposite sex, especially from her mother’s complaints in the past. She often wondered if her son would ever meet a girl and subsequently get married. However, it was Jonathan that surprised all by moving in with Clare over and above the school dormitory provision for in-college students. It would be definitely strange to say that Jonathan is in love with her as the novel made mention of no sexual activity between them throughout the time they lived together. Again, when Bobby came to live with them in New York, a mutual sexual relationship was ensured between Bobby and Clare which made Jonathan jealous. When living with Clare, Jonathan was having a secret

affair with Erich too and refused to introduce his lover to Clare until he was learned the relationship between Bobby and Clare. Due to the developing tensions and the fear of the effect of the deadly sexually transmitted disease on Rebecca, especially from Jonathan, Clare decided to move house for the sake of her daughter. From all indications, it seems that Jonathan's relationship with Clare was not mutual. It may be for the reason of partial conformity to normative society expectation of a heterosexual family, and or using this as a cover for his secret gay sex which was just to satisfy his impulse and desire. It can also be argued that he was not fair to Clare.

Also, Jonathan had a weird relationship with Erich after moving to New York and while living with Clare. The fiction suggests that although Jonathan had series of sex with him, there was no real love attached but lust and sexual satisfaction. The meetings and affairs are carried out in secret away, from the watchful eyes of both Clare and society. They met at a gay bar and were attracted to each other as Jonathan himself confessed:

> My other half –lover's name was Erich. He and I had sex, though he did not inspire in me the urgency or the sorrowful, exhilarating edge that, combined with desire, must add up to love. I kept my loved man I'd slept with –I hadn't come close to the feeling, though I'd gotten to know dozens of bodies in their every mood and condition. My own capacity for devotion focused actually on of the city: strong –looking men who didn't aspire to conventional fame or happiness, who cleaved the air with definitive thoughtlessness. I looked as unobtrusively as possible at punks in black army boots, sullen Italian boys, and tough long –haired kids from small towns who had come to New York expecting their criminal reputations to hold (Cunningham, 1990, p. 114).

These reflective utterances of Jonathan give credence to the desires and pleasures which Erich arouses in him but he claims it was not enough for him to love Erich. He was only seeing his body and not his personality. Jonathan's real devotion was to the ordinary strong-looking men of the city who reminded him of the bodies he has had sex with and exploited in Bobby and Erich. These ordinary people appeared as lively and energetic as when naked with Erich and Bobby. Looking at those men, they form a union that is fuelled with their bodily energy that turns to form their identities. He can still sense much better the desires and pleasures that those ordinary strong men evoke in him and being able to feel in the way that he does and by acknowledging the desire that is produced in him, forms the basis in the formation of

a self. A self is primarily multiple desires as in the psychoanalytic tradition of Freud (1856-1939), Lacan (1901-1981), and Kristeva (1941). It is a recognition of the multiple desires and pleasures and is the starting point in the formation of a self which is not something that is given or fixed. Therefore, Jonathan finds a much better way of constructing a self through the intense sensations of desires and pleasures. The whole novel comes to demonstrate this process of formation.

Jonathan was not capable of love after Bobby. The assertion by Sigmund Freud that when a melancholic loses a loved thing, the person accuses of himself/herself and resorts to punishing himself/herself by doing unwanted things (Freud, 1917) is reflected in Jonathan's action. It could be seen that the desire of Jonathan to punish himself may have led Jonathan to move from Cleveland to New York, leaving Bobby behind. He inflicted on himself the greatest of pains imaginable by abandoning his love.

At this point, it is clear that Jonathan has lost his capacity to love and cannot love another person other than Bobby. He has sex with Erich, but there is no love between them. Having sex without love is a kind of punishment. The heart of Jonathan belongs to Bobby. When Jonathan and Bobby experienced their first sexuality, Jonathan was full of regrets and on his way home, said "I was infused with a bodily pleasure that was intricately, brittle edged in regret" (Cunningham, 1990, p. 121). Jonathan reached satiety but he felt guilty at the same time. Their relationship is based on sexuality which is homosexual. Jonathan knew that he could not set up a home with him. It was not a possible thing to happen in society between the 1960s and 1980s.

Another instance where Jonathan manages to form a connection with his own body and others is when he is in the bar where bodily activities are intense. Jonathan prefers this little community to the larger communities because of its uniqueness. His hanging out there, and being able to watch the ordinary strong men from the city makes him feel that he is entering a sub-culture that is outside the heteronormativity. A bar is a homoerotic place for it is composed of males who have strong social bonds between them and are attracted to the active male bodies around.

It could be said that the relationship between Clare and Jonathan was appropriate and in line with the expectations of society so they could look like a real

family. They could also have a child or children like Jonathan's family expected of him. Until the end of the novel, Melancholia carried on and for melancholia to end, the characters needed to reach a peaceful world to put an end to their sorrow. Clare could have been a good wife for Jonathan but the relationship was not suited to provide Jonathan with a happy life. Cunningham throughout the novel reflects on the importance of setting up a family. Homosexuality was seen as a factor that can ruin the family structure. Social norms capture the essence and happiness of people. To be a queer person was really hard. If a person was queer, it is seen as derogatory and could leave a dark blemish on his/her entire life.

After the survival of Stonewall in New York City, other gay bars began to flourish. In the novel, Jonathan met Erich in a gay bar. As mentioned before, Jonathan's melancholia could be likened to mourning yet the loved object is not dead. His loved object Bobby is alive, so Jonathan does not know exactly what he lost in Bobby. He wanted to experience his homosexuality freely. He had sex with Erich secretly and even did not tell Clare. His desire for Bobby was quite different and unique. He always feels incomplete without Bobby. Jonathan was trapped in his longing for his feelings for Bobby throughout the novel. Longing, sorrow, despair, and grief are considered as features of melancholia. This longing must have led Jonathan to the strange relationship with Clare, he indicates:

> My head seemed to be floating somewhere above my body. Numbed by gin, I felt my own emotions like radio transmissions being broadcast by my own disembodied head. I was angry and envious. I wanted Bobby. In other sense, I wanted Clare (Cunningham, 1990, p. 179).

When Jonathan found out about Bobby and Clare's relationship, he was so jealous but did not let them see the jealousy in him. The situation was too much for him to accept. This triangular love affair, where the three characters love themselves points out another example of melancholia. Jonathan decided to relocate to Arizona for the fear of losing their love in the future and to visit his sick father. The relationship between Bobby and Clare made Jonathan sad providing another reason for Jonathan to move along. Alice and Ned had moved to Arizona from Cleveland as Ned was suffering from an illness known as Reuben. Arizona provided him with a good place to mourn his loss. The love affair between Bobby and Clare affected him negatively,

and added to this was his sick father. He began to feel compassionate towards Ned as he lay on his sickbed.

The image of the heterosexual order in the union between Bobby and Clare must have started his melancholy. He began to wonder if he would ever fit into his society and find his identity in his confusing world. Neither could he freely live his homosexuality nor could he free himself from the societal pressure of heterosexual relationships. It is to these that he laments to himself:

> I was still struggling to invent an alternate version of myself, someone proud and unflinching who could gaze levelly at his father and tell him his last secrets. I wanted him to know me; to have seen me. I'd been waiting until I was settled and fulfilled, so as to present myself in terms of a happiness he might understand (Cunningham, 1990, p. 197).

Jonathan's desire and wish to live a life free from normative societal oppression is captured from these lines and to let his father and the world know who he is and to be accepted for who he is. He wanted to be known and respected as homosexual Jonathan. If he could achieve these, he would reach satisfaction and his melancholy would be ended. He demanded an explanation from his father on why he was so different from other people. Almost all the characters in the novel tried to establish a new identity and life for themselves. Jonathan tried so hard without success, to understand the mystery of marriage. His father Ned patiently explained to him that he was having problems. Until the end of the novel melancholia is felt in all of the characters.

When Jonathan went back to New York, he told Clare that he would not live with them any longer. When Clare demanded to know the reason for his dramatic decision, he explains:

> I asked him why.
>
> To get a life," he said".
>
> When I asked what exactly he thought he was living at that moment, he said, "A cancelled ticket" (Cunningham, 1990, p. 202).

The above dialogue between Jonathan and Clare highlights the continued search for freedom and self-identity by Jonathan in the novel. Although he knew that he would be sad leaving Bobby and Clare, he experienced another loss to find himself here. A new melancholia process started –longing, despair, sorrow, and unhappiness, which is inevitable in a queer character's life. For Jonathan, the loss of Bobby was the most sorrowful thing that has happened in his life, so he tried to forget about him by moving away. He thinks that he will never fit into the society where heterosexualism matters. His loss is perhaps what he cannot live. His feelings are lost in life. His melancholic soul chases his loss and punishes his ego by escaping from his true love.

Clare asked Jonathan to introduce her to Erich, which she hopes will help him overcome his melancholia by meeting with his secret lover Erich. At first, he was hesitant to introduce Erich to them because of Erich's sexual orientation. When Jonathan finally introduced Erich to Clare and Bobby, they both accepted him and they spent good and valuable time with him. Shortly after, Jonathan jilted them and left home unceremoniously without saying a word. His leaving home devastated Bobby, who began to feel that his life in New York is not different from the one in Cleveland. He says:

> Without Jonathan, I haunted my own life. I couldn't make contact, I walked through the hours like a shade wandering in helpless astonishment through rooms he'd once danced and wept and made love in; rooms he'd once been alive enough to ignore (Cunningham, 1990, p. 214).

From Bobby's words, we can feel the strong connection between Bobby and Jonathan. Both of them tried to stay away from each other. Even if they sometimes had succeeded in staying away physically, they did not manage to do so sentimentally. Their homosexual nature made them sad. Their queerness pushed them to melancholia at that time. Both of them did not know what they had lost. Was it a loss of a loved object, friend, or sexuality? Perhaps there was no way of pinning their loss to a particular thing or object. Jonathan's feeling was inevitably affected by normative society and by struggling with his personal loss, was pushed to melancholia.

The theme of loss which pushes Jonathan to melancholia is seen nearly in all parts of the novel. The story shows how all the characters experienced a loss in one

form or the other. It is significant to note that emotions which are directed by the mind are significant in determining how queer characters react to events in their lives. Throughout the novel, Jonathan's feelings change from despair, sorrow, deceit, and to love and could be strongly felt in the depths of the reader's soul. As mentioned in the above quotes, Bobby, Jonathan, Clare, and Alice are considered melancholic characters in this novel. The oppression of queer people by society between the 1960s-1980s and how the normative society pushes them to melancholia, is revealed.

Nothing can fill this emptiness in Jonathan. This emptiness could only be filled with an epiphany. Once, Jonathan, Bobby, and Erich were in the lake, they are not just three male humans but became a part of the lake and a part of one another. In this regard, the clean and quiet lake that is welcoming to all three suggests the mother's womb in part and her body in general. It also suggests mother nature, the giver of life, solitude, and peace. It is a safe and secluded place that Jonathan has been searching for from his childhood. It is indeed a return to the wholeness of the mother's body and the numerous flowing desires. Jonathan expresses his satisfaction with the following words:

> I wouldn't say I was happy. I was nothing so simple as happy. I was merely present, perhaps for the first time in my adult life. The moment was unextraordinary. But I had the moment, I had it completely. It inhabited me. I realized that if I died soon I would have known this, a connection with my life, its errors and cockeyed successes. The chance to be one of three naked man standing in a small body of clear water. I would not die unfulfilled because I'd been here and nowhere else (Cunningham, 1990, p. 342).

In the psychoanalytic tradition, for Sigmund Freud and Jacque Lacan, in the early ages, the infant cannot perceive itself as separate from the mother and its environment. The infant does not have full control of its own body parts. The infant thus is dependent on the mother and for this reason, finds solace in it. This period comes before Jonathan's entry into this world therefore the infant is not yet positioned in this normative world. Jonathan cannot resist the temptation of the lake because he has been looking for the loss of his mother's body. In the course of the novel, Jonathan constantly looked for and attracted to the bodily union with the ones whom he had substituted with his mother's body. He moved back and forth to the bodily activities

that are repressed in the normative society. This scene indeed becomes the most significant and effective of all and in sense signals Jonathan's epiphany.

2.2. Bobby as A Queer Melancholic Character: Gender Melancholia

Gender melancholia plays a significant role in queer individuals' life. The way the society constructs structures and institutions to impose a certain personality or identity on people, especially gender in the form of 'male' or 'female' identity can be simply said to be gender melancholia. It can also mean the imposition of heterosexual identity on queer people in a culturally compulsory way. The analysis of the character, Bobby, as presented by Michael Cunningham in his novel, *A Home* (1990), reflects Bobby as a character exposed to compulsory heterosexualism and has stronger melancholia than other characters in the book.

In the previous part, Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia", melancholia was discussed concerning how people manage events in their lives in the event of 'loss of a loved object' and the internalization of the lost object. In this very part, melancholia is used to refer to people who are forced to compulsory heterosexuality by the normative society. So Butler's gender melancholia is discussed through the character of Bobby. According to Butler, gender is performative. She suggests that there are not two sexes as man and woman, and that gender can be seen as a kind of identity. Butler also thinks that identity discussion, cannot be separated from gender discussion, and being comprehended as a person depends on suitability to the structure of gender. The normative structure causes all subjects to internalize gender. The prohibitions and restrictions which impose compulsory heterosexuality have created great pressure on people's psychology. Throughout history, homosexuality has been seen as a taboo, and so queer people, are constantly subjected to this pressure. In other words, the heterosexual world pushed people to melancholia in the past (Butler, 1990, pp. 57-59).

In the novel, Cunningham portrays Bobby as a naive character without a word of his own. He could easily be pushed around and would always prefer to let things go instead of fighting for his right. The love story that started between Bobby and

Jonathan could be said to be a strange love. Having met Jonathan at their high school queue, they developed a bond and love for each other. They were, however, interrupted when masturbating in a car by Alice, which consequently led to Jonathan relocating to New York, but Bobby stayed behind and was unwilling to go with Jonathan. He was left alone for eight years in Cleveland to mourn his loss. Leader indicates that alienation and the desire to be anonymous are features of melancholic (Leader, 2008, pp. 62-65). From then on, Bobby withdrew to himself, but, unlike Jonathan, did not have sexual intercourse at least in Cleveland. He lacked the courage and determination to continue his sexual practices from fear of societal norms. Even though he is gay, he did not love any other person apart from Jonathan. Butler states in the following excerpt that taboos are internalized by gay individuals and cause melancholy:

> As a set of sanctions and taboos, the ego ideal regulates and determines masculine and feminine identification. Because identifications substitute for object relations, and identifications are the consequence of loss, gender identification is a kind of melancholia in which the sex of the prohibited object is internalized as a prohibition. This prohibition sanctions and regulates discrete gendered identity and the law of heterosexual desire. The resolution of the Oedipal complex affects gender identification through not only the incest taboo, but, prior to that, the taboo against homosexuality (Butler, 1990, p. 63).

The taboo against homosexuality suppressed the gender of Bobby as he undertook different activities that might help him take his mind off sex, like taking a lesson and setting up a restaurant. Sigmund Freud believes that a melancholic individual identifies himself/herself with the loved object, and this identification which is originated from melancholy is an unresolved object of the relationship (Freud, 1917, p. 22). For Butler, she thinks that a melancholic identifies himself/herself with the gender, the internalization of the prohibited object as a prohibition causes melancholia. She argues that if the gender bond is strong, the loss remains unresolved because gender contains norms, prohibitions, and restrictions that internalizes the prohibited object and possibly lead to melancholia (Butler, 1995, pp. 177-178).

In melancholy, the loss of a loved object can happen in several ways, however, in an Oedipal situation, it happens by prohibition or when a person is under the influences of prohibitions. It is safe to say that Bobby identified himself with a prohibited object by keeping his sexual orientation close to his heart throughout the

novel. When finally, he decided to move in with Jonathan, he lacked the courage, to even discuss their homosexuality. Instead, he stayed away from Jonathan not to commit a crime against society. His gender has been internalized.

A person is identified in society by his/her sexual orientation as gender. A man or a woman is, therefore, expected to flirt with the opposite sex. People would ask you if you have a girlfriend/boyfriend. In this case, only homosexuals are intimidated here and would not want to disclose their sexual orientation by identifying with a gender. Identity discussion cannot happen without gender. This normative structure causes all subjects to internalize gender. Gender is sex; sex is a construction. Gender materializes, the body gains comprehensibility through gender. It is not the body that materializes, it is the norm, a gender that is ideal (Butler, 1995, p. 175).

To sum up, the ideal gender is the one that is related to sex as in a female gender desires the opposite sex, a male. She is expected to behave like a female as stipulated and internalized by prohibitions. The female should also desire to have sex with a male counterpart and not a female. Compliance with these practices is accepted as natural while any other practice against them is unnatural and unaccepted. Butler argues that they are not natural, but products of specified culture as being a subject is not autonomous but performative. This argument shows that gender is not natural but a product of the society internalized through cultural practices. Gender is achieved by practice and is designed to ensure the continued practices of these cultures like marriage culture and dress culture. Ironically, homosexuality which is more natural than the performative – heterosexual is oppressed and discouraged. Gender, therefore, forces people to compulsory heterosexuality by achieving heterosexual positioning. A society that adopts this process that constructs sex in its cultural practices, forces heterosexualism on people. This process creates fear of acceptability in society as well as degradation in both men and women. The very fear of being a homosexual induces panic (Butler, 1995, pp. 178-179). Butler writes that:

> Hence, the fear of homosexual desire in a woman may induce a panic that she is losing her femininity; that she is not a woman; that, if she is not quite a man, she is no longer a proper woman; that, if she is not quite a man, she is like one and hence monstrous in some way. Or, in a man, the terror over homosexual desire may well lead to a terror over being construed as feminine, feminized; of no

> longer being properly a man or of being a "failed" man; or of being in some sense a figure of monstrosity or abjection (Butler, 1995, p. 168).

As a result, one could safely say that the accepted sexual orientation in a normative society is not ideal, however, created by the condemnation of people to heterosexuality. In general, being gay is not welcomed in society, and often this attitude extends to the family. This distressing situation causes melancholy, and the loss experienced here is the sex itself.

The fact that Bobby was hesitant in continuing having sex or living his sexual orientation with Jonathan, and in this process, people are condemned to heterosexuality, are explained. In conformity, Bobby instead started a heterosexual relationship with Clare in New York. He became afraid and panicked at the very thought of homosexuality. Bobby's heterosexual identity refuses his homosexual identity, and that pushed him to melancholy. He is now the melancholic obligation of the love that he refuses. The loss of Bobby's real love is internalized in him and brings him face to face with melancholic sorrow. This internalization in Bobby, is a way he recognizes, rejects, and distances himself from the loss and prevented from being a homosexual. As a result, he is forced to his relationship with Clare and at the same time identifying himself with his lost object.

Butler indicates that "…'truest' lesbian melancholic is the strictly straight woman, and the 'truest' gay male melancholic is the strictly straight man" (Butler, 1995, p. 177). By analysing the principles of gender identity on queer melancholia, using Cunningham's character Bobby, in his novel, *A Home* (1990), it shows clearly why Bobby has lost his ideal gender identity. It will also help understand the nature of his relationship with other characters of the book.

Bobby is shown in the novel as a queer melancholic character. His relationship with his family is as interesting as his life itself. Although his family is typical of a heterosexual and is accepted by society, they always had to deal with one problem or another. His brother, Carlton, died in an accident at home which affected her mother psychologically, and had to be placed on sedatives. She died from the trauma. The father, Burt Morrow, did not care much about Bobby so he did not experience fatherly

care early in his life. He moved in with Jonathan in his family home where Alice played a motherly role to him.

Bobby and Jonathan started dating from high school. When Alice saw them masturbating in a car, it was a disturbing event that led to the loss of his love. Jonathan moved to New York for his college studies but Bobby remained in Cleveland. While in Cleveland, he tried in vain to forget his loss but did not succeed. Alice taught him to cook which led to his starting up a restaurant business that did not last for long. During this period, society has succeeded in condemning him to heterosexuality. When finally, he decided to move to New York, he has already lost his gender identity. He started a relationship with Clare, who completed the transformation to heterosexualism by cutting his hair short, changing his dress mode, in total conformity to the heterosexual family. They had a baby girl, Rebecca, and Bobby played his fatherly role well. Although Bobby is together with Clare, his happiest moments were the good times he spent with Jonathan. This shows that he is not living his life freely and was condemned to heterosexuality, and he comments:

> I'd made a kind of love with Jonathan because he'd wanted to, and because I'd loved him. I'd had orgasms that passed through me like the spirits of people more devoted to the body than I was. These spirits were pleasant enough in passing but truly gone when they were gone. After Jonathan left town, I was alone inside myself. This lack was probably what had made it possible for me to live my bakery life in Cleveland; to need no sensations beyond the first feathers of November snow and the living hiss of a needle touching vinyl (Cunningham, 1990, p. 141).

When Jonathan discovered his sex affair with Clare, he became jealous, and at some point, had to leave the house. It was at this time that his emotions and feelings are expressed in the above speech. The longing and search for self-identity, his triangular love story, and sorrow pushed him to melancholia. It is significant to note how Bobby reacts to significant events in his life as different from those of Jonathan and other characters in the novel. Bobby internalises his loss and blames himself for the loss in his life.

Again, the loss of a loved object, discussed in this study in Freud's essay, suggests that the 'loss of a loved object' can be interpreted as an emotional intensity that is directed on the self and generates negative feelings. Heterosexuality depends on

several factors like prohibitions. These norms are used to dominate queer people's life as well as their sex life. It is seen that queer melancholic individuals become heterosexual not of their own free will, however, they are obliged to live their life according to the norms of society. In that case, the homosexual identity is banned and considered as forbidden desire. For the continuation of gay and lesbian identities, it is necessary to reject the compulsory heterosexuality by society without which melancholia is inevitable. It can be clearly seen that society presents many obstacles in the way of gays and lesbians living freely. Queer characters forced into heterosexualism are likely to experience sadness, grief, and sorrow as well as losses that can cause melancholia.

The death of Carlton, Bobby's brother was a huge event in the lives of both him and his mother. Carlton introduced Bobby and his mother to drugs which they became addicted to. When he died, he was the first loss of Bobby, and he went into mourning by wearing his brother's eye embroidered jacket. He was so sad, and the jacket reminded him of his dead brother. Freud points out in his essay (1923), the identification of the lost object inside the ego:

> an object which was lost has been set up again inside the ego—that is, that an object-cathexis has been replaced by an identification. At that time, however, we did not appreciate the full significance of this process and did not know how common and how typical it is. Since then we have come to understand that this kind of substitution has a great share in determining the form taken by the ego and that it makes an essential contribution toward building up what is called its "character" (Freud, 1923, p. 28).

His brother's eye embroidered jacket became the object which he replaced Carlton, and he wore it every time. Wearing his brother's jacket can be considered as a kind of mourning for Bobby.

When Bobby moved to New York, he met with Clare, and they started an affair together out of convenience. Clare was determined to totally transform Bobby physically to fit into society. Bobby, who has been forced to change his sexual identity, complied as Clare took him to buy new clothes and had his ears pierced. Bobby is happy to be with Clare and says this about her:

> I had been in a graveyard for years; now I was at the party. In the middle of that life, I kept quite as a ghost. A beautiful girl with skin the clear blue-white of skim milk walked serenely among the dancers with a fat, speckled snake coiled around her waist (Cunningham, 1990, p. 155).

The above account establishes the fact that Bobby is happy to have some form of conformity with society, and for him, it is like a new beginning. Bobby confesses that Clare has affected him positively by making him experience sex with her. Bobby has never dreamt of the possibility of having sex with a woman, and Clare made this possible. At the end of the novel, Bobby was in the company of the three men in the ice-water. His last loss could be interpreted as when Clare left with his daughter, and he had to live with Jonathan and Erich. It is not, however, clear if Bobby was able to find his identity in the novel.

2.3. Jonathan and Bobby's Melancholic Family Structure

The word 'family' is a familiar word to all and is generally used to refer to people with some form of relationship or another. Over time there have been concerted efforts by experts to come up with a comprehensive definition of family. Even authors, teachers, and researchers struggle to answer when faced with the question of what a family is. This is mainly since the unit of analysis is not always clear. "The U.S. Census Bureau describes a family in the following manner, a family is a group of two people or more (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together" (Amato, 2014, p. 1). This definition is known as an objective approach.

Family can also represent a person given the chance to identify his/her family members. In this instance, the person could include people who are not related to him/her by blood, marriage, or adaptation. People in a love affair, can equally live together and regard themselves as a family, or people who live together as flatmates or housemates and develop respect, bond, and love similar to those found in a family-related by blood.

Another significant aspect of the family specification is derived from a situation whereby people select whom they want to be their family members even when the intended people are by-laws referred to as members of a family. These are generally prevalent in cases of remarriage or in a family feud that may cause a person to omit a family member and select another. Overall, the different approaches to family definition overlap in some of their meanings and accommodate the different kinds of families as seen in the novel by Cunningham, *A Home* (1990).

Cunningham, in his novel, creates the image of families in the normative society of the period in history between the late 1800s through the late 1900s. To achieve this, he uses the families of the queer characters in his book, Bobby, Jonathan, and Alice's family. The families in question present "unusual, but, still classic families" (Pearl, 2013, p. 37).

From the novel, Bobby is described as a person with three families when all the three approaches to the family definition are put into consideration. His first would be his immediate family where he spent his childhood until he was fifteen. This family is a composition of the objective approach, which could be said to be a product of normative society. It consists of a group of people related by birth and marriage; Burt Morrow as the householder, the wife, and two sons, Bobby and Carlton. Bobby's brother died in an accident, and it pushes him to mourning and melancholia. He started wearing his brother's jacket regularly to replace the loss he suffered from the death of his brother. His mother died shortly after, and he had to move to Jonathan's family house. He says "All my life, it's just that I have been invisible. I only lately decided to let myself be seen" (Cunningham, 1990, p. 54).

His second family would be when he moved in with Jonathan and became a resident with Jonathan's family. We see from the novel the motherly care provided for him by Alice that he never had in his first family. This family can count as a subjective approach where people are asked to name their family members and also their residence. He also learned essential life skills from Alice here and was able to experience his homosexuality with Jonathan. Bobby's third family saw him moving to New York and settling down with Jonathan and Clare, a move that started his relationship with Clare, and they had a baby girl, Rebecca. This family is also a

definition of the subjective approach from the perspective of partners living together. Clare was his partner, and they lived together. Again, when Jonathan went to New York for his college studies, Bobby lost his love and subsequently was forced to heterosexuality by society. This also caused melancholy in him (Cunningham, 1990, pp. 109-126).

Another character whose family was discussed in Cunningham's novel was Clare. Her family appeared to be normal according to the objective approach definition of family. There were her father and mother did not feature prominently in the fiction. Clare was living in a flat when she met Jonathan. For some reason, Jonathan moved in with her, and they started living together. At this point, it could be said that the family that is presented was that of residence. Although Clare loves Jonathan, she could not live as his partner because of his sexual orientation. When Bobby came to live with them, she seized the opportunity of her starved sexual life, and they became partners living together. She did her best to change Bobby's already changed sexual inclination by working on his physical appearance. They had a daughter together, and Bobby played the fatherly role. She also used to be a lesbian and was also suffering from gender identity imposed on her by society. She suffered her loss and sorrow in silence, and is seen as a queer character in the novel, a person that cannot live her sexuality freely (Cunningham, 1990, pp. 146-160).

Jonathan as a queer character, in the novel written by Cunningham, is portrayed as a stubborn and determined character. The novel also puts him in different family settings in the narrative. His first family life was not a pleasant one, where at an early age, he was introduced to society prohibitions by both father and mother. At his tender age, his father tried to impose gender identity on him by telling him how to play and what to play with to be acceptable in society (Cunningham, 1990, p. 11). Jonathan is shown as a character with a different sexual orientation, and Alice is aware of this. Throughout the novel, Alice, although she was careful not to give out her worries, was worried about his future. Jonathan's homosexuality drives him to grief, shame, sadness, and melancholy. Alice transferred her motherly love to Bobby as she failed to establish a parental connection with Jonathan. It is very difficult to have queer children in a normative society, and Alice was constantly reminding Jonathan of the need for a family that is accepted by society, as in marrying the opposite sex and having children.

She wants Jonathan to stay away from Bobby. The fact that Jonathan was changing day after day before her eyes was a painful experience, but she refused to admit the truth. This must have caused her some distress and sorrow and may explain her queer nature in the novel. She tried to get rid of her melancholy mood by occupying herself with other things. When Ned fell sick, they had to move from Cleveland to Arizona. Alice, reflecting on her relationship with Ned says, “The Cleveland kitchen and the pear tree in the back yard I realized I had always planned, in some uncertain way, on leaving him” (Cunningham, 1990, p. 181). Although Alice wanted to divorce Ned, it was impossible at that time. Losing his marriage, love, and the desire to start a new life was always on her mind. This marriage, the norms, and a queer child gave her grief, sadness, and melancholy all from her family.

Jonathan’s second home was in New York when he moved in with Clare. Cunningham probably implies his action to partial conformity to society as he continued in search of his identity. This family can be defined in relation to residence and probably provided a home for him away from society. He also had time to hang out in gay bars where he met Erich with whom he continued his homosexuality. Unlike his Cleveland family, Clare loves Jonathan, and in an attempt to win his love, did not criticize or prohibit his activities. However, when Bobby moved in with them, the composition of the family members got unusually complicated. When he discovered the love affair between Bobby and Clare, he could not bear it and decided to leave the family. He was not comfortable with this family now as with his family back in Cleveland. He later came back after some time and continued living with Clare, Bobby, and Rebecca. The family got more complicated when he had to bring in Erich to stay with them. Erich has been exposed to the deadly HIV/AIDS, and Jonathan is worried about the consequences of this illness on him as Erich was his sex partner. Clare, worried about the possible psychological implication the situation will have on Rebecca, decided to live separately from them. This family too has caused him stress, sadness, and sorrow.

Undoubtedly, living with having a gay child in the 1960s was a difficult task for families. A family, with a gay child, when first aware of their child’s homosexual orientation, experiences fears and anxieties, and they face a sense of loss. The queer characters are used to expose the many difficulties experienced in these families and

how they reacted to and managed their loss. The process, accepting a homosexual as a son in a family, carries the hope that things could change for the better. Subsequently, the acceptance stage takes place, it cannot be said that everything will be fine after the acceptance because families are wary of being ostracized in society, and the bad stigmatization that might follow if exposed to the knowledge of society. The negative discourses against homosexuality affect the entire social structure as it cannot be denied that it is aimed at protecting the heterosexual order and the heterosexual family structure. The emphasis on reproduction in religion and society has excluded and negated the sexuality and homosexuality that prevent reproduction. For example, Alice and Ned tried to guide Jonathan to heterosexual intercourse, and when Alice noticed Jonathan's sexual orientation, she was absolutely disappointed (Cunningham, 1990, p. 94).

Alice could gain her epiphany by coming to terms with and respecting Jonathan's homosexual orientation. In the novel, Alice expresses this clearly with her words, "His existence compelled and distressed me so much that I scarcely knew what he looked like. Now I loved him less dreadfully, from a deeper reserve of calm, and I could see him better in his human particulars" (Cunningham, 1990, p. 281). Alice was beginning to get used to her son's tendencies with these words, "Jonathan, find someone of your own to love." (1990, p. 291). Alice expresses here that she wants Jonathan to find a partner, someone he loves. She felt that Jonathan would be lonely in life and upset since Bobby supposedly has been indoctrinated into heterosexuality.

As previously discussed from the perspectives of Freud, the loss of love can lead queer characters to melancholia as Alice experienced with Ned. Although she is married to Ned, she has somehow lost her love for him. With Ned's death, Alice's distressed mood began to brighten. Alice even found a partner and a lover and expresses her happiness in these words, "I had started seeing someone. He was younger than I, his name was Paul Martinez, and he'd begun teaching me a range of pleasures I had hardly imagined while married to Ned." (Cunningham, 1990, p. 287). Her life, which was filled with grief, sadness, and melancholy changed from the moment she met Paul. She was not sure of Paul's love, but she knew she was happy to be with him.

Finally, in the novel, *A Home at The End of the World* (1990), Cunningham carefully reveals how families in our society are shaped and affected by norms internalized in the system and how it affects queer characters from the eyes of characters. He exposes the difficulties families with homosexual children face in real-life situations and the devastating effects on them. All the characters and events in the novel are closely interrelated, and the family structure and melancholy of the characters show parallel tendencies with the bad stigma against homosexual individuals in society.

2.4. AIDS Crisis

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was conceded as a disease in 1981 when a rising population of homosexual men began to be affected by this deadly disease. It is a retrovirus now known as human immunodeficiency virus type 1 (HIV-1) was later found to be the cause of one of the most disastrous killer diseases to have emerged in recent history (Popovic et al., 1982, p.1). This disease spreads by sexual, percutaneous, and perinatal routes. However, many adults acquire HIV-1 when exposed to mucosal surfaces, this makes AIDS primarily a sexually transmitted disease (Cohen et al., 2011). It was first identified three decades ago, the pandemic form of HIV-1, has infected more than sixty million people, killing about twenty-five million of them. In the less developed countries especially in young adults in Sub-Saharan Africa, this disease has been more devastating. With concerted efforts by researchers in the medical field, antiretroviral treatment has reduced the number of deaths caused by this disease. Accesses to the therapy is both expensive and restricted in size and reach so AIDS will continue to pose a significant threat to public health for many decades to come (World Health Organization, 2004, p. 10).

In the novel, Cunningham reflects the melancholia of the diseased body and the crisis caused by AIDS at the beginning of the 1980s using the protagonists of the novel, Jonathan and Erich. The writing of his fiction coincided with the break out of this devastating disease which was taking its toll on the lives of young homosexuals in

the USA and around the world. Therefore, Cunningham would not miss the opportunity to reflect on it in his novel, especially as it relates to the bad stigmatisation of queer characters in society as one of his main themes in the novel.

Jonathan and Erich are queer characters who were exposed to AIDS in the novel. The fear of AIDS made them feel terribly sad, unhappy and grieved which causes melancholy. The first virus cases were seen in New York and California at the beginning of the 1980s. At that time, Jonathan and Erich were living in New York, and little or nothing was known about the disease which was believed to be a disease caused by gay men. In the beginning, although Erich and Jonathan were aware of this disease, they did not think that they could be vulnerable to it, but they were caught unawares as they failed to take precautions against it. They were fully aware that it is a sexually transmitted disease that was ascribed to homosexuals.

Medical experts suggest that diseases invade the body like an enemy in a battle, and the body responds by fighting back using its defence mechanisms. In other words, diseases invade the body, chemotherapy invades the diseases. “HIV can spread in different ways like through unprotected sex with a person with HIV” (Plus, 2021, p. 1) and is said to be the most common way of its spread among people. It can also spread “by sharing drug needles, contact with the blood of a person with HIV, mother to baby during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding” (2021, p. 1). Anyone can get HIV if exposed to it but certain groups of people have a higher risk of getting it: those who have another sexually transmitted disease, people who use drugs, gay and bisexual men, and people who engage in unsafe sexual behaviours like not using condoms in the course of sex. The first signs may come as a flu-like symptom in the forms of “fever, chills, body rash, night sweats, muscle aches, sore throat, fatigue, swollen lymph nodes, and mouth ulcers” (2021, p. 2). The symptoms may last for two to four weeks which is called an acute HIV infection. If it transcends this stage and is still untreated, it becomes a chronic HIV infection and often without symptoms. The virus is now endowed with the capacity of weakening the body’s immune system, and the infection progresses to AIDS. AIDS badly damages your immune system and makes it vulnerable to all kinds of disease, and because diseases constantly attack the body, they will find no resistance and can cause people to die. It is a disease of time. When a certain intensity of symptoms is reached, the progression of the disease may change,

and unbearable pain may occur. AIDS makes its patient increasingly desperate, hopeless, and unable. AIDS is perceived as a slowly progressive disease just like Syphilis. AIDS is the name of the challenge to the commitment of the human race to life and hope (Sontag, 1989, pp. 16-22).

In our society, AIDS is not a disease that people are proud of or discuss freely. The illness is usually hidden from neighbours, colleagues, family members, and friends since it gives a shameful identity. To be an AIDS patient is also perceived as a defect of someone who is caught in unsafe behaviour. AIDS is often kept as a secret like other embarrassing diseases –syphilis, cancer, plague, tuberculosis. It forces people to think of sex as something that can lead to one of the most terrible consequences. AIDS can also be contacted from multi-partner sex. Having sex with different individuals is a major cause of the disease. In the novel, Although Jonathan did not have sex with more than two people, he started having the symptoms. This could be interpreted to mean that his present sex partner, Erich, had sex with multiple individuals and also with Jonathan. In the past, having a sexual relationship with more than one person is considered as a sin, and those people, are referred to as killing machines in society.

Today, the understanding that AIDS is a homosexual disease has waned from current information and researches by medical experts. They have shown that it is a sexually transmitted disease that can be found in sexual intercourse of both homosexuals and heterosexuals. Despite these developments, AIDS is still regarded as a taboo in society, and people exposed to it, are still treated with contempt and isolation. “The relationship between AIDS and gay sexuality has had a vexed history since symptoms emerged in a number of sexually active gay men, mostly in the United States, in the late 1970s and early 1980s” (Stevens, 2011, p. 133). One of the earliest names of the syndrome is Grid or Gay-Related Immune Deficiency. Sex workers, men who have sex with men, those who use drugs with injections are the risk groups. People who lived with AIDS were ignored by all institutions of the social structure and were shown as utterly helpless and as dying moribund people. AIDS feeds both individual and social vulnerabilities and fantasizes about disease more than cancer, like syphilis. The virus invades the body; the fear of illness invades society. This situation can cause melancholia in queer people.

Jerry Falwell offers the generic diagnosis that "AIDS is God's judgement on a society that does not live by his rules" (Sontag, 1989, p. 61). When AIDS first emerged in western countries, it was defined as a deadly disease and an epidemic of unprecedented prevalence. The emergence of AIDS has been crucial in the development of the history of queer as it was commonly thought to be a homosexual disease. Some people even believed that this disease was a punishment that was sent by God to homosexuals.

The society that showed some forms of tolerance to homosexuality for a while became wary of them again. The emergence of some groups to help change how AIDS is understood in society became imminent. Organizations like ACT UP! and Queer Nation at the turn of these groups. ACT UP saw AIDS as a challenge. People living with HIV were ignored in society and excluded by multi-dimensional discriminatory policies, were highly discriminated against. The abject is neither a part of the body nor is it separate from it as a whole.

From all indications, AIDS has a significant impact on homosexuality in particular, and sexuality in general. It is also influential in choices made by gay individuals. At the time in question, nothing could be worse than being infected with the deadly AIDS disease. The stigma attached to it by society and the concrete fear of death as a direct consequence is more than enough to shake the psychology of the individuals. Society points an accusing finger on homosexuals as the carriers and distributors of the pandemic. This is well expressed by Susan Sontag as follows:

> The way particularly dreaded diseases are envisaged as an alien 'other', as enemies as in modern war; and the move from the demonization of the illness to the attribution of fault to the patient is an inevitable one (Sontag, 1989, p. 11).

The fear that the syndrome could be transmissible through sexual activities in homosexuality and random sexual intercourse that could lead to death made people anxious and apprehensive. AIDS is both a personal tragedy for those who have the syndrome and a disaster for the gay community. In the novel, Jonathan, Bobby, Clare, and Erich moved to a home (not just an ordinary home). That house represents the world where confused, gays, bisexuals, and dying people take refuge and shelter from society. Brookes in analysing Cunningham's novel, sees the "home" in the title as an

attempt to find refuge in a wrecked world: to reconstruct from a deconstructed mental landscape (Brookes, 2008, p. 113). It is, however, a matter of debate how much refuge this home provided for these troubled characters.

There are other diseases, which could bring shame and stigma to people apart from AIDS. For one reason or the other, either the patient or families of the patient decides to conceal the illnesses from either the patient or the family. Susan Sontag succinctly explains the situation like this:

> Like other disease that arouse feelings of shame, AIDS is often a secret, but not from the patient. A cancer diagnosis was frequently concealed from patients by their families; an AIDS diagnosis is at least as often concealed from their families by patients. And as with other grave illnesses regarded as more than just illnesses (Sontag, 1989, p. 36).

These secrets of not letting a cancer patient know he/she has the disease, and keeping the AIDS infection report from parents, was because of the shameful nature of the diseases, and also to protect the patients from societal or parental pressures.

There are lots of ambivalences in the novel as presented with the queer relationships between Jonathan and Erich, Alice and Ned, Clare and Jonathan. At least for Jonathan, there is no strong bond or feelings that could show he loves Erich. For him, it was just affairs to satisfy his sexual needs, which took a dangerous dimension by resulting in AIDS. His only love was Bobby, and therefore, his loss is Bobby. In the case of Alice and Ned, although she did not love him, Alice had to live with him till his death. This could probably be because of their only son Jonathan, and for this reason, had to lose her love. This may also be why she did not have sexual inclinations towards Ned. Pearl points out:

> While mourning and melancholia have the same causes, Freud explains that there are three pre-conditions of melancholia – loss of an object, ambivalence, and regression of libido into the ego (Pearl, 2013, p. 85).

As can be deducted from the quote, people always have the desire to reach the ideal in their ego. This is irrespective of their sexual orientation, and as a result, the individual experiences dilemma within himself/herself that facilitates acting upon the ideal. However, it is unthinkable to believe that he/she will give place to the ideal in

his/her life forever. The losses and uneasiness caused by not being able to be where he/she belongs in itself push him/her to sadness. In this study, as mentioned before, the characteristics of melancholic mood are reflected in the sad behaviours of the characters in the novel, as Cunningham suggests:

> I believed I knew what he wanted. He wanted to collapse into love. Life was too frightening. Renown was withheld despite his constant efforts, and the future we'd all counted on could be revoked with a nagging cough, a violet bloom on a shin (Cunningham, 1990, p. 174).

The psychological state of homosexuals in this period of history can be well understood, by analysing their experiences in the society they lived inside. It is even worse with homosexual individuals suffering from AIDS as the depth of an individual's melancholic sadness cannot be disputed. His/her disease contains so many unpredictable concerns in managing the situation. The person is subject to suffer both physically and psychologically as is the case with Jonathan and Erich. If Erich is to be evaluated, he has given up on himself, his hope for the future is dead, he is exhausted from the disease, and he is like a warrior who has surrendered himself to the virus in this war.

Through the eyes of Jonathan, we picture the anxiety of queer individuals and their worries for their future. Jonathan having found out that Erich has been infected with HIV believes that it will automatically affect him sooner than later. He was no longer comfortable with having Erich around and treated him like a virus. In his reflection, he recounts:

> We lay for a while without discussing the last remaining event in our sensual histories –the fact that we had not exercised bodily precautions together. Now it was too late to protect ourselves from one another. There was no rational accounting, beyond the fact that even four years ago, when we'd met, the disease had still seemed the province of another kind of man. Of course we'd known about it. Of course we'd been scared. But no one we knew personally had gotten sick. We'd believed –with a certain effort of will –that it befell men whose blood was thinned by too many drugs, who had sex with dozens people every night (Cunningham, 1990, p. 175).

This reflection also shows that Jonathan had pre-knowledge of the existence of the killer disease before Erich got sick from it. As he laments, he also shows how

people explain away their actions in situations of epidemic or pandemic before their possible infection.

When Jonathan and Erich first met, they took no precautions because, at that time, the disease seemed to be the product of another human species and no longer needed to be protected from each other. They were aware of this disease, yet no one had illness four years ago, and people believed that only those whose blood was thinned by drugs and had sex with dozens of men interchangeably are prone to it. When Jonathan first saw Erich after he has been infected, he was so different from the healthy Erich he knew. As Erich's face faded, Jonathan started confronting himself more and listening to his inner voice the more. He said to Clare "I don't have to love Erich just because he's sick," "I don't have to suddenly take responsibility for him." (Cunningham, 1990, p. 307). Clare had something to tell him about this:

> No, she said. "I don't suppose you do."
>
> Shit, why did I have to invite him?
>
> Jonathan, honey," She said. Erich's being here doesn't make any difference. You sound as if you think he's brought some sort of germ with him."
>
> Hasn't he? I could go a full day without thinking about it before. Now I've lost that. (Cunningham, 1990, p. 307).

The presence of Erich at home became a source of grief to Jonathan since it constantly reminds him of the illness. As Sontag pointed out, the diseased body of Erich is like an enemy at home. That home is like a battlefield in which they all live inside. Jonathan, Erich, Clare, and Bobby can be seen as warriors. Jonathan tormented himself snakingly by thinking of the disease. It is not just an ordinary disease. Both of them know that there is no cure for AIDS. Jonathan's melancholy is inevitable. He thinks that he will lose his health like Erich. Perhaps he will die. The fear of loss can be evaluated as another factor of his queer melancholia. That house is a house where the characters experience all kinds of pain, anguish, fear, longing, and sadness, and at the same time, it is a world where they can live their unusual life. Somehow, they were inspired to face the disease and to fight it against all odds. There was not much to do in the face of this terminal disease but to resign to their awaited fate of depression and melancholy.

The term melancholy exhibits the features of depression. Although Jonathan did not want to be around Erich because of his ailment, and the possibility that he has been also infected from making love to him, he had to face reality and show empathy. What if he was in Erich's shoes? How would he feel if Erich treated him like this? Will his detestation for Erich change anything in the given situation? And can Erich help himself in this situation? Erich's diseased body was rapidly deteriorating with every passing day, and his skin was getting grey and pale. Erich's condition became a source of worry to him as he struggled with deep sadness, anxiety, and worry. They now share the same feelings and emotions as they are now part and parcel of the problem. Erich is, now, a patient that needed care and attention as he lay dying in their Woodstock home. He tried to comfort himself by doing things he did not ordinarily want to do. This is far from ordinary but a cause to worries, fear of loss, loss, and sadness that lead people to melancholy?

The role of society affects the queer melancholic characters immensely. They do not only have to deal with their disease, they may also have to deal with oppression and discrimination in their time in history and consequently lead them to melancholia. The worries and concerns entertained by Clare for the child as she peruses the picture of the family:

> What if she came into her full consciousness as Erich died and Jonathan started to get sick? What would it do to her if her earliest memories revolved around the decline and eventual disappearance of the people she most adored? (Cunningham, 1990, p. 322).

Clare knew that Jonathan has already been infected with HIV –just as Erich, and perhaps die a few years later. So, she did not want to raise her daughter Rebecca in such an environment. She wanted to leave there with her daughter. She believed her daughter's psychology will be affected negatively. She did not want her daughter to experience a loss at an early age. She chose to go with her daughter and by doing so she averted her immediate future loss that appeared so imminent and inevitable. The effect of this pandemic contaminated by Erich was not limited to him and Jonathan; it also affected Bobby, Clare, and Rebecca. Jonathan laments, "Oh, Bobby. I wanted to be part of something that wasn't dying" (Cunningham, 1990, p. 333). He thinks that the home they live in smells of death and that they should be living in a different world.

The fear of AIDS shapes a person's future at a time in history when little or nothing was known about it. Undoubtedly his/her future will be full of fear and pain. Anxious queer people are likely to withdraw themselves from social relationships. Sex cannot be regarded as just copulation; it is a chain that started from the past to the future. The US Minister of Health Dr. Otis R. Bowen states "So remember when a person has sex, they're not just having it with that partner, they're having it with everybody that partner had had it with for the past ten years" (Sontag, 1989, p. 73). It shows that in the novel, Jonathan is supposed to have had sex with all the people with whom Erich had had sex for the past ten years. How ironical life is. The anxiety of AIDS made people afraid of contaminated people –fear of contaminated blood. Sontag explains:

> Gradually weakened by the onslaught, the AIDS victim dies, sometimes in months, but almost always within a few years of the first symptoms." Those who have not already succumbed are described as "under assault, showing the tell-tale symptoms of the disease," while millions of others "harbour the virus, vulnerable at any time to a final, all-out attack (Sontag, 1989, p. 19).

Jonathan believes that Erich was responsible for his infection and as a character in the novel, did not feature prominently, however, only served to highlight Jonathan's continued homosexuality and the AIDS crisis. In the scenes where he was featured, he was not expected to express himself verbally because of his pathetic condition. Erich came to visit their home with AIDS, with his pain, sorrow, and grief. This home in which they live belongs to their world. All the symptoms of AIDS in Erich could be observed in his appearance. He lost weight; his skin went grey and thickened in a willing surrendered to fate. He was spending his last days in this house, a home he never had before. Jonathan panicked when he first saw Erich in his pathetic condition suffering from the deadly virus, and Jonathan's melancholy was strengthened on seeing the state in which Erich was. Voicing out his thoughts he says:

> My limitation was my own rationality. I was too balanced, too well behaved. Had I been a different sort of person I could have stormed through the house, shattering crockery and ripping pictures off the walls. It would not of course have solved anything, but there 'd have been a voluptuous release in it –the only pleasure I could imagine just then. The idea of sex revolted me, as I did the comfort of friends who knew their blood was sound. My one desire was to run

> screaming through the house, tearing down the curtains and splintering the furniture, smashing every pane of glass (Cunningham, 1990, p. 308).

Jonathan, with these words, was expressing his inner turmoil and could no longer think of anything apart from the pandemic and the attendant consequences. The melancholic grief inside him was getting bigger day by day, and he was trying to relieve his pain in other ways. He knew that he would live a big loss in the life of Erich, and consequently, it would come to his turn to die. What he and Erich lived before in the sense of sexual intercourse or having sex with Erich gave was great as long as it lasted, but it meant nothing to him now. Clare tried to console him to no avail but, it was clear to him that his time was drawing close as he now exhibits symptoms of HIV. He knew that nobody without this terminal disease and the state of mind of the sufferers will exactly comprehend what feelings come with it. The knowledge of the fact that AIDS was incurable at the time was nothing to be compared with all his past experiences in his tormented life. Jonathan as a product of the normative society that constantly induces people to gender identity suffered immeasurably all his life and made him an extremely melancholic individual. Throughout his life, he has been constantly bedevilled with losses that weighed him down, made his move in search of another home, placed doubt on his identity, and made him believe he would never be able to fit into society. The breakout of AIDS, at that time, made him one of the most miserable people of his time and further worsens his mood. Neither Jonathan nor Erich were able to live their lives freely or potentially due to pressure from society. Their quest for love was never met and they knew it as they lived what they had together. The only thing Jonathan had in common with Erich was their sexual relationship and AIDS that would torment them for the rest of their lives.

At the end of the novel, Erich dies. Bobby, Jonathan, and Erich went swimming together before the death of Erich. The water was so cold as Jonathan contemplated the importance of the last moments he was going to spend with Erich. Erich and Jonathan were cold, and perhaps capturing the moment as Erich was saying goodbye in a painful way as they floated naked in the ice-cold water. Jonathan was so peaceful for the first time in his life, and although he knew that he would die like Erich, was determined to die a free and enlightened man. He felt that he was existing for the first

time in his life and was no longer a melancholic person because of this whole unity with Mother Nature.

Jonathan and Erich could be seen to share almost the same fate as in the AIDS crisis on one part, and pressure from society on gender identity on the other hand. Erich was presented as a passive character throughout the novel and waiting for the day Jonathan would love him. Although they were in a very strong melancholic mood, their hopes, and aspirations were always held dearly in the corner of their hearts. When Jonathan moved to New York from Cleveland with a loss (Bobby) in his heart, he met with Erich and used him as a means to satisfy his sexuality. They all came to live in New York hoping that it would be a better place for them, to live their lives freely, but it was the worse for them. During the days of Jonathan, the deadly disease AIDS was prevalent, however, there was not enough medical information or explanation to its effects and treatment. It was tagged as a gay illness as a way to stigmatize people who have sex with same-sex.

In the novel, Clare's house in which they all lived is completely in a different world with an attached place for a restaurant with a queer name, Homo-Café. This house is like a battlefield –the battle of diseased bodies. The virus invaded Erich's body, and Jonathan, who is a link in this chain, started a war with himself against his troubling fears and there seems to be no way of winning the war-making death inevitable end for this battle as it played life quadrangle filled with loss, melancholy, homosexuality, and bisexuality.

It is clear that AIDS patients and being homosexual individuals in the past were related to melancholia. Narcissists insist that the world needed to be cleansed of gays. Queer people were seen as sinful, sick, guilty, perverted, unnatural, not patriotic, thought to threaten the family, the state, order, and the future of humanity. Heteronormative order played a central role in queer people's life. Hate speech of the heteronormative order against queer people left a deep wound in their lives. This attitude was the same for sickly queer bodies and heteronormative relationships. A heteronormative person who had sex with more than one person was seen as a sinner.

Today, AIDS has been proven to be not just a gay disease, but, just a sexually transmitted disease thanks to improved medical technology. Over time it became clear

that the information that was first peddled by people claiming that the pandemic was unique to homosexuals is false. AIDS is also seen in the heterosexual relationship has and continued to infect humans even to the present. Despite the notable advances in the detection and treatment of the disease, there has been no medical solution to completely eliminate the disease. Reasonable progress has also been registered in the process of managing the virus. The psychological impact of the disease on people has not changed from the years of its emergence and as a result, AIDS patients are still excluded from society, therefore, are compelled to hiding their ailment.

Society bears a lot of resentment and hate for homosexuals that have affected their emotions negatively. The humiliation and stigma channelled towards queer characters because of their sexual orientation lead them to depression, stress, and melancholia. In some cases, homosexuals exposed to AIDS or with the symptoms prefer living out their disease in secret than seeking medical help from hospitals. This homophobic attitude constitutes a serious barrier towards ending deaths, especially arising from the loss of immunity that AIDS inflicts on our bodies (Global information and education on HIV and AIDS, 2017).

Fear is a significant factor in shaping the emotional and psychological state of people throughout history. As fear is associated with diseases that are seen to be shameful in society plays a vital role in the lives of homosexuals who are infected with HIV/AIDS. In addition, it may lead to their concealing their disease by preferring to live with it without seeking medical help due to the prejudices in society that result in a great deal of emotional injury. According to researchers, in recent years, there have been some divisions towards homosexuals in society. Stigmatization and discrimination are evaluated as crucial problems in queer people's life. It should not be thought of as just homosexuals' problems; it is the problem of all people who have been infected with HIV.

In a nuts shell, for the reader to fully understand the predicaments of the protagonists as reflected in the lives of the queer characters in the novel, let us reflect on the vivid memory of our living experiences of the coronavirus pandemic ravaging the world today. The mysterious nature of the virus, contradicting information that reigns of daily, the trial and error methods of treating symptoms of the disease, the

various lockdowns in almost all the sectors of the society, and how people infected with the virus are treated and seen in the society. There will be no need to stress the impact of the Coronavirus on people all over the world, ranging from the physical, mental, emotional, psychological, and social status of people. This picture will hopefully help the readers empathize with queer individuals in general.

2.5. The Effects of Music on Melancholia

> I think music in itself is healing. It's an explosive expression of humanity. It's something we are all touched by. No matter what culture we're from, everyone loves music.
>
> - Billy Joel

Throughout history, each aspect of music is used for different purposes in human culture. The impact of songs on humans' minds is unpredictable. To some people, it could be a great source of happiness and comfort, while to others, rhythm motivates or heal them. The American musician, Billy Joel, states that music has a significant place in human life, and its therapeutic effect could be observed. Music can affect people in a positive or a negative way according to an individual's mood. In this part of the thesis, the effect of music on the behaviour and psychology of queer melancholic individuals is reflected the reader through the characters in Cunningham's novel, *A Home.*

In the novel, the positive effects of music are prominently observed in Jonathan, Bobby, and Alice. Jonathan and Bobby often listen to "Tore Down a La Rimbaud" by Van Morrison, which is a Lyric. Morrison's song was influenced by the poems of a French poet Arthur Rimbaud, who is one of the greatest representatives of symbolism and challenges the tradition of the term. Rimbaud's relationship with his mother is comparable to that of Jonathan, the protagonist in the novel under review. Rimbaud is a person who was alienated from society just as Jonathan and their melancholic moods can sometimes be seen to be similar.

In the article "Frontiers in Psychology", the relationship between melancholia and listening to sad music, is discussed. "The researchers found that sad music has a

counterintuitive appeal – it actually makes people feel better" (Kot, 2014, p. 1). People can sometimes uplift their feelings by listening to sad music, and in this way, get spiritual relief. The research shows that music with emotional intensity, whether sad or happy, stimulates the pleasure centre in the brain just like eating food, and the fluctuating rhythmic structure of music provides relaxation and creates deep emotions. Music is mainly focused on emotions:

> Evolutionary speculations have tended to focus on single-source causes such as music as an indicator of biological fitness, music as a means for social and emotional communication, music as social glue, music as a way of facilitating caretaker mobility, music as a means of tempering anxiety about mortality, music as escapism or transcendental meaning, music as a source of pleasure, and music as a means for passing time (Schäfer et al., 2013, p. 3).

Music, as indicated above, plays a significant role in people's lives and is listened to at different times and for various purposes. In one of the scenes in the novel, as Jonathan and Bobby listen to "Tore Down a La Rimbaud", the sad melody of the music releases the sorrow in their sad soul and creates refreshment. This is evident in the scene where Jonathan and Bobby were having a good time listening to music and dancing despite their troubled lives (Cunningham, 1990, p. 81). The room which is in a separate part of their home in Cleveland is sacred to Jonathan and Bobby. That room is not just an ordinary one for it, signifies a temple of spiritual emancipation and psychological therapy to Jonathan and Bobby. A place for momentary epiphany.

The characters in the novel highlight the importance of music, dance, drugs, and entertainment in their queer lives. For example, the first time Alice tried using drugs with Jonathan and Bobby, she felt better herself. Also, the effect of the drug made her sympathise with her husband on sex. From then on, she began to take kindly to sexual intercourse with her husband which did not use to be appealing to her previously. Using drugs and listening to music drastically changed her attitude towards her husband and restored their relationship. It could be clearly seen from this scene how listening to music and using drugs affected the characters for the better. In a period of intense oppression against homosexuals, when Jonathan and Bobby realized that their sexual orientation is not acceptable in their society, they resorted to music as a healing therapy in managing their melancholia.

The novel also highlights the difference between Bobby's tastes in music as that of Jonathan's. It suggests that Bobby has better taste than Jonathan. However, Bobby was comfortable listening to Jonathan's choices of music which also affected him positively. Also, in the scene where Jonathan was at loss with words to have a meaningful conversation with his father on his sexual orientation, and personality, music came to his rescue. When the conversation did not happen, he employed music and dance as tools of coping with melancholy.

In the America of the 1960s, the characters of the novel Jonathan and Bobby, portray queer people in terms of their sexual orientation and in their unusual 'selves' that cause sadness in their lives. Since being despised as an individual in life could inevitably pave the way for deep wounds. The wound in the human spirit is a small part of melancholia, which translates to sorrow. The sorrow that melancholic experience can be managed through listening to music as there is a strong connection between music and melancholy. The melancholic that lives his/her pains within himself/herself, can ease out his sorrow by listening to music. Perhaps, Jonathan experiences a vehement release of pain, sorrow, and sadness by listening to music in a way that he has never been able to before.

In a different study, Researchers at the University of Groningen indicate in an experiment that listening to sad or happy music not only puts people in a different mood, but also changes what people notice (Avramova, 2019, p. 2). In another study, people who listened to happy and sad music and how it affected their moods were observed. Those who listened to happy music were found to be happy and those who listened to sad music were seen to be sad. It is clearly visible how listening to music has affected the fictional characters of Jonathan, Bobby, and Alice. Music has a magical way of affecting people. The way songs affect people can vary from person to person. Sad songs, however, do not always have negative effects on people. It can be used to mark the mood of a situation, or event like funeral music, played in a funeral ceremony to capture the mood of the event. It is also played "when confronted with difficulties or a sad mood. It is expected to improve mood, help cope with difficulties, and provide comfort" (Bogt et al., 2019, p. 259).

Cunningham, in his novel, masterfully reveals the positive and negative effects of listening to music through the queer melancholic characters. In the inner beings of the characters, the difficulties of the period and losses that are caused by the gender roles, which were systematically imposed by society, caused deep wounds and sorrow on the queer characters. The novel reflects to the reader how the characters in the novel, managed the losses caused by normative society in their lives. Jonathan, Bobby, and Alice like everyone else, by listening to music attempt to ease their internalized troubled lives, even if intermittently throughout the novel.

CONCLUSION

The word ‘queer’ has come to be used for a myriad of disparaged sexual activities, which had been considered as abnormality before the 1870s, and is now used as an only identity of an individual. After Foucault’s analysis of the deprecation of homosexuals, condemned as guilty and declared as sick, the queer theory gains momentum. Foucault explains that homosexuality and homosexuals are products of nineteenth-century discourses, which structured and condemned them in religious, psychological, medical, and legal discussions that aim at producing another form of sexuality. Judith Butler claims that gender is not the cause of performative activity, but, the performative result of repeated action. She further explains that it is a series of repeated acts that constitute the subject, rather than being performed by the subject. Gender is always under restriction by the instruments of prohibition and taboo and constantly overloaded by the threat of one’s being cast out of society. Sedgwick blames the male majority for exchanging women between different families to construct society as male-dominated. In all, queer would mean different things in different periods in history.

Earlier in the 19th century, the word queer was used on individuals who do not conform to the norms of society and on others who have a different sexual orientation outside heterosexualism. The word ‘queer’ was generally used in gossips and discussions about other people other than the person speaking to refer to outlaws and non-conforming characters of the time. In the twentieth century, however, it came to be used by people, who are gays and lesbians, as well as people of other representations: as in outlaws, bisexuals, groups, and organizations as a word for identification and assertion of their presence. This was the time America was witnessing a sharp increase in the population of lesbians and gays and the formation of groups who see themselves as vessels of emancipation for the marginalized. In-between, the word queer has been twisted and rotated to represent power in the war of public awareness and acceptability by queer individuals against heterosexuality. At some point, it represented groups of people with the common goal of making their

voices heard and be taken seriously. The queer theory opens up a space for many identities to well define queer as Halperin states:

> at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing particular to which it necessarily refers. It is an identity without an essence. 'Queer' then, demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative... [Queer] describes a horizon of possibility whose precise extent and heterogeneous scope cannot in principle be delimited in advance (Halperin, 1995, p.62).

The word queer is widely acknowledged and widely discussed mainly because of its different use and representations.

Melancholia stems from a natural human experience of suffering becoming the object of a cultural establishment, within the normal range of human; being unhappy, discouraged, disappointed, dejected, depressed melancholy, and manifests as a mood or emotion. Everyone can suffer from this kind of metaphorical melancholia, however, by relying on the rich history or the theme in literature and philosophy that creates this imagery of the materialization of a psychological experience, we give meaning to the term. Sigmund Freud, as the main reference point of this thesis discusses melancholy in "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917) as the 'loss of a loved object' that can lead to mourning. It is a concept that throws light on how the normative society affects queer individuals through the structures and institutions that may lead them to melancholia. It also explains how queer people deal with the losses they suffer as a process of internal struggles in their lives. Against this background, it is visible that society promotes and encourages heterosexuality and a strong rejection of homosexuality. Butler also explains it as an account of identification by incorporating the loss object that "…seeks to situate the melancholic condition of the bodily ego in terms of the loss of the same-sexed object under existing conditions of compulsory heterosexuality" (Butler, 1995, p. 165). This narrative suggests that the 'lack of substance' of that 'loss' may be ascribed "…to the foreclosed status of homosexual love as that which 'never was' and 'never was lost" (1995, p. 165). "In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself" (Freud, 1917, p. 246).

In "The Ego and Id" (1923), Freud admits that melancholy which is the unfinished process of grieving, is at the centre in the formation of those identifications which forms the ego itself (Freud, 1921). He further remarks that "the ego is first and

foremost a bodily ego" (1921, p. 16). This discussion is further examined by other authors who agree that society through its numerous agent forces homosexual individuals to a loss and to have a new sex orientation in the form of heterosexualism. Judith Butler in her discussion also believes that queer individuals are oppressed and coaxed into heterosexuality in normative society. In a later book, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1996), Butler elucidates upon the criticism of her work. Furthermore, she writes:

> 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 (Butler, 1996, p.95).

What gives an individual identity is not from what he/she does essentially, however, what the individual is biologically constituted. Although gender is performative, it cannot be deferred on the wish to do so, which is its precondition to do so under restriction, and may relegate queer characters, finally to melancholia.

The history of melancholy is of interest to the reader because it was one of the principal forms of madness in earlier history. The concept runs through the entire history of humoral. Melancholia is described as black bile in one of the peccant humor, recognized in Hippocratic and Galenic medicine in India (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 1). The study might also be helpful to the modern anthropologists and epistemologists of medicine to elaborate upon concepts currently in use in culturally constructed diseases, just as somatization and depression which have never been included in any knowledge of medical history. It also teaches us plenty of useful concepts, schemed, and analytical processes that could be used today and to understand the recent developments in cultural psychology.

The significance of events in our lives can cause a meaningful change in our behavioural patterns. In the event of the loss of a loved one, he/she takes full responsibility for the cause of the death by believing he/she has done little or nothing

to save the dead. The dark period of mourning, blaming, and self-pity follow. Freud insists that understanding how people react to events is closely connected to the concepts of mourning and melancholia (Freud, 1917, p. 153). He argues that depression is a concept that expresses a very different situation and should not be confused with melancholia. Huge losses in our lives tend to last long in our memory, and painfully too. Freud, argues that "Mourning and Melancholia" is a useful guide on how people deal with inevitable losses in their lives, or otherwise, and without proper management, could lead to personal blame, self-pity, withdrawal, pain, and grief (1917, p. 153). However, when managed properly, it can generate powerful positive energy.

Cunningham masterfully explores the affective processes and behaviours of his queer characters in his novel, *A Home*. This book which was recorded as his first novel highlights the inherent consistencies in the lives of queer individuals in a construct normative society as experienced by the characters of his novel. Cunningham, by showcasing the difference in human characters, leaving a den to establish a home, difficulties queer characters encounter while living in a normative society, exposition of queer family structures induced society. AIDS crisis in that time of history, continued search for self-identity to fit into society, and how music was used to ease pains and change the attitudes of queer individuals in the novel.

The novel explores leaving the den to prepare one for you which is at the very core of the narrative, *A Home,* and develops into a tale of four cities. In line with the growing up of its characters, the plot of the novel evolves, reflecting first the juvenile nature of youth, then the instinct or reflex of chasing dreams in a big and promising city, and finally facing the painful realities of adulthood and life. Jonathan and Bobby leave their Cleveland homes at different times to live in New York, the story changes; it will change again when they finally moved to and ended in Woodstock with Clare and Rebecca –a house at the end of the world.

One of the social aspects of people in the society explored by Cunningham in his novel was that humans exhibit and showcase differences in characters. In the fictional character used to capture this essence of human differences, we are introduced to two childhood friends, Bobby and Jonathan whose characters did not match up in

many cases. Although they were both queer, Bobby was not as determined as Jonathan to the continued practice of his gender identity. Following their loss, Bobby withdrew to his shell in an attempt to replace his loss by replacing it with a newfound love in the form of cooking, and he subsequently never had sex with a male-sex partner, unlike Jonathan. We also see other character discrepancies in Alice and Clare, Erich and Jonathan, Ned and Burt, and Bobby's mother and Alice.

Again, the novel explores the difficulties queer individuals suffer in a construct society concerning mourning and melancholia, as it is seen, in the queer characters. The psychological impact is reflected on both the characters of queer individuals and their families in dealing with the stigma associated with being a homosexual that may relegate them to melancholia. Their experiences show that it is not easy for queer individuals and their parents to live in a society that systematically molds, and induces people to heterosexuality.

Another point worthy of mention is the way families were affected in society that forces heterosexuality on its people. The structures of society that process family values and constitutions sided with heterosexualism makes family composition unacceptable without it constituting of a man, a woman, and a child or children living under one roof. It prohibits people from freedom of sexual expressions and experiences outside the acceptable practices, and how queer characters are forced to attach themselves to a family in an attempt to fit into the norms of society to gain acceptability.

At about the time the novel was written, the deadly HIV was breaking out and ravaging the young American population. Against the background where little or nothing was known about this pandemic, society came to see it as a curse and direct punishment for homosexuals. The devastating effects of this discriminative approach by society are evident in the ordeals of Erich, exposed to the disease and secluded in the home where Clare, Bobby, and Jonathan live, and also in the lamentations of both Jonathan and Clare.

Relatively, the matrix of society that forces gender identity and promotes heterosexualism as the only accepted sexual practice pitches society against homosexuals who constantly explore different options of fitting into the society.

Throughout the narrative, almost all of the characters are seen to be constantly adjusting their persons in response to pressures from society, a search that ended with both winners and mostly losers. This search was a journey that took them through many hills and mountains that relegated them to melancholia as illustrated in the novel.

In addition, the role of music as a tool for spiritual and psychological therapy is explored in the novel. This is indicated in the momentary ease of pain and anxiety by both Bobby and Jonathan as they listened to music and by the positive set of mind affected on Alice after the use of drugs and listening to music in the company of Bobby and Jonathan.

Finally, for Jonathan, the act of swimming in ice-cold water was a challenge to live despite his diseased body. It was a salvation from the prohibitions and norms of society, and he experienced being together with two homosexual people there, Bobby and Erich. He was aware that he would die because of AIDS, yet he would die as fulfilled and enlightened. Unlike Jonathan, it is not known that Bobby is satisfied or not. Also, the image of the lake was used to reconcile the resolution of the protagonist, Jonathan, in the discovery of Mother Nature in fulfilment of his search for personal identity, and just like epiphanies of queer melancholic characters that justify the topic of this work.

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