

Universidade do Minho
Escola de Letras, Artes e Ciências Humanas

**FEAR, FLIGHT, AND FIGHT: THE
REPRESENTATION OF GAY LOVE IN
BRITISH FILMS**

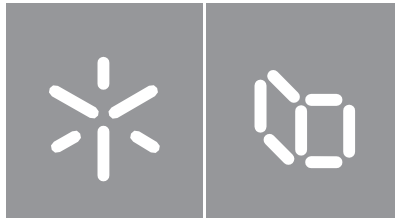
DIOGO ROSAS

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THE REPRESENTATION OF GAY
LOVE IN BRITISH FILMS**

Master Thesis
Masters in English Language, Literature and
Culture

Work developed under the supervision of
Dr. Joanne Madin Vieira Paisana

September 2023

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PREFACE

I would like to start by saying that this project would have never been possible without the invaluable help and support of those who were not only to support me, but also to question me and all my pre-established ideas and notions around the theme here discussed. I am eternally grateful for all the afternoons, evenings and sometimes even phone calls spent for nothing other than to take this dissertation further.

Firstly, to Dr. Joanne Madin Paisana whose support and patience were determinant for the conclusion of my work. Her generous opinions and insights helped me push further what would otherwise have been shallow and plain.

I am also eternally grateful to my family and friends who were there every step of the way and never doubted my potential and were keen on my success.

Without the support of these people, completing this thesis would not have been possible. I am grateful for their presence, blunt and sharp honesty which I shall always cherish.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Diogo Rosas

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THE REPRESENTATION OF GAY LOVE IN BRITISH FILMS

ABSTRACT

In Britain, especially in some major TV shows and films, gay men seem to have increasingly important roles. This is a major difference from about sixty years ago when seemingly gay men started to appear on the big screen and when their portrayal was ridiculously stereotyped. With this in mind, the main objective of this dissertation is to analyse the changing media representation of gayness in Britain through analysis of two films, *Victim* (1961) directed by Basil Dearden and starring Dirk Bogarde and Sylvia Syms, and *Clapham Junction* (2007) directed by Adrian Shergold and starring Tom Beard, James Bellamy, Robin Berry and Rachael Blake. In order to do this, an initial summary of Britain's gay history based on the work of Matt Cook, Robert Mills, Randolph Trumbach, and H. G. Cocks will be presented. The choice of films for analysis was based on the need to show time-related differences of gayness in the media. After contextualization of each film, the evolution of the portrayal of gayness in film will be analysed, showing how the current relative ease which many gay men seem to feel about their sexual identity, their fight for more inclusiveness, can be seen clearly in the filmic portrayal of London's evolving gay subcultures. In the final chapter, it will be shown through the manner in which the two films discuss matters that are so absolutely and fundamentally transcendent- love, fear and hatred, how they shed light on the importance of these sentiments in a gay context and ultimately impact contemporary Britain. *Victim* and *Clapham Junction* demonstrate how the notions of being gay in London have changed in both the legal and cultural arenas.

Keywords: (Sub)Culture, Gay, Film, *Victim*, *Clapham Junction*, London, Representation

A REPRESENTAÇÃO DO AMOR GAY NOS FILMES BRITÂNICOS

RESUMO

Na Grã-Bretanha, especialmente em alguns dos principais programas de TV e filmes, a comunidade gay parece ter papéis cada vez mais importantes. Esta é uma grande diferença em relação a cerca de sessenta anos atrás, quando homens aparentemente gay começaram a aparecer no grande ecrã e quando a sua representação era ridícula e estereotipada. Nesta luz, o principal objetivo desta dissertação é analisar a mudança na representação da homossexualidade na Grã-Bretanha por meio da análise de dois filmes, *Victim* (1961), dirigido por Basil Dearden e protagonizado por Dirk Bogarde e Sylvia Syms, e *Clapham Junction* (2007), dirigido por Adrian Shergold e protagonizado por Tom Beard, James Bellamy, Robin Berry e Rachael Blake. Para tal, será apresentado um resumo inicial da história gay da Grã-Bretanha com base na obra de Matt Cook, Robert Mills, Randolph Trumbach e H. G. Cocks. A escolha dos filmes para análise partiu da necessidade de mostrar as diferenças temporais da homossexualidade nos *media*. Após a contextualização de cada filme, será analisada a evolução da representação da homossexualidade no cinema, mostrando como a atual relativa facilidade que muitos homens gay parecem sentir na sua identidade sexual, na sua luta por mais inclusão, pode ser vista claramente na representação filmica das subculturas gay de Londres. No capítulo final, será mostrado como os dois filmes discutem questões que são absoluta e fundamentalmente transcendentemente - amor, medo e ódio, como eles sublinham a importância desses sentimentos num contexto gay e, finalmente, o seu impacto na Grã-Bretanha contemporânea. *Victim* e *Clapham Junction* demonstram como as noções de ser gay em Londres mudaram nas arenas legais e culturais.

Palavras-chave: (Sub)Cultura, Gay, Filme, *Victim*, *Clapham Junction*, Londres, Representação.

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation was elaborated under the supervision of Dra. Joanne Madin Vieira Paisana and constitutes the final project for the Master's degree in English Language, Literature and Culture, Department of English and North American Studies, University of Minho, Braga.

The title *Fear, Flight and Fight* is appropriate for this dissertation because gay men throughout history have lived in fear of being discovered, publicly shamed, and even sentenced to death. Sometimes their distress was so great they would have to flee. Eventually, as this dissertation will demonstrate, they decided to fight back for what they believed was their right. Their right to love.

To remember something that has happened a long time ago is perhaps difficult for the average individual, who tends to be far too busy with his/her many daily affairs and who will have selected information to remember and discarded that which is unimportant as s/he travels on life's journey. The human memory needs to be supplemented and supported with various aides. Nowadays, we do not need to carve or paint our discoveries, ways and customs on stone for we can use advanced forms of media technology such as video and voice recordings, digitalized written texts and images, etc., to do it. Controversial themes like gay love have gradually been broached using this media technology and a wider public has been reached, leading to important debates on issues significant to all or parts of a society.

Every society has a collective memory. Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) was one of the first thinkers to broach the subject of memory on a group rather than an individual level. He defined it as only operating within the realms of a collectively, and different groups of people were said to have different collective memories which are always of a selective nature. Jan Assman talks about cultural memory (one that is shared by a certain group of people) and distinguishes it from 'communicative' or 'everyday' memory (oral tradition and daily speech). For Erll, Nünning and Young (2008), "cultural memory is based on communication through media" (p. 6) and acts as carriers for cultural memory in its many shapes and forms, preserving its message(s) and meaning(s)¹. Film is a good example as it may act as a communication carrier for memory of a given culture at a certain time and place. It may provide clear

¹ More information about these concepts may be found in the book *Cultural Memory Studies* (2008) by Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning, & Sarah B. Young.

insight into a group's customs, traditions and belief systems thereby allowing later generations to know about them, which in turn fosters a better understanding of their present.

For a very long time, the actual and figurative witch-hunt for gays and 'devil-worshipping women' was great, for the establishment saw these two groups as uncontrollable threats to their orderly society. What compelled me to write about being gay in Britain, specifically in London, was not only because I am a proud, openly gay person myself, who loves British culture and delights in its progressive gay and inventive subcultures, but also because it is so important to remember gay history and its influence on contemporary British society.

What was previously universally censored and punished is now integrated into mainstream society. In the past, if two men were caught in the so-called molly houses, places where they could dress up and take on male and female roles, they would be treated with great contempt and even imprisoned. Nowadays, there is more public acceptance of these rituals. Their portrayal/representation has changed. Indeed, it has been remediated in different forms. Regarding film, so much has changed since gay men first appeared on the big screen that nowadays their prominence implies greater importance and significance.

Gay is the preferable word-choice used in this dissertation when referring to homosexuality in general and especially in modern times.² It has a more positive connotation regarding homosexuality than other possible labels such as 'queer' which may be understood more as an umbrella term and not an exclusive synonym for gay or homosexual, or 'puff' which gained a pejorative meaning. In this dissertation, along with *gay*, the term *homosexual* will also be used when discussing same-sex relationships.

² The word homosexual, being a cross between Latin and Greek, originated in Germany in 1869 and was introduced to the English language in 1891, according to H. G. Cocks (2007).

CHAPTER 1

HIDE AND SEEK

An overview of the English gay culture since the Middle Ages

1.1-Introduction

The children's game Hide and Seek is an apt title for this first chapter, the aim of which is to provide an overview of gay culture in London since the Middle Ages, when until fairly recently acting as opposed to just being gay was highly inadvisable. Men did it anyway and sought the company of one another in various manners and disguises, as will be demonstrated later. This chapter will focus on seven important aspects of gay culture: name calling and labelling, gender transgressions, the law, auto-exposure of gay men, medical science, the changing attitudes of the early twentieth century, and finally, the gay liberation movement. These aspects are important because they help us to understand the changing cultural constructs around the representation of gay love, but which in the past had different names and was understood in different ways.

1.2-Name-calling and labelling

In Medieval and Renaissance London, and elsewhere in England, a word other than *gay* or *homosexual* was used to refer to men who desired/loved other men, and that was a biblical term *sodomy*. The term *sodomite* referred to someone akin to being gay or having a huge sexual appetite. Nevertheless, the term was open for interpretation, and it might or might not refer to anal sexual relations between men as was popularly portrayed later. Nevertheless, its biblical origins are quite clear. According to the Bible, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by God who was enraged at seeing the lustfulness of men "who sinned shamefully against Nature" (Mills, p. 15). They were condemned for all eternity for it. The term was also used during this time to defame political enemies. If a certain noble or clergyman wished to rid themselves of individuals who were dangerous liabilities to their ambitious ends, they would often accuse them of sodomy.

Another common belief in the Middle Ages was that sodomy was synonymous with being effeminate, for it was said that "desire was inordinately female" (*ibid.* p. 14), as it was associated to the Original Sin. For example, *sodomite* was a term used to attack male members of the English court who

were more content with the “pleasures of bed” rather than with hunting and preferred “verbal dexterity” to a physical combat (*ibid.* p. 18). Moreover, Mills continues, evidence indicates that sodomites from the Middle Ages were individuals who took good care of themselves and kept up with the trends. They were fashionable people, not necessarily wealthy ones, who prided themselves on looking good. This association is an interesting one and the second chapter will show how fashion and being gay have been going hand in hand for quite some time.

England and France were often not the best of friends, and during the reign of William Rufus (1056-1100), who insisted on keeping the political ties between England and Normandy – he was after all the Duke of Normandy – the chronicler William Malmsbury pointed out the gender transgressions in his court. The criticisms included “taking a swipe at a fashion for long hair, fancy clothes and curly toed shoes” which was “the epitome of style for youth” (*ibid.* p. 20). By writing this he meant to associate such outward signs of sodomy with the French. The same treatment would be given to other foreigners by commentators, even more forcibly in post-WWII Britain, namely with reference to the Germans.

During the reign of King Henry VIII (1509-47), homosexual activities were known as *buggery*. The Buggery Act (1533) decreed homosexual acts “to be from [t]henceforth adjudged felony”. The punishments would range from death to “losses and penalties of their goods, chattels, debts, lands, tenements and hereditaments” (Pickering, p. 266). Different penalties could be applied to the criminals, depending on their rank. According to Robert Mills, (2007), evidence suggests that the higher the rank the more severe the punishment would be. Impalement, for instance, was a typical punishment and consisted in penetrating a man who had been accused of sodomy through his backside with a sharp stake.

Molly was another name which had its roots in the early 1700s and was originally used to refer to male prostitutes. Renaissance mollies were rather creative and well-organized regarding the organization of their encounters, as will be demonstrated in a subsequent section in this chapter. Among themselves they would take on certain female names by which they would be known in their gatherings. Usually, the fashionable gentlemen would call one another *Madame* followed by their *molly-name*.

Modern times would witness a new slang language called Polari, “adapted from criminal argot” (Cocks, p. 108), used between gay men who, for instance, would call each other “Mary-Anne, Margery or poof” (*id ibid*), the latter being nowadays a derogatory term used against modern gays.

The more modern label of *queer*, in its turn, was appropriated by the gay community and its past pejorative meaning has come to signify something empowering to the overarching gay LGBTQI+ public³. As more and more societal acknowledgement (not necessarily all positive) has been given to this *alternative way*, the terms 'homosexual' and 'queer' were substituted for the French word *gay* which is still synonymous with 'happy' but Such an appropriation is suggestive of a steadily growing acceptance in many (not all) parts of the world of the 'gay identity' not only as a sexual orientation but also as a lifestyle (Garrett, p. 145).

1.3-Homosexuality and gender transgressions

London in the Middle Ages was not quite as diverse, bold and outward-looking as it is today. According to Robert Mills, a chronicler from Winchester wrote in the 1190s that male-male relations prospered in a very different institutional context: prostitution. Men who wished to be with other men, being forbidden to do so out in the open, would disguise themselves as women and look for men on the streets. Prostitution teemed with individuals whose sexual orientation, and in many cases gender identity, did not fit the norms of society. This was a time when there were no notions of, let alone distinctions between, gender identity and sexuality in the terms discussed today. This ties in rather well with Mill's argument that a great deal of "same sex relations" might have been "compatible with cross-sexual relations and crossdressing" (Mills, p. 43) It also suggests that what are regarded currently as relatively new notions were anything but this. No one thought of them in these terms.

But prostitution was only one of the situations where homosexuality thrived. The monasteries have long been associated with same sex relations and there are many cases of priests, monks, bishops and friars and all the other ecclesiastical ranks associating with male youths. There was also a huge affluence of clerics to brothels and prominent members of the Church of England would patronize the many houses lodging prostitutes (male and female) and their clients in London (Rutherford).

This situation is particularly important as it served as part of the argument Henry VIII used to implement the clerical reformations he desired. According to Trumbach in *Renaissance Sodomy, 1500-*

³ LGBTQI+ stands for Lesbians, Gay, Bisexuals, Trans, Queer, Intersex and much more. It is the expanded and more inclusive version of the first LGBT label in the 1990s standing for Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transsexuals.

1700, once sodomy was made a criminal offence the ecclesiastical courts were stripped of their jurisdiction over it and their powers were given to the secular state. The monarch's political reasons were quite explicit. Not only did he desire to marry a second wife, Anne Boleyn, but he also wished the law to be in his favour while securing the legitimacy of this second marriage. The aforementioned "Buggery Act" was a reinforcement of the already existing criminalization of Medieval gay men and was used against the religious establishment to discredit it.

Same-sex relations in the religious orders were especially common in England between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, but due to the danger it represented to keep a boy in public, the holy men would take their male youths under their wings on the pretext that the latter were their apprentices (and in many cases they were indeed *bone fidi ones*), so as to be able to consummate their love and affection for each other. Examples of effeminacy as a sign of being gay are shown in Medieval documents telling of individuals who would disguise themselves as females in order to gain a man's attention. On one occasion reported in these documents, a male was taught by a woman how to dress up like a lady. The man (who would be called a transvestite today) worked as an embroiderer in Oxford, an occupation mostly attributed to the 'gentle sex' at that time, and while living and working there, s/he had several sex encounters with scholars, friars, foreign men and "countless other clerics in exchange for money" (Mills, p. 42).

As Trumbach reveals, several historians found evidence of particular role-related (sexual) practices between men which were age defined. It is quite possible that men, including gentlemen, either married or unmarried, had affairs with their servants.⁴ The older men in the homosexual relationship would often grow a beard, a sign that he had managed to successfully go through the rite of sexual passage between (passive) youth to (active) adult. The sexual roles were very important and highly significant here. If two men were engaged in a relationship and sex was involved, the adults would take the active part whereas the younger one would more likely assume the passive one. This idea was so deeply rooted that it became a symbol, not of sodomy but of manhood, not of sin but of respectability, for it enhanced the older man's feeling of male sexual superiority. The boys would later on be encouraged by their beloved to seek a woman, get married and start a family. At this point the relationship between

⁴ The youth would be kept as a sort of wife or mistress, similar to what happened in Ancient Greece, where it was common for adult men to have a relationship with younger boys.

the two men would cease to be a sexual one and the former adult lovers would often become the godfathers to their ex-younger lover's child.

But if this dissertation has so far led to the idea that male-male love had begun to enjoy more acceptability because it enhanced the older man's sexual power (a rather praised manly quality), that was not to be the case until many centuries later. People were still very afraid of being caught. However, given that such practices were becoming more common throughout the country, it is possible that more males were prone to desire adolescent boys even if they did not "act upon this desire" (*ibid*, p. 49). Nevertheless, nothing kept men from having sexual relations with women, too, somewhat akin to modern day bisexuality.

In terms of public portrayal of gender transgressions, the theatre has long related to this and Renaissance England had quite a few dramatists who depicted male-male love. Playwrights and directors portrayed gender transgressions and would often choose "beautiful boys" who would be "transformed into women" (*ibid*, p. 57). The characters were obviously male but during the course of the play they would disguise themselves as women, be fancied by another male who taking the masked youth for the *real thing*, would make sexual advances to him. These plays would also show the standard patterns of homosexual lifestyles: friendship between an older and a younger man which is "concluded when the older promotes the marriage of the younger" (*ibid*. p. 65).

Not everyone accepted these practices and the Puritans in particular railed quite effectively against the London stage where "sodomy was often promoted" (*ibid*, p. 56). If in the Middle Ages the Puritans sought to put an end to these theatrical performances by prosecuting (sometimes unsuccessfully) the perpetrators, the Renaissance Societies for the Reformation of Manners (henceforth, SRM) took this matter far more seriously. Some of their actions consisted of raiding and closing the theatres for their "sexual frankness" on stage, as they displayed "unparalleled blasphemies" (*ibid*. p. 72). Men told boys that it was only right that they should have sexual relations because the same was done even in their "Fore-father's time" (*id ibid*). This was probably a reference to the ancient Greeks or even the Celts. This manner of thinking anticipates a gay subculture⁵ for which the capital (and its theatres) would later be so famed.

⁵ This pre-gay subculture stands for the practices that were taking place in London before the word 'gay' was coined. In the Middle Ages gay men were submitted to public humiliation where they were forced to wear women's clothes and forced to

The mollies were men who dressed like women. They would come from many social ranks wear women's clothes (cross-dressing) and exercise "lady-like accomplishments" such as singing, dancing and playing the guitar, at exclusive clubs where they felt safe to act according to their own nature. They would "play with fans and mimic the women, make curtsies, hug, kiss, tickle and feel each other" (Trumbach, p. 79). They would use feminine voices, rebuke others for not attending more frequently and call one another Madame" or mollies (*id ibid*). They had specific rituals which were very likely based upon the punishments effeminate men received in the previous eras. "Mock-groaning and christening" were typical at these reunions wherein one of the guests would enact a woman giving birth, while another would stand by playing the midwife who would help deliver the baby: "a wooden doll" (*ibid*. p. 81). If in the Middle Ages these enactments were forms of punishment for those accused of sodomy – usually followed by the pillory, Renaissance Englishmen seem to have been more daring and appropriated such cruelty for their own purposes. These practices were more pronounced in the capital,⁶ where many would flee and "enjoy their new identities" in "the large city's sexual subculture" (*ibid*. pp. 93-94), one comprised not by priests or aristocrats but mainly by poor, unmarried men aged between twenty to thirty.

The places where such gatherings occurred were either taverns or alehouses, but the hosts could also be cooks, fruiterers, vintners and victuallers who would allow this flamboyant clientele to enter a private backroom in their establishment. The owners would use women's names and were probably mollies themselves. But the meeting places could also be a private house, or for the more daring, public establishments which would open under the pretence of some other 'proper' activity. Nonetheless, the activities taking place there were far from being *respectable*. From "kissing and groping each other, dancing and singing bawdy songs" among other forms of entertainment so far covered in this chapter, "a public sexual subculture" was beginning to appear and consisted mostly of "men in their twenties and thirties" (*id ibid*) who had sex with each other. However, there were exceptions to this, for some 20–60-year-olds would seek willing prepubescent boys (12-16 years old). Some, often aristocrats and religious ministers, would keep a long-term relationship with their youngsters (*id ibid*).

The Molly-houses contributed a great deal to publicising homosexuality and all the other associated behaviours such as transvestism, partying and clubbing, activities which seem to be tirelessly

perform a mock-birth, where a doll would be given to them as if it were a baby they had just given birth to. Later, Renaissance gay men adapted this cruel behaviour as a means of entertainment among themselves at the molly houses, for instance.

⁶ Nevertheless, reports about similar meetings have been found in Manchester and Gloucestershire.

connected even with today's gay culture. The newspapers saw to that. Theirs would be the job to disseminate the so-called sodomites' lifestyle and even though not in the most flattering manner, describe what they looked like, their interests and the supposed dangers they posed to an orderly society. They discovered and wrote about the most frequented meeting places. Great danger was upon the mollies and if exposed they had much to fear. A number of these men were married, had children and did not wish their families and friends to discover their *shame*. Therefore, they would often pay those who threatened to denounce them via black-mailing and live as quietly as possible with their secret.⁷ Between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a number of cases came to the courts about men being caught red-handed in homosexual acts. Some were even blackmailed by passers-by: "young underpaid", working class men "stationed in London" (*ibid.* p. 102) with too little to do, and police officers who would exploit the terrible persecution against homosexuals to earn some extra money. They would threaten to imprison the suspect if the latter did not pay the *fee* (even if the man in question was not guilty). Several would pay more than once in order to remain anonymous, while others would simply move away.

In Victorian London, the molly-houses continued to play their role catering to men from all classes, including "wealthy gentlemen" and those "of more noble rank" (*ibid.*, p. 116), where even soldiers would mix with *effeminate men* on occasional "evenings of music and dancing" (*id ibid*). These private gatherings were common and very well organized. So much so that the proprietors would even have housekeepers and a whole staff vouching for their guests' *every* needs.

A more commercial form of these entertainments might have begun in the 1850s and was called the fancy dress ball (*ibid*). Not being exclusively homosexual it provided a good motive for a man to go drag, a form of a club verging on a private society. The guests were welcomed to dress up, either shabbily or smartly, and some would put on costumes of historical figures. The same is suggestive of a sense of nationalism, or at least cultural pride as a couple, for instance, would favour Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, and another would opt for Romeo and Juliet. Attendance required a direct invitation and being in possession of a password for the organizers were highly methodical and employed their creativity and shrewdness to carry out these endeavours.

⁷ Blackmailing was not a practice of this period alone; it can be found in the Modern and Postmodern times, as will be demonstrated later.

It was not just the molly-houses the police were interested in. They were aware that London gay men were secretly meeting in the parks or public toilets for sex. Those who were caught would be taken to the police station and a great many of them would give accurate information of who they knew to be a homosexual, where homosexuals met, what they did, etc. which made the persecution far greater. However, if prosecution and persecution were meant to reduce, punish or eliminate homosexuality altogether, the endeavour was far from successful. It was quite the reverse for the practice continued and continues today. Instances of this will be analysed later in *Clapham Junction*.

Victorians who praised themselves for their propriety and respectability were, in fact, full of contradictions. If on the one hand they were deeply religious and viewed sex as a means of reproduction (a rather biblical maxim), theirs was also a time when prostitution reached unprecedented numbers and public sex scandals began to feed the masses. The streets of the capital teemed with people, both male and female being paid, mostly by other men, for sex. Sex continued to be ever pervasive and *cruising*⁸ was a constant practice in public places like the Royal Parks at night, the West End music halls and theatres.

Victorians were fond of professing morality and social responsibility, and they were ruthless towards homosexuality which in their eyes was an enormous offense. Not only was same-sex desire criminalized, but it was also silenced, and the matter was never explicitly named. Rather, terms like “unnatural crime” were used, since “such abnormalities” were not supposed to be named least of all in the newspapers. Editors would make sure that the real words to refer to *it* would be written with asterisks or dashes (*ibid*, p. 107). Lord Alfred Douglas (also known as Bosie and the lover of the celebrated author Oscar Wilde) used a similar evasive strategy when he wrote the poem “*Two Loves*” where the lines “the love that dare not speak its name” became a famous mantra for later generations fighting for gay liberalization.

Inspired by classical Greece, “including its subtly homoerotic ideals of beauty”, (*ibid*, p. 139) the artistic and literary movement called Aestheticism aided the early gay cause. It completely severed art from all its moral utility and devoted itself completely to the search and contemplation of beauty. Art was not supposed to function as a moral compass, but rather to provoke a passion “for intense feeling” (*ibid*. p.108). It was very convenient, one may argue, for Victorian gay men to accept these ideas as they were

⁸ Cruising is the act of searching for people to have sex with, usually in public places such as toilets and parks.

so compatible with their *natural instincts*. “Art for art’s sake” quite welcomed homosexuality and tended to produce a feeling of belonging and ease with oneself. As it was, artists and intellectuals who meant to defy the establishment produced great and exuberant forms of art promoting homosexuality. Examples would be those of the English poets Algernon Charles Swinburne and Christina Rossetti, Lord Alfred Douglas and Oscar Wilde.

Inspired by all the upheaval taking place in London, the writer and poet George Ives created a secret society called the Order of Chaeronea. Highly influenced by classical Greek mythology, it was vested in “setting all loves free” (*ibid.* p. 137), attracting several writers and poets to the gatherings. A sense of comradeship was promoted that prompted discussion and mutual support. Together the Chaeroneans would challenge the deeply moralized British society, kick-starting an “embryonic gay liberation” movement (*id. ibid.*). Oscar Wilde was prominent in this movement. He was the first who, during his trial, advocated same-sex love with an impeccable clarity and fearlessness. Invoking the Greek principles of beauty he found embodied in men, he declared that there was no shame nor sin in the love between two males, especially that between an older and a younger one. It was in his considered opinion the highest example of purity and perfection, “the noblest form of affection” (*ibid.* p. 140) that could be found both in Shakespeare’s works as well as those of Michelangelo. Despite his prodigious oratory, he was convicted for committing acts of “gross indecency” (*id. ibid.*). But from that moment onwards men in Britain and all over the world were listening to, reading and discussing his case. So much so, that his influence and popularity prevailed and has been an indispensable source of inspiration for those who were (and are as yet) willing to fight for the acceptance of homosexuality.

Nowadays, men at gay clubs and bars tend to dress like women (drag queen shows for instance), take women’s names (personas), dance exuberantly and lip-sync songs. Similarly, it is also common practice for some gay men to gather as friends and *go drag* in the private comfort of one of their homes.

1.4-Auto-exposure of homosexuality

Certain British gay men felt they had nothing to fear by openly and unapologetically declaring their homosexuality. An example of this is that of Frederick Park and James Boulton, two middle-class men born in London who owned an antique shop. They lived as man and wife at their house in St. Pancras, London and it is said that “they kept an entire wardrobe of dresses, jewellery and wigs” (*ibid.*

pp. 121-123) which they would use when going out to the West End area. In one of these night digressions, they would transform into Fanny and Stella respectively and strut along the streets of London which would frequently lead them (in)to trouble.

Boulton had an affair with an upper-class man who was no less a person than Lord Arthur Clinton, the Duke of Newcastle and a former cabinet minister. This is a particularly important story as it helps to understand the events taking place during this time regarding homosexuals. The police were more determined to capture the *culprits* and would stop at nothing to achieve their ends. Some of the tactics were imprisoning individuals they knew were homosexual and threatening them with heavy sentences if they did not provide names, addresses and evidence to convict other homosexuals, especially those the police had been trying to arrest for a long time. Park and Boulton were two such persons. The result was that no sooner had this *witch-hunt* begun than homosexual men were giving their own friends and acquaintances away in the hope of being released. The same happened with Park and Boulton who had been arrested one night for disrupting the peace at “the fashionable Burlington Arcade” (*id ibid*) while walking the area as if they were its owners, teasing the surrounding men on their way. The police had taken an interest in the two men and strongly suspected them to be prostitutes, which was never proved. What seemed to be “overwhelming evidence against them”, the letters they wrote to their respective lovers, the testimony of Lord Clinton’s maid revealing how Bolton frequented the duke’s house with great liberties, might not have been considered in the end (*id ibid*). After the trial, both men were acquitted. Had it been because money changed hands and deals were struck? An aristocrat had been involved and set free after all. Or was it public opinion changing in such a manner that a scandal of this nature would lose some of its negative connotation and gain a new one?

It is important to note that the defence made an interesting and perhaps unprecedented case in favour of these “unnatural crimes” (*ibid*. p.123). Drag, for instance, was presented to the jury “as something completely ordinary and familiar in middle-class Victorian society” (*id ibid*). What was more was that people who had known the couple for their artistic performances provided evidence of how positive an influence Boulton and Park had been on them. Not for nothing were their attendances at fairs and theatre plays where they entertained huge audiences and gained great popularity. In time, as word spread around the country, the duo was being invited to people’s homes, the Oxbridge Boat Race, high-class fancy dress events and, in the case of Boulton, to fox hunting. To all these they would attend dressed up as women.

It appears that Boulton and Park were being considered as human, no matter how puzzling they appeared to the average Victorian. Their story may be the origins of how modern gays became synonymous with being funny, humorous and *delightful*. Up to their court case, if anything, homosexuals were quite simply considered to be criminals.

1.5-Homosexuality and the law

Homosexual behaviour had been illegal in England since the 16th century, but the law was hardly ever enforced. It was only in the 1720s that specific (homo)sexual policing began, and it seems it began practically by accident, as according to Historian H. G. Cocks, the law's intention was to prevent more common offences: "theft, violence and political sedition" (p. 110). He also argues that around the 1780s a vast number of men had been arrested "for sodomy" (*id ibid*) which might have led the judicial system to review the Criminal Justice Act, 1820 and replace the pillory with prison terms ranging between 6 months to 2 years.

Resorting to the 16th century English laws against sodomy, the new 1820 legislation ruled that even one attempt at committing homosexual acts would count as a crime in and of itself and until 1861 sodomy/homosexuality was a capital offence. Before 1861, the culprits would have been sent to the pillory. There, with their "feet and hands placed in stocks" (Cocks, p. 111), they were exposed to public abuse, name-calling, beating and waste throwing. This was a punishment that was recuperated from the Middle Ages and reinforced in this period. These crimes as mentioned above were not named outright in the media for fear they might give the populace dangerous ideas, for example "the young or the poor who were not morally self-possessed" (*ibid*, p. 113) and were more prone to follow in the *disreputable* example. Punishments in general at this time were very common and what would be regarded today as severe, and what seem nowadays to be petty crimes or offences such as stealing to feed one's family could incur death by hanging or deportation, for example. Gay men might be hanged too or sent to the pillory where they would be subjected to public humiliation, thrown food at, as well as faeces, dead animals, rotten fruit or even stones, which could kill. The ridicule was so huge that these men would often be forced to wear women's clothes and enact a mock birth of a baby involving a wooden baby-substitute doll, in public (Cocks). Nowadays, in Britain people will not be sent to prison for being gay, but the social stigma is still quite effective. In fact, even after homosexuality was decriminalised in 1967, the

prejudice against gay men was so great that many would be violently attacked on the streets or at home, leading them to feel increasingly frightened and isolated.

The media, especially the press never discussed the subject openly and would use euphemistic terms such as “unnatural behaviour” (*id ibid*). Morality, propriety and a sense of social responsibility began to take hold in the nineteenth century, and it was established, therefore, that anyone seeking to undermine the system of good law and order was to be punished. But as a significant number of arrests were taking place in the nineteenth century, it was only natural that major public attention should have been paid to the subject. Reporters would flock to the courts where they would hear about the accused, the verdicts and subsequent punishments, which the papers would deliver as though as “a regular diet of shocking and sensational entertainment” especially for the lower classes (*ibid*. p. 114). But the cases which gained more publicity were those involving upper-class men, but as so often happens, these managed “to escape by virtue of their wealth” (*ibid*, p. 115). This particular topic shall be developed in the second chapter where examples will be provided.

The many scandals led to many arrests, but instead of underlining the unnaturalness of the crimes this produced instead a major awareness about homosexuality, providing varied information about who these individuals. Exposing various aspects of homosexuality to the public was a double-edged sword, for if it discouraged people from straying from the righteous path, it also glamorized the adventurous/exotic *homosexual world*.

According to Cocks, more than half of all offences had taken place either in streets, parks pubs and theatres. But perhaps the most notorious of them all were the urinals as they seemed to be far more appealing, mixing the excitement of meeting a man, the danger of being caught and the *openness* pre-modern gay men so desperately needed. While advising against the dangers of these areas, what those in power truly managed to do was advertise their *attractions*, making way for the audience to be not so much wary, but aware. As they knew so little, with all the scandals about how homosexuals posed a threat to orderly society, the people became aware and would soon make up their own minds about the matter. Areas such as Soho and Covent Garden – still popular gay areas today – had windows posted with bills warning passers-by to “Beware of Sods” (*id ibid*).

1.6-Homosexuality and medical science

At around the time “the modern homosexual emerged” and helped people to formulate an idea about “homosexual behaviour” and, subsequently, identity, measures were taken to stop it. (*ibid.* p. 135). Respectable doctors pondered whether there might be “an inner psychology and psyche” (*id ibid*) that could be linked to same-sex desire. Karl-Heinrich Ulrichs, for example, a German writer, theorized about three types of homosexuality, or Uranism (*id ibid*). All over the British Empire, prominent individuals adopted Ulrichs’ ideas. Henry Havelock Ellis, an Australian physician who studied human sexuality, defended that homosexuality was about a form of *inversion*, a female soul trapped in the body of a man. Edward Carpenter, who was himself a homosexual, defended that homosexuals had signs of feminine psychology, more acute sensibilities, or in other words, women’s intuition, only possessing so called masculine rationality. He went even further suggesting that homosexuals represented the future (*ibid*). As it was, many people did not frown upon the notion that Edward Carpenter formulated, that being homosexual was synonymous with refinement, detaining an exquisite taste and a flair for music. If anything, it proved to be of valuable guidance, provided to all men from all classes.

Upon the whole, it was ascertained that homosexuality was “something inborn and congenital” (*ibid*, p. 137), not degeneracy, and soon enough people would develop more concrete ideas about it. Supposedly there was a kind of inner effeminacy these “particular types of persons” were born with, which gave them specific characteristics (*id. ibid*). Needless to say, many of these beliefs, although not entirely inaccurate, prevailed. Even in this day and age, in some cultures gay men are understood as a form of ‘women misplaced’ or highly sensitive individuals.

One of the biggest issues gay men faced in the twentieth century was the AIDS crises.⁹ In the USA, the first cases were registered around the 1960s but in the United Kingdom the first official death related to this disease was in 1982, after which a huge wave of antigay reactions began. People were afraid and government urged caution, at times going as far as to discourage any sexual contact between two or more men, as AIDS was incorrectly associated “as an exclusively homosexual plague” (Garrett). AIDS produced a great deal of hysteria, anti-gay feelings and even more prejudice against the LGBTQI+ community. In Britain, at first, AIDS and HIV were not only seen as a gay plague, but they too were also believed to be an American one (*ibid*). Nowadays it is common knowledge that those who were infected

⁹ Acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

by the virus/disease, desperate for a cure, took to less conventional means, believing these rather more holistic approaches to be more effective. These were very dangerous substances one would drink or eat for they were told would reinvigorate their immune system and fight the virus, that it could even cure them completely. Needless to say, these methods did not work out and people died by the thousands every month with or without the supposed miraculous treatments.

As the government took too long to act, popstars Holly Johnson, Boy George, Mark Almond, and Jimmy Sommerville spoke openly about their sexuality in the media. Cook, in *From Gay Reform to Gaydar*, 2007, says that even film director Derek Jarman, one of the victims of the virus, gave his own testimony of how he was being treated at St Bartholomew's Hospital, London. Talking openly about their experiences made them true role models for the gay community, many of whom desperately needed someone to look up to.

To these positive initiatives there came the campaigns to raise awareness about AIDS alerting the youngster who were more prone to have unsafe sex to take precautions and use the condom. Moreover, with the several treatments being tested, eventually the pharmaceutical companies managed to develop drugs which helped stabilize the disease and in time, although the levels of contamination were still unfavourably high, fewer deaths began to be reported.

1.7-Homosexuality in the mid-twentieth century

From the second half of the 20th century Britain went through many changes, especially during the 60s with London in the centre of the Swinging Sixties. (Garrett). British youth subcultures started to emerge with a great need on the part of the young people to express themselves more freely and creatively than ever before This seems to have helped the passing of more permissive legislation for abortion, divorce and homosexuality. Domestic life was enhanced, the home made more comfortable and family values were especially nursed with the rising prosperity after WWII. People bought cars, black and white televisions and other amenities that until then had been unattainable to the vast majority. Consumerism and materialism were taking the reins, "and the flamboyant queens began to disappear from the streets" (Cook, 2007a, p. 153). Most of them found their safe haven in the East End where homosexuality "had always been absolutely accepted", continuing on into the 80s (*ibid.* p. 159). But others adapted to the new circumstances and were keen to live as a family, being rather "discreet in

their partnerships" (*id ibid*). At home, sometimes the family comprised more than two men, including one of the partner's daughters and sons, and each would often have a pet name. There was a lasting relationship of "deep commitment and love" (*id ibid*) which in certain cases transcended a purely sexual relationship. Companionship and dependability were the pervasive features of these families.

The Chancellor of Reading University, John Wolfenden, consulted with lawyers, high-court judges, MPs and the Chairwoman of the Scottish Association of Girl Guide Clubs. Together they worked on a report that recommended decriminalization of "consensual homosexual sex between adults over 21" (*ibid*, p. 173). This 1957 report suggested that it was not the law's business what two consenting adult men did together and that homosexual acts between them should not be considered a criminal offence but rather an intimate decision. The amendment was supposed to bring forward these new ideas, but after much debate in Parliament, the motion was not passed. It would take a decade until it finally did, which was during the late 60s. Amidst the many revolutions taking place in London, which will be mentioned below after inevitable turmoil and discord, the prerogative defended by the Wolfenden Reform succeeded. It became known as the Sexual Offences Act 1967 introduced by Lord Arran in May 1966, decriminalizing homosexuality at last, so long as it was between two consenting men over the age 21.

The Swinging Sixties was a time for new experiences, for the young British to leave behind old-fashioned values and beliefs. Those who could not fit in were kept in the margins and it was in the margins where the gays (and the rest of the LGBTQI+ community) were. It did not take long for Cockneys and queers to gather forces and reinvent the London Scene, where many were flocking for new styles and innovation. The fashion industry had always been a rather tolerant and accepting space for gay men. A "burgeoning youth culture" brought back the "pre-war flamboyance" which inhabited the streets and a few selected private places (*ibid*, p. 153). The latter would often be "illegal bars" managed by Afro-Caribbean immigrants, themselves castaways, who sympathized with the gays and lesbians that had nowhere else to go (*ibid*, p. 154). As the law was changed and more freedom was given to homosexuals around the country, "the discreet drinking clubs" evolved into super clubs in the 1970s, where the "dancefloor, music and drugs" became typical practices and would be associated with gay culture for a very long time (*id ibid*).

1.8-Gay liberation and more

Even though being homosexual had never been a crime in the United Kingdom, one would be punished by law if caught in homosexual acts until the 1967 Sexual Offences Act was passed which decriminalized homosexual activities in England and Wales. Once this law was passed, an openly lively gay atmosphere started taking over in areas such as Soho where there was a variety of spaces for gay men and women. Later, London would come to be known as one of the gay capitals of the world, holding the first Gay Pride March on 1 July 1972, currently known simply as Pride.¹⁰

According to Cook, unhappy with the 'sanitized' manner many gays were being forced to live their lives, the dictates of the heterosexual norm, several men and women began more radical demonstrations. They rebelled against the condescending regime that allowed them to be with their loved ones – which was only in private – but did not completely protect them at work and other places against prejudice and discrimination. Out of this discontentment was born the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) whose first initiative was sabotaging the Christian Festival of Light in 1971, a campaign determined to re-awake "Britain's sense of morality" (Cook, 2007b, p. 179).

The GLF produced a manifesto advocating a number of changes, including the reform of sex education in schools and the right for gay men and women to show affection for their partners in public. They disliked the stereotypical treatment supposedly gay characters were being given in the media and so they lunched magazines and pamphlets and created a sort of communal way of living. There was more than one 'commune' in London and as they were so popular, they began to spread around the country, especially to bigger cities like Manchester. These usually held sessions which aimed at providing information and comfort to those who had been rejected or were struggling to come to terms with their sexual identity. The communes have evolved and nowadays are known as group meetings for the LGBTQI+ community. They are still useful and valuable ways to provide information, guidance and support.

¹⁰ It is held annually, with several thousands and at times even millions of people, as was the case of the 2022 march, where more people than ever attended. This was possibly because for two years, due to Covid-19, people were not allowed to have such congregations.

Violence against gay men reached unprecedented scales and it would continue to be the case into the late 1990s. With the communes, violence would be met with love. Gays would respond not with violence, or at least not immediately. Instead, they would declare themselves to be *people* that “believed in talking, in friendship and in understanding each other” (*ibid*, p. 181). In time, similar initiatives would be taken by other groups who would, for instance, write letters to teachers and ask them to promote “positive images of gays and lesbians to their students” (*ibid*, p. 195).

The atmosphere within the GLF communities was often not as honest and welcoming as the advertisements seemed to suggest. No sooner had they started what was expected to be their inclusive mission than racist and xenophobic behaviour began to be reported against many black and Asian men who felt they were being excluded and negatively portrayed within the groups. Lesbians also showed their dissatisfaction at being outshone by the gays who they felt could be “ignorant, sexist and misogynist” in their approaches, both at the social and political scale (*ibid*, pp. 184, 187). This separatism would endure until the 24th Clause of the Local Government Act, 1988, enforced by Margaret Thatcher’s government. The clause forbade the promotion of homosexuality or publishing “material with the intention of promoting homosexuality”, going as far as to ban teaching at any school “the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship” (Local Government Act 1988, s.d.).¹¹

Compounded on this, Thatcher’s government also failed to yield to the needs of the miners. Here, lesbians and gays came together once more and colluded with the miners. Together they managed to raise considerable funds for the striking workers from Dully Valley in South Wales between 1984-1985, which compelled the many families who benefited from the money to attend the Pride march in 1985. The march was on the whole quite peaceful and widely broadcasted by the media.

The Stonewall group is an LGBTQ+ rights organization which for the last 30 years has been helping to transform and change the lives of LGBTQ+ people in Britain. Stonewall invested in several initiatives to drop the age of consent to 18, which is the age a person is legally considered an adult, and it succeeded. The group then went further and as of November 2000, sixteen became the new age of consent for gay men and women in the United Kingdom. Other victories would come such as making gay marriage possible in the beginning of the 21st century. Gay rights groups had secured enough

¹¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/9/section/28/enacted>

legislation which allowed gay couples the same rights as heterosexual married people, and as of 2004 the Civil Partnership Act gives same-sex couples identical marriage responsibilities and rights (Garrett).

No doubt many positive changes have been implemented and many openly gay celebrities such as Sir Ian McKellen and Stephen Fry have shown for a long time now great support for the LGBTQI+ community. However, Garret argues that acceptance of gay men and women is still an issue in British society (*ibid*). A growing tolerance towards homosexuality notwithstanding, for this appears to be one of the major cultural developments in the nation for the last twenty years, there are still many people from all age groups and social classes who struggle to accept homosexuality. It is possible, the author continues, that especially in the younger age groups, distinctions between straight and gay cultures have started to blur a little. What once was deemed to be 'something gay' to wear has now been adopted by straight men, not to mention gay night clubs that have become more mixed regarding gender and sexual orientation.

CHAPTER 2

KISS DON'T TELL: *VICTIM* (1961)

2.1-Introduction

The 1961 film *Victim* is important even today, many years after it was released, because it deals with how gay men were being treated in the early 1960s. There had been attempts previously, however disguised, to portray ~homosexuality through stereotyped characters. This film is different, however, because the director decided to depict the horrors gay men were facing because they were not legally protected, especially the fact that they were being blackmailed. This shone a whole new light on gay men. They were portrayed not as criminals but as victims. The true criminals were not those who loved but those who hated or feared this love 'that dare not speak its name',¹² quite yet.

In an early attempt to look for gays on the big screen, Andy Medhurst suggested that such characters already existed in "pre-gay British Film", i.e., films made before *Victim* (Medhurst, p. 23). They were individuals who had a distinctive look about themselves, with characteristic (effeminate) mannerisms and a particular speech pattern, who the author named "nebulous nancies" hovering "in the background of heterosexual narratives" (*ibid*). In such early films there seems to have been an attempt to incorporate this "alternative" persona, mostly through the use of somewhat extravagant, middle-aged rich(er) men who held a social position in society that guarded them against any ill-speaking outside of their contacts. These are choices which seem at odds with the common belief that homosexuality was symptomatic of, if not synonymous with, belonging to the working-class. As they were respectable gentlemen of some prominence, the risk of being caught or even of being suspected of dangerous ideas, was minimal. Theirs was the ability of escaping the might of justice as they were incredibly rich and powerful, not to mention that it was often assumed that men from upper classes "had the distinctive sexual identity" and so theirs was an exemplary role to uphold and emulate (Cook, 2007a, p. 161). However, it does not mean they were unlikely to be recognized in the films, not only by the viewer but also other fictional characters who would often demonstrate outright distaste and affront (an interesting note on the script writers' objectives). It goes without saying that there were also stereotypical

¹² From the poem *Two Loves* (1892) by Lord Alfred Douglas (1870-1945), also known as Bosie and late lover of Oscar Wilde (1854-1900).

representations of obviously gay men in the early films, almost always “ludicrous, villainous, monstrous, shadowy, pained, paranoid, edgy, guilty, doomed, or mocked” (Medhurst, p. 24), but that was not the case of the first British film to present an obvious gay man on the big screen, in 1961, *Victim*.

Victim is set in a time when practicing homosexuality was still forbidden and considerable steps had to be taken in order to make a change in society. The Sexual Offences Act was not due for six years, but many people were already keen on the idea of a reform. Homosexuality is only one of the main themes of the film, as the plot shows and emphasises on the strong sense of awareness about the prejudicial treatment gay men received, focusing on a major distress: blackmail. Many had had their dwelling and indeed their life torn apart by the unexpected police raids, which would often come about because the victims could not pay their due to the blackmailers. People would turn in their friends to the police in the hope of not serving (another) sentence in prison. The Wolfenden Reform would eventually trigger the emergence of support groups, whose purport would not pass unmarked.

With homosexuality as a backdrop, *Victim* considers the following issues: the flawed law which criminalized homosexuality; blackmailing; the institutions of marriage and family; the relationship between straight women and gay men and, finally, the intricate issues around *outing*.

To begin the film analysis, it is important to consider the plot itself. In *Victim*, the lawyer Melville Farr is as far removed from any homosexual contact as possible, at first. Farr had almost been in an affair with a young man, henceforth called Barret, not long before, but as the boy was Farr’s employee and Farr was married, they had to end it. Upon Barrett’s death, Farr seeks justice, knowing the boy’s suicide to have been the only solution Barrett had found to save his beloved Farr from utter disgrace. The lawyer sees through the boy’s actions and decides to take the case and interview ‘spottable’ homosexuals who were possibly being blackmailed themselves. The investigation he undertakes is revealing as he is looking for noticeable signs of fear in the victims’ eyes: “Fear is the oxygen of blackmail” (Farr). The Dark Ages may have been long gone but the witch-hunt continued and not by police officers only. Common people were involved, civilians who were determined to exploit, to use the words of Robert Griffiths, “the contradictory nature of the law” for their own benefit (Griffiths, p. 9).

But before the young man Barrett committed suicide, he looked for help, and surprisingly he found it in the assuring countenance of a straight male friend, Frank. Frank is someone who may have

had a more positive reaction to Barrett being gay as he is the one the latter looks to for help to leave the country. Frank understands his situation, he is the only one who knows exactly what is going on and provides a hint of knowledge of what his friend's situation would have been like had it been in the Middle Ages. "Back then it used to be witches. At least now they won't burn you." Compassion from a male friend who is neither privileged nor sophisticated suggests that not only women or the wealthy and powerful or knowledgeable people would be perceptive and understanding about this. The common man might be too. Again, the idea that homosexuality as mentioned previously was being identified in "all walks of life" (Griffiths, p. 10) is quite sustained here also. Frank's reaction to Barrett contrasts greatly with how his girlfriend feels about him, for she wishes to have nothing to do with the young man and 'his kind'. This is a subject which will be developed further in this chapter. Frank, despite his girlfriend's disgust at Barrett being gay, agrees to help his friend to leave the country. Later, when the couple is at home, they have an argument and what they say is particularly meaningful. Frank admits to pitying Barrett for he does not have what they have: love, a home, the possibility to live with a partner, the prospect of marriage and building a family. These are the privileges reserved to heterosexual relationships which the system teaches as the only viable foundation an individual may rely on. What is hinted at also is that if gay men had this luxury, they need not be blackmailed and fear for their lives.

But afraid they were, constantly, for there were those who, as mentioned before, took advantage of the law criminalizing gay men caught in the act, and who would blackmail them for money. An example of this in the film is a photograph taken by the blackmailer, which shows the two men, Farr and Barrett. one older and the other younger, crying inside Farr's car. The 'evidence', one may argue, seems too feeble to be presented as conclusive proof of homosexuality in court, but to a shrewd police officer it would be enough to "snuff it out of" someone. Barrett was quite aware of this treatment and knew that if caught he would be pressured to tell the truth, which would result in exposing his (unconsummated) 'affair' with Farr.

Concealment creates a lot of strain in Farr's life, and he becomes restless and determined to bring the true culprits to justice, all the while keeping his homosexuality quite hidden. Farr's wife, on the other hand, is completely in love with him and wants to understand his situation, knowing that her husband had once loved another man who had died. Learning that Farr is involved in the investigation of Barrett's death, she is determined to find out if he loved the boy "as a man is supposed to love a girl" (*id. ibid*). Her determination is not without reason for the couple had got married in the hope that Farr

would lose his homosexual inclinations. This action was especially common within prominent upper-class families since a great deal about moving successfully in the inner circles had – and has still – to do with putting up a show and keeping up certain appearances.

As the investigation progresses, Farr meets with other possible victims but not everyone wants to cooperate. The lawyer becomes increasingly desperate, and surprising occurrences take place. He meets with quite interesting individuals who want to avoid being exposed and who want to help find the other men who are being blackmailed, to join with them and make one last considerable payment to end their nightmare for good. Barrett, however, rejects the proposal, preferring to catch the blackmailers and stop the torment in a manner that would make him, alas eventually disgraced, into the hero.

2.2- *Victims* and Victimization

Considering the time it was filmed, *Victim* is rather bleak, the tone much too serious when compared to the burgeoning gay and straight subcultures nesting in the capital and awaiting their turn to bloom. The choice of Dirk Bogarde as the respectable, attractive gay lawyer Melville Farr was bold and is useful in “rethinking issues around (gay) identity and representation in cinema” (Griffiths, p. 5).¹³ Until then, homosexuality was often associated in Britain to the poor working class, whose sexual identity lacked the distinctiveness of the upper classes (Cocks). It is important to note that gay law professionals, along with accountants, doctors and teachers, were in an especially dangerous position in Britain at the time (Cook, 2007a). Many had families, a reputation and responsibilities at work and in society, and so they had to take more precautions not to be exposed. They were vulnerable to blackmail, which was still prevalent in the early 1960s, most significantly in London, where the gay identity was beginning to be regarded “as existing in all walks of life” (Griffiths, p. 10). Interestingly enough, it was the heritage film canon, one that more often than not represented high-class individuals and their daily affairs, that proved more welcoming to homosexual representation (Dyer). If E. M. Forster’s *Howard’s End* explores the problems involving straight relationships between individuals of different social standing and temperament, as did D. H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, then Basil Dearden has a homosexual take on the subject in *Victim*.

¹³ The actor, Dirk Bogarde, reportedly a “strait screen icon” (Griffiths, p. 9) was believed to be a closeted gay himself.

Another of the many striking features of the film *Victim* is that the main gay character does not die or experience a horrible end, unloved and disgraced. On the contrary, he rises above the danger that chased him for so long and manages to find peace of mind. Melville Farr is not some stereotyped effeminate working-class man, but a poised and refined individual, which is indicative of a more progressive treatment of homosexuality. Too farfetched? Closer attention should be paid to how Farr meets three men, quite distant themselves from the flamboyant, queen-like characters who represented gay men in earlier films.

Farr meets with Calloway, a famous actor he approaches in the hope of finding some cooperation in solving the crime of Barrett's death. He also communes with Lord Fullbrook, a campaigning British politician who works with Farr. Lastly, he meets Mandrake who works in his firm too and who is punched by Farr when the former 'outs' him as a homosexual. Farr admits to sharing "the same instincts" as the other three, who are being blackmailed by the same people who were blackmailing Barrett.

Meanwhile, it is important to highlight how Callaway deploras the idea of going to prison because "he finds love in the only way he can" (*ibid*). He is unapologetic about his sexuality, as many celebrities would be in subsequent years (Cook b), and Farr's counterargument is quite thought provoking. He argues that as Callaway is a star he should out himself and thus set up an example for others. Swinging London was all about new faces, new topics, new experiences and adventures and people were looking for that (Levy). Farr had a notion that a change could be achieved if those who could prompt it were prepared to make it happen, but in order to do so they would have to be brave and face the adversities on their way.

Despite his almost prophetic pronouncement, the "fine upstanding barrister" is decided to continue with the plan he had hatched with Eddie, Barrett's other friend who had identified the body. But another moment of similar 'oracular proportions' is when Farr meets with one of the other victims, a hairdresser named Henry. As he "can't help the way he is and the law says he is a criminal" (*ibid*), the latter is preparing to move to Canada. It seems oracular because Canada is at present one of the most gay-friendly countries at the moment, although it was not as much so in the 1960s, since it would only decriminalize homosexuality in the same year as England and Wales. He also hints that Farr as a distinguished individual, with "a big position" as a barrister could tell the establishment that "there is no

magic cure for how we are". It would be arguments of this nature which would compel later legislative change to the age of consent and enable gay men aged 21 to engage in a gay relationship.

Griffiths also believes this film discusses the institutions of family and marriage, showing them as being somewhat contradictory. Regarding the main characters' marital relationship, Farr is initially presented to the viewer as a respectable and wealthy lawyer, married to a beautiful woman who cares for him very much. Indeed, the few emotional signs he gives are towards her, whom he loves but does not desire, along with his grief for the "boy Barrett" who he "wanted". This choice of portraying a (closeted) gay man who respects his wife ties in well with the other gay traits aforementioned, being a respectable, high-middle-class professional. These are compelling characteristics which encourage the audience, so unused to seeing an obviously gay man on the screen, to accept at the very least that gay men can be *likable*.

2.3-The police: friend or foe?

There are forces working for and against the 'gay cause' throughout the film. There are characters with firm, unforgiving, conservative British morals and characters who, without completely standing for or against 'the condition', suggest a major openness to it. Surprisingly, the latter attitude may be associated with Detective Inspector Harris, the supervisor of the blackmail case. The inspector did not look down on homosexuality, nor did he believe it was his job to do so, rather he found the matter of blackmailing the 'tormented souls' a great breach of the law and was quite determined to see it rectified. This contrasts enormously with the reality of the day, when police officers were only too keen on finding homosexuals who they saw as a threat to good law and order. Such a reaction is that of the other unnamed police officer in the film working on the case who does not share the same amicability as the former and feels repelled. Inspector Harris on the other hand took a rather curious stand, informing the viewer that "almost 90% of blackmail cases were related to homosexuals" (Dearden, 1961) who were the victims and not the criminals. The two policemen had a conversation where each showed himself quite aggrieved, although for different reasons. Inspector Harris wanted to help 'the poor devils' and he believed that freed homosexuals would only bring all sorts of vices, so they were better outlawed. This was an ironic moment when the junior officer affirmed his pride in being a puritan, to which in response Harris quickly pointed out the former illegality of puritanism too. This episode shows how the police may respond to homosexuality differently and makes us wish that they would see gay men for who they are,

victims of a system that would not allow them the right to be happy with their own true nature. Harris might have been thinking along these ideas.

Another element of how the police force was in possession of knowledge of how homosexuals behaved and organized their encounters is the existence of the mystery boy sitting in the pub who glances *meaningfully* at Eddie. This was an arrest technique developed and used throughout the 1960s called “*agents provocateurs*” (Cook, 2007a, p. 175), which as the name indicates consisted in having policemen pretend to be gay, making passes at other men in order to catch them red handed. This is a perfect depiction of how gay men since times immemorial have been making themselves noticeable to other gay men without raising suspicion. Body-language was quite a useful tool and a simple glance towards another who they fancied would often do the trick (Flynn). What is interesting here is that this loner is in fact an undercover policeman passing for a gay man. He is part of the investigation too and uses his knowledge of how gay men secretly operate in the light of day and at the dead of night to not only catch gay men and arrest them but also to solve the blackmail case.

2.4-Crime and class

While contemplating the unfolding events of *Victim*, a typical atmosphere experienced in the 1960s becomes evident, one of “an absolute coming together” between age groups and social classes who would have otherwise never have met (Levy, p. 57). Barrett, for instance, was a working-class man who was working at the construction firm with which Farr was involved (managing the legal issues) and that is how they met. They are both from different social classes, but that did not prevent them falling in love. A similar situation is that between the love-trio made up of Fullbrook, Callaway and Mandrake. Fullbrook is an aristocrat, Mandrake has a photography studio (middle class), and Callaway is an actor (middle class).

It may be possible to discern a relationship between the “criminal underworld and corrupt London upper class” (Griffiths, p. 75). The blackmailers happen to be three different individuals who find out about homosexuals and threaten to expose them if they do not pay a fee. The first is an underpaid working-class woman with hard facial expressions called Miss Benham; the second is a possibly unemployed man in his late thirties who drives a motorbike, and the third is a gay man who used to be blackmailed himself and was unable to pay the other two and therefore begins to cooperate with them, giving his own friends away. This was a common practice as discussed in the chapter Hide and Seek.

Formerly, it would be the police who would “twist the truth out of” their suspects determined to find out more about active homosexuals (Dearden). In the film *Victim*, it is the criminals who are shown in possession of evidence which could greatly hinder the people they are pressurizing.

However, it was more common for blackmailers to not have evidence at all and simply approach passers-by who may or may not be gay (Cocks), reasonable doubt being the only criteria needed. The reason behind this is that being called queer or gay or homosexual in the street was a grievous situation and would have incurred legal action indeed, that is, if the person who had been *offended* had it in them to face the perpetrators and the possible ensuing scandals. Often, people would simply walk away after being name-called, not wishing to be associated with homosexuality, such was the prejudice in bygone days.

Perhaps to say that Lord Fullbrook is a corrupt man may be a little unfair, but he is certainly a hypocrite, showing to the world a respectable face when in secret he has ongoing affairs with two other men. As aforementioned, aristocrats had on several occasions managed to disentangle themselves from any unfavourable situation “by virtue of their wealth” (Cocks, p. 115). The three men, so unlike in breeding, rank and name, have nevertheless the same commanding expression about themselves, a form of respectability and self-possession until then never ascribed to a homosexual in film. Attempts have been made to portray gay men as an evolved species with their exquisite taste, and a tendency to be more sensitive than what was traditionally expected of a man. This film shows such a refined group of persons as victims of the law and the atrocities they had to endure due to an unjust system. This was not quite the media’s usual standard which used to be to ridicule homosexuals, making them a laughingstock (Griffiths).

Combining three people who are so completely different from one another is evocative of the Victorian gatherings between highly educated gentlemen and more uncouth individuals, such as the one called Order of Chaeronea mentioned earlier. As they were unable to love one another freely, they took measures to do so in private. Or so they thought. Had they been more careful they might have never received a letter blackmailing them. This ties in only too well with the notion of “marginalized homosexual subcultures” (*ibid*, p. 75) which at first were kept in a low profile only to emerge in subsequent years “rather at odds with hetero-masculine norm” (*id. ibid*).

2.5-The Swinging Sixties

Throughout the ages, there have been those who found their voice to speak the terrible injustices being perpetuated against homosexuals. Their activities range from the political to the cultural arena, as demonstrated beforehand. Unsurprisingly, however, art and aesthetics also have a fundamental role to play.

When Farr arrives at the place where the victims await him – Mandrake’s studio – there may be found an artistic *altar* of elements of a ‘queer nature’. There is a photo of a lady who is a character in the plot, too. She is an actress and poses there as if she were a diva who must be worshiped by her admirers. This is important for this film analysis: the relationship between gay men and straight women.

Earlier in this dissertation, *Victim* was described as being not quite as lively as one would expect of a film about the ‘swinging sixties’. It is a black and white film, thereby contrasting with the colourful, psychedelic garments being worn around the streets, as well as with the vibrant personalities involved in fashion and music and elsewhere. The black and white film may be because the subject(s) the film focuses upon were deemed to be serious topics for discussion, which indeed they are – homosexuality, suicide and blackmail. Moreover, it maintained high class establishment figures and law representatives as indices of *pro-gay* attitudes and positions. Keeping a more sober tone helped formulate the argument that being gay, although still far from being *okay*, did not pose a threat to society. On the contrary, the viewer is encouraged to believe that it was because the law criminalized homosexuality that gay men became the victims, obliged to submit themselves to all forms of precariousness and lacking any legislation which would protect them from bullies, blackmailers, and murderers.

Many believed that this swinging decade was “like coming out of prison” (Levy, p. 58), a comment by Mary Quant, an English fashion designer who dictated trends and tastes in the early 60s. This idea is revealing as prison was exactly what gay men were afraid of. In the film, for example, Henry the hairdresser was a convicted homosexual, having been to prison four times. As he feared going back to a cell, Henry refused point blank to give Farr any information other than that he was to leave the country. This was the case of so many other British gay men who sought the tranquillity and openness of countries where being gay was not illegal like France and Italy. One may wonder why Henry did not think of these two countries in the first place.

The thought-provoking arguments in this film are linked with the great changes sweeping the capital. What with “a strain of conscious rebellion” (*id. ibid*) that was beginning to feel palpable all around, it was no wonder those with a bigger voice would want to use the vibrancy of the 60s to create the necessary social changes. Farr is one such voice, and even though he was afraid of losing everything he acts quite the hero when embarking on such a dangerous path as that of denouncing the true criminals. For the purposes of the film, of course, his significance may be observed from a wider viewpoint. Progressive and inventive although the 60s may have been, homosexual men were far from being given any recognition, let alone being made heroes. History would make martyrs out of some more active individuals, but nevertheless, no one was prepared to take them seriously. And yet the film depicts precisely that: a matter of great seriousness taking place in London around this time, blackmailing homosexuals whose voices were deemed too feeble and whose strength of character was too miniscule for any major consideration to be paid to them. It may be prudent to point out the huge tendency for Britons to cling on to their heroes as a fundamental aspect of their cultural identity (Storry & Childs). Melville Farr seems to be [re]presented to us as one of those heroes.

In the real world, however, historically, these voices were hugely aided by the music and dancing which shaped this decade – not for nothing was the sexual freedom *swing* movement one of its symbols. They were also helped by fashion and television. And who were often the major sensations in these two industries? Women.

2.6-Female representation and the cult of the divas

Gay culture has for a very long time been associated with female-representation, or as it is termed today, diva-worshipping (Anderson). The divas in question are statuesque, strong-willed and extremely elegant and gracious ladies (not to mention highly talented and famous) who gay men tend to look up to as role-models. It is a cult currently advertised mostly on the internet, but it may also be found in several films and TV series wherein gay characters make their jokes and share their interests. Such practice gained a higher level of followers in the USA, more than in the United Kingdom where it would be observed with less enthusiasm at first. Diva-worshipping would be more pronounced after the 60s with the boom of pop music and drag shows (Cook), both quite interlinked and stretching their exuberance well into the present days all around the world.

Female representation, therefore, may be of utter importance when analysing *Victim*, and there are three examples that must be considered. There is the dutiful wife, the snappish girlfriend and the lady actress who all offer some hints on how homosexuality was seen by the 'gentle sex'. These three blonds, from different upbringings, quickly show their differing points of view on the matter. The wife is startled at first about the prospect of losing her husband and keeps a distance from him for a while. However, in the end, upon reaching an understanding of Farr's true resolution, she accepts his fate, that he must seek justice for Barrett, even if it costs them all they had built together. She smiles and "suddenly feels very strong" (Dearden). What remains suggestive here is that although their marriage is not the most traditional, their bond as man and wife remains strong enough and Farr himself appears to need her strength. This attitude, however unlikely it may seem to some viewers considering the time, provides a notion of how things were beginning to change.

Women were usually more considerate to the homosexual cause, and are nowadays often quite supportive, maybe because they are part of an unequal minority themselves. Improvements in treatment before the law had to be fought for at great personal risks. Just like the gays. Women fighting for equality who had found their voices and won the vote thanks to women like Emmeline Pankhurst half a century previously were gathering forces with homosexual men and aiming for a more inclusive Britain (Cook, 2007b). This is why the female representation here is of such relevance as it is a propeller for change, since some change had already been achieved by women.

By contrast, the girlfriend Sylvie is harsh when she sees Barrett and becomes increasingly irritated when her boyfriend and Barrett's friend show sympathy. "Why can't he stay with his own sort?" (Dearden), she demands, the repulsion and anger showing on her face, (an extremely symptomatic reaction in those days as ignorance fed the minds of the people). It would continue to be so throughout the rest of the century, and paired with it would be the hatred and fear of the *difference*. The latter, as demonstrated earlier, used to be obstinately associated with the lower and working classes as they were the ones who maintained the conveyance of mistrust against homosexuals. But more of that later.

A third blond lady of a certain age, who happens to be in the picture on the pseudo diva culture altar where the three men in love are gathered, must be considered. Her name is Madge, and she works for the television industry in publicity, and when asked about homosexuality in a pub she does not shy

before the issue. On the contrary, she is rather forward and all knowing about the matter. “They’re just not quite normal.” she argues when trying to defend some boys who the bartender looked at with great contempt, indicating Madge may feel supportive.

Madge greatly contrasts with one of the most influential figures of this decade who quite firmly stood against gay rights. Mary Whitehouse battled tooth and claw anyone who sought to undermine her religious and traditional family ideals which in her view were the only means to save the nation from “moral collapse” (English Heritage). One of her most iconic duels was that with Sir Hugh Carleton-Greene, director general of the BBC from 1960-69. A natural modernizer, Carleton-Greene made sure to create a more inclusive place where talents “of all sorts” could be “recognized and nurtured” (*id ibid*). Indeed, such an enterprise not only famed him for his dare-do, but it also made it easier for television to represent what had once been ignored.

The television industry was increasingly popular from the 1960s, as spreading affluence meant that more viewers than ever before could afford a ‘box’. It was perhaps one of the major means of communication in the country (along with radio) and one of the most popular ways of spending leisure time for the average British citizen, a habit which has been maintained (Storry, Education, work and leisure). Madge the actress, representing one of the ‘pro-gay’ figures, happens to be a public figure and public figures were much appreciated in the 60s.

Fashion and theatre were not the only places where gay men could hide, or perhaps it may be more accurate to say, *be at ease with* themselves. Television, with all its super-stars, big names and wealthy investors, proved since its early days to be a wonderful place for displaying homosexuality, too (Flynn). Great minds, artists and celebrities famed for their contributions to *showbiz* were in several cases gay themselves. And they would be so in the less judgemental environment kept there. Sir Carleton-Greene had seen to that.

2.7-Guilt and Shame

If women were a major comfort for the homosexual cause, they were also blamed for nurturing homosexual sons. Clearly of chauvinistic origins, born out of a conservative, patriarchal society, such strong convictions of this nature could be seen in Britain for many years. Different arguments were/are

used to justify homosexuality but blaming it on poor parenting was/is common. As boys, it was/is thought, adult men must have been too loved and pampered by their mothers and neglected by their fathers, or perhaps they were rejected by both and disregarded completely.

All in all, these arguments were presented to the viewer of *Victim* as Ms Mage had her usual drink at the bar and the barman told her that whether homosexuals were “too loved by their mothers” or “not loved enough” it was all “a big bunch of excuses”. The barman presented a rather interesting view on the matter, therefore, as it was incorrectly but routinely believed in those days that being gay was merely a choice, and that the full responsibility was of these men and not their mothers.

Tied in with this notion of blame lies that of guilt and shame. As men sought to live their dangerous affairs with their corresponding loved (same-sexed) ones, the degree of guilt and fear would become almost tangible. This may be observed in the practice mentioned in the film of men meeting in secret in parks at night, or as was the case of Farr and Barrett, in the former’s car. All the arrangements had to be taken with the utmost care lest they were caught by undesirable prying eyes.

One such keen observer was the major blackmailer Sandy, who the film hinted may well have been gay himself. The viewer noted how he walked, talked and posed in certain ways that were characteristic of how people used to (and a great many do still) perceive and represent homosexuals-dandi-*ish*, eloquent, well dressed and combed, fashionable, and wearing leather. For a very long time, notes Paul Flynn, an English author and journalist, the *leather-culture* was commonly found in gay fashion, this being one of their favourite materials, whether for clothes, accessories and a myriad of other uses, such as fantasy and *fetich*.

Another aspect of consequence is the fact that Sandy owns a portrait of a statue of a naked man *David* by Michelangelo the Italian sculptor. It purportedly represents youthful beauty, independence and strength, the latter two being aspects which gay men were deemed to lack. It may also symbolize the perfect man. In Chapter 1 it was mentioned how the Order of Chaeronea favoured the Greek classics and how Oscar Wilde himself perceived perfection and beauty in the naked body of a male youth. This suggests that the blackmailer may well have been someone who struggled to come to terms with his sexuality, and prevented from truly and freely experiencing it took to tormenting those brave enough to attempt it.

Homosexuality, then, may be observed in *Victim* through victims, heroes and criminals, all of whom exhibit guilt and shame to a certain degree.

2.8-Outing

To conclude this chapter, the issue of what is now termed *outing* will be addressed. If in the Middle Ages it was common to denounce another man for sodomy in an attempt to discredit him and profit by this, 'outing', on the other hand, although a dirty political tactic in and of itself, had a deeper intention. Progressively, those who wanted more protective legislation for gay men and women would find out about public figures who were gay and expose them to the press, such was their desperation for change and support (Cook, 2007b). No doubt it could never be considered an ethical practice, but in the circumstances most of the gay population was finding themselves in, activists took on more radical approaches to address the matter.

Another example of outing, slightly different from that of when Mandrake exposes Farr as a homosexual, is when the two meet at the former's house just as the film is moving to a close. Farr's wife and her brother find the capitalized words "FARR IS QUEER" painted on the garage-gate of the couple's property. This was no doubt written by the blackmailer himself, which raises the question of *outing* once more. Among men, especially the lower classes, calling another man a queer (many times acting out of revenge or pure jealousy) would create doubt about the latter's manliness. A famous example is the case of Terence Stamp, an English actor who like many others had risen to fame in the 1960s and became an iconic figure of the era (Levy). Because he was so famous and could have all the girls he wanted, these girls' (ex)boyfriends, in an attempt to defame him, spread rumours that he was homosexual, when in fact this was completely untrue. However, this is not quite the case when Laura and her brother found the dreadful capitalized words. The purpose was evidently to expose Farr or intimidate him with the sole intention of thwarting his plans to stop the culprits and bring them to justice.

Victim may well have been a film ahead of its time, but it was a fair depiction of how homosexuality was treated in many respects during the 1960s, all the while providing hidden clues of a surging gay subculture. Never before had a film portrayed homosexuality quite as overtly and yet it was done prior to any meaningful legal reform concerning Gay and Lesbian rights.

CHAPTER 3

OUT AND ABOUT: *CLAPHAM JUNCTION* (2007)

3.1-Introduction

The 21st century was met with a revival of gay (not-so-sub)culture. The early 2000s brought a great deal of innovations, such as technology, globalization, easier access to information and more opportunities for one to travel and even move abroad. What with the *boom* of the internet, gay culture was becoming synonymous with freedom, fun and fabulousness. The former gays, referred to only as refined middle-aged men with fashionable tastes blessed with sharp intellect, were now young adults, teenagers and even children “from all walks of life” (Griffiths, p. 10) whose curiosity would more often than not take the better of them. An example of this is the growing interest in gay literature and pornography which until then was a taboo (Cook, 2007b).

People up and down the country were being given the right to make themselves visible more than ever before and in London the most outspoken and exuberant gay men were a mark of just how far the capital had come.

Inspired by the murder of Jody Dobrowski in October 2005, who was beaten to death by two "gay-bashers" on Clapham Common, the film *Clapham Junction* depicts the lives of gay men who live in the southern part of London called Clapham Common and follows their daily affairs for the period of thirty-six hours, when their lives change utterly. According to Storyline,¹⁴ Robin, a gay writer, has his script declined by a television executive whilst school-boy. The young adolescent Theo stalks his older neighbour Tim, on whom he spies through the window. The dutiful grandson Terry, who lives with his grandmother, prepares for a night out whilst professionals Gavin and Will are shown getting married. Theo's mother, Natasha, is suspicious of Tim's intentions and warns him to keep his distance. Consequently, Tim refuses to acknowledge any more of the boy's advances. Alfie dies in hospital as another young boy Danny, a talented violinist, has his instrument smashed by young homophobic tormentors.

The subjects tackled by this film are the connection between violence, class and same sex relations; risk-taking among gay men; drug use while cruising for sex; the legalization of gay weddings

¹⁴ <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1043903>

and civil partnerships; clubbing; the relationship between gay men and straight women; the age of consent and, finally, how artistic expression and the media have made it possible for gay men to gain more projection and representation throughout the years, ever since homosexuality was decriminalised in 1967.

3.2-Violence: bullying and crime

If gay men had been making arrangements throughout history to survive the cruel persecutions against them, going to extreme lengths to be safe while acting upon their nature, their enemies began to be just as well organized. Terry, for instance, pretends to be called Sniffy and assumes a completely stereotyped attitude and body language associated with being gay, while he is at his victim's place, (supposedly called Mickey). It is not clear if the latter is in fact who he says he is, which seems to tie in well with the common practice gay men employed at gay gatherings such as the aforementioned Molly houses. As mentioned earlier, gays would take fake names to protect their identities since they did not want to be discovered or suspected of illicit practices and vice.

The boy criminal Terry/Sniffy is filmed in a rather stereotypical pose, hugging his right knee while sitting on the couch and speaking to Mickey. At some point, when the latter is not looking, Terry smashes an ashtray on the former's head and beats him up, calling the poor man names and urinating on top of him. This raises the question: Gay guy feeling anti-gay? Or simply a gay hater? This is an issue which will be developed later in this chapter.

The violence here represented might be tied up with the fierce wave of hatred and prejudice against gay men that arose during the 1980s and continued until the late 90s and early 2000s. The Clause 28 implemented during Margaret Thatcher's government had been repealed in 2000 but that did not stop many gay men from being victims of violent attacks, some resulting in murder.¹⁵ There is ample evidence of anti-gay crime in Britain, including physical attacks and even murder. In the 1990s, a particularly dangerous gay murderer was Colin Ireland, who would pick out his victims in pubs in London and kill them. In 2002, another attack took place in South London. The victim was an older man Geoffrey Houghton Windsor, 57, who was beaten in the head several times and sustained grave

¹⁵ Clause 28 was implemented during Margaret Thatcher's government, and it stated that any means of promoting homosexuality, whether by teaching or by publishing material, was illegal.

injuries which resulted in his death. He was found in Beaulieu Heights Park on South Norwood Hill, just like Clapham Common, a “notorious gathering place for homosexuals” (Williams). Parks were still dangerous places, and with all the information circulating about gay pubs and gathering places, naturally the attackers would find it easier to prey on an unsuspecting victim.

However, the murder represented in the film *Clapham Junction* is based on the one that took place in Clapham Common, South London, in 2005. The perpetrators of what turned out to be a “sustained” attack caught Jody Dobrowsky, a 24-year-old barman, as he departed from his friends on a Friday night (BBC News, 2006). Witnesses who had heard screams of a homophobic nature were urged to come forth and give evidence of their accounts.

According to the prosecutors, the accused, Pickford and Walker “had a pre-meditated plan to attack a gay man” (*ibid*). This is precisely what the film shows. The character Alfie had been viciously attacked at a park after leaving the same toilet where Robin and Julian met. Alfie’s face was so severely damaged he had to be identified by his fingerprints. He had been so violently attacked by the two men because, according to a witness who heard them shouting, they did not want *poofs* there and believed they had the right to kill them (BBC News, 2006). It shows that for gay men there is just as much freedom as there is violence against this freedom and very little legal action either to prevent or prosecute the criminals.

For many years now, several appeals have been made to have more legislation protecting LGBTQ+ people. One of the strategies is through education, asking teachers and parents to pass on to their pupils positive images of *queer* people (Cook, 2007b). Although more action has been taken in the last 10 years, back in the early 2000s, the struggle, violence and crimes made against gay men was incredibly high. Some violence was even taking place at schools “where anti-gay bullying had not abated” (*ibid*, p 213).

Clapham Junction depicts, even if only lightly, an event that might have happened in the region just about the same time as when the boy Jodi was attacked in 2005. It was a case of bullying where students chased the young violinist. This is a perfect depiction of the “sad, tortured and lonely” (*ibid*, p. 189) gay boy in his early teens. Danny was in his 7th grade and according to his violin teacher, Miss Richards, his chances of getting a scholarship at a musical college were very high. At no point in the film

does he speak about his sexual identity or anything else. Due to his quiet personality and sensitive nature his school bullies decide that he must be gay and act at once, following him from school to where he has his lessons, somewhere near the park around Clapham Common.

3.3-Public places: parks and toilets

Toilets and parks were still very popular for *cruising* and *cottaging* and are presented in this film as dangerous places of assignation, just as they were in the 19th century. With the beginning of the new millennium, however, far more daring approaches when cruising for sex appeared, possibly because of French and American influences, so much so that men were taking more liberties, even if they were considered ASBOS, people whose behaviour disturbed the public peace. This risk-taking may be observed, although without them being caught, when Robin meets Julian, an upstanding married doctor and father, in a public toilet in Clapham. They exchange meaningful glances and present their penises to one another, suggesting in silence to enter a toilet cubicle for sex. Their intentions are impeded by the arrival of two seemingly *straight* men who get in the way.

The event is not without its significance as it is suggestive of the risk-taking attitude, the rush of adrenaline when one is doing something dangerous or forbidden. This is exactly what many older gay men complain about, and is discussed in this film too, that these days with all the seeming liberties and rights, the joy of being gay has faded. According to them, it was the risk, “The jolt of excitement as put by Robin when the film is moving to a close, that made it worthwhile. The knowing that if they were caught, they would be in serious trouble indeed (Cook, 2007b) and getting away with it was almost more important than the sex itself. This suggests a sense of nostalgia that the older generations felt towards their good old times. One of the most popular parts of these places, according to Paul Flynn, were the *holes of glory*. As the name might indicate, there would be a hole on the wall separating the cabins through which men could perform oral sex without being caught. After Robin departed from the place, Julian uses one of these holes, performs oral sex with a complete stranger next door and has anal sex with him afterwards. This practice had been popular with the Victorians, too, but apparently the *boom* might have started around the 1970s and 80s when even at the BBC premises there were toilets as places of assignation where gay men, often famous pop-stars, had their encounters with strangers (Flynn).

The violence does not stop there for Tim, the gay-attacker-maniac, meets another elderly man who is sitting on a park bench. The victim always seems to be the one who is the neediest, helpless and unexperienced. They make small talk. When the older man is asked whereabouts he lives, he says “about West”, far from where they are meeting. This is suggestive as he seems to have a family of his own, for he denied having any with very little conviction. Married men looking for young boys for a moment of fun is a story as old as time and again, history has shown it. History has a knack for repeating itself, it would seem. Terry uses his former victim’s name (Mikey) when introducing himself to the older man. Again, the secrecy and anonymity are essential to those who do not wish to be discovered, whatever their reasons. Then they hear screams, the old man runs. Upset, Terry looks for the source of the sound and finds Alfie in painful whimpers lying on the grass in a most disgraceful state. Terry does not help the boy, despite the latter’s pleas, but takes the ring Will had dropped in Alfie’s pocket during their wedding and leaves the young man to his fate. Now note the poetic justice the film seeks to deliver, whether it is a warning to those who act as Tim does or something else, is left for interpretation. Terry is looking for another victim in the park when he meets a bulkier man who accompanies him to a quieter place in the bushes. But it is Terry who is taught a lesson this time, as it is the bulkier man who attacks him. But he manages to pull himself up and heads to a hospital where he is treated by Gavin, Will’s husband. “We are not living in the dark ages anymore.” says the good-natured doctor “It’s time these Neanderthals caught on.” (*ibid*). Perhaps it is a mere coincidence, but time and time again, when addressing the appalling crimes committed against gay men, the rhetoric used tends to relate the criminals to images of savagery and medieval times.

3.4-Sex, drugs and a wedding

One of the arguments laid against gay men has been that they were quite incapable of faithfulness, of being in a respectful, steady relationship with one partner without the need to be “sniffing around”. This idea is portrayed in the film, not as an absolute truth but as a prejudiced conviction which affected the many lives of gay men in Britain. Before the 1967 Sexual Offence Act, unable to live their lives with the ones they loved because the law stood against it, gays acted out or simply disdained the petty ways heterosexual couples deemed to be the most respectable. This might have been passed on through the years to new generations, leading to a great deal of gay men, especially in big cities such as London, not wishing to follow the straight-oriented normative roles. They craved freedom, acceptance and rejected condescension. Of course, the lifestyle these gay men led was greatly frowned upon by

conservatives and the usual uneducated rogues who were all for the traditionally accepted family values. But with the introduction of the civil registrations for gay partners in London in September 2001 (Garrett), prejudice suffered a great blow. Three years later, civil partnership law gave same-sex couples (both male and female) “almost identical legal protection”, as well as rights and responsibilities, “as married heterosexual couples” (Cook, 2007b, p. 212). The film *Clapham Junction* quite ostentatiously depicts one such celebration, where a happy upper-middle class couple exchange their vows and without one moment’s hesitation kiss quite passionately just as witnessed in *Victim* when Farr, the closeted gay man, kisses Laura, his wife of convenience.

What the film shows through this seemingly happy moment is not so much the importance and impact that it was gaining with the raising legislation for gay men (and women), but also the reluctance some [gay]men experienced in remaining faithful to their male partners. According to a survey conducted in 2013, “[t]here is now greater disapproval of non-exclusivity in marriage among both men and women” (Weston), an increase of 45% to 63% since 1990/91. During the wedding reception, Will takes a fancy to Alfie, a young man from Shropshire who is part of the catering staff. They have an encounter and kiss. Alfie is quite reluctant, so much so that he blushes, excusing himself by saying “it’s hot” and that he must get back to work. Will is the bigger man and ought to know better than to cheat, but Alfie is there to work, and is quite overwhelmed with happiness “to see the day two blokes getting married”. It is easy to understand his fascination by the upstanding groom who exudes power and confidence aplenty. A few moments later, in the pantry, the two meet again and after sniffing some cocaine lines it becomes apparent that Will clearly has no wish to remain faithful to his husband and honour the “token of my abiding love” (*ibid*). He wants to possess Alfie, but the young man, although quite fascinated by the power and confidence the older man exudes, shakes him off. This much confirms the continuing tendency of older and younger men to feel attracted to one another as discussed in the first chapter and witnessed in *Victim* by the pair Farr-Barrett.

The last decades of the 20th century saw people, mostly “young self-confident urbanites” (Cook, 2007b, p. 190) with some money rather keen on gambling more with their lives as they began to experiment more types of recreational drugs. It seemed to produce a feeling of power, freedom and self-possession; the latter having been in years previous attributed to the heterosexual upper classes.

There is a moment when young Terry, a supposedly good-natured individual who looks after his grandmother, is doing cocaine lines at his home. It is not clear whether he is gay or not, but it soon becomes clear that he has issues against gay men. Cocaine again, is another prevailing feature in gay culture as it seems, in this case particularly, to boost Terry's sense of purpose to prey on and antagonize seemingly vulnerable men who are cruising for sex in clubs and parks.

Will, on the other hand, is portrayed in this film as the poised, determined, money-making figure. Whatever his faults in his marriage, he is gay and feels quite at ease (cheerful!), self-possessed about it as he, very drunk, demonstrates while taking a stroll with his husband Gavin to a park in Clapham. "We are fucking married", he shouts. This is an aspect that greatly contrasts with Terry who has no prospects at all and whose only life's achievement thus far had been nursing his incapacitated grandmother who brought him up after his mother had abandoned him. Could his bitterness be channelled through his violence and cruelty? In which case he certainly represents the dangers posed to gay men these days as unsuspecting, seemingly well intended men might make themselves appear gay and prey on easier victims. So where could gay men find shelter when danger was nearby?

3.5-Clubbing

Even though clubs are not constantly shown in the plot, they play nevertheless a vital role in this film, for clubbing is even now a prevailing feature in gay culture (Cook b). Its significance is shown while indicating where, when and how two especially important characters meet: Alfie and Terry, although their interactions are very short lived. Terry makes a pass at Alfie when they see each other for the first time in the club, and here it may be possible to observe a common practice that since times immemorial, gay men might have used in order to make themselves noticeable to other gay men. The kind of look that tells one that they knew what the other had been up to last night, as Flynn observes in his book: *Good As You*, 2017. Alfie does not dismiss the intense glances and upon the first seconds of conversation with Terry is willing to introduce him to another acquaintance of his. Believing himself to have been dismissed, Terry walks away leaving Alfie engaged in a meaningful conversation with this other friend. They speak freely about sexuality, providing an idea of how in the early 2000s the gay issue was being addressed. The club is therefore the only place where the atmosphere is conducive enough for one to talk openly about one's sexual identity without shame, reserves or fear of being overheard. This positive and welcoming environment is all the more evident by the fact that both old men and new congregate quite

at ease, suggesting a more open atmosphere than that of years previous marked by racism and misogyny (Cook, 2007b). In *British Cultural Identities*, 2017, there may be found an entire section dedicated to this matter. Roberta Garrett points out how nowadays gay bars, pubs and clubs not only have become major attractions in London for gay men to meet, but also seem to indicate how far the country has come. She observes that in 2007 it is perfectly possible for both straight and gay men to hang out quite harmoniously at what once had been exclusively gay places (Garrett).

The meaningful and revealing conversation Alfie has with his friend begins when Alfie is asked if he had ever told his mother that he was gay, to which he answers “no”, but “she probably knows everything anyway”. The friend’s reply is even more suggestive “Yah mums, usually do” (*ibid*). The idea that mothers have an important role in their children’s life and that they usually know that their sons are gay is a common belief.

3.6-Straight women, gay men

Women, especially mothers, seem to have an important role in this film too. If the gay community had gone through great changes that was nothing in comparison to how far women had come. Successful, confident and at times even fierce, they are portrayed in this film once again as driving forces for the gays.

It is important to discuss the usually, seemingly inevitable relationship forged between gay men and straight women. Many accounts in books, studies and reports have been made about this subject and an example is that of *Straight Women, Gay Men* (2001), by Robert H. Hopcke and Laura Rafaty. The attraction between gay men and straight women is not always clear, but as the authors indicate in the aforementioned book, “the friendship between the two helped them make a difficult situation a little easier for everyone” (Hopcke & Rafaty, p. 198). Both women and gay men have struggled at the mercy of the patriarchy, being ruthlessly wronged, abused and marginalized. Naturally, at some point both victims decided to take up arms and fight for what they believed was rightly theirs. The chance to be unapologetically happy. Nowadays, women who seem to attract or feel more at ease in the company of gay men are usually referred to as *fag-hags* (*ibid*), but it is also common to find the term *beard* applied to any woman who is in a romantic relationship with a gay man in order to disguise this man’s homosexuality. The woman may or may not know about her male partner’s true sexual identity, which is

the case of a character in this film called Marion. History has shown just how many *beards* existed in the past, when seemingly heterosexual men secretly kept their love affairs with younger boys. And the media have depicted this quite voraciously, it becoming not only a symbol (the *fag-hag*) but also a cliché (the *beard*) of gay men culture. In America, it is all the more pronounced than in the United Kingdom, although it is quite possible to distinguish the inevitable attraction between straight women and gay men in Britain, too. An example may be that of *Absolutely Fabulous* (1993), where one may find the difficult relationship between alcoholic and drug addict Edina Monsoon (Eddie for short) and her ex-husband, Justin Monsoon who she had met during the 60s, and had a daughter when they were married, Saffron (Saffy for short). Justin and his partner Oliver own an antique shop. This is reminiscent of the story about the previously mentioned, scandalous Victorian couple, Frederick Park and James Boulton. They too owned an antique shop. And in the film *Victim*, there is a character whose book shop quite resembles a place where one may find antiquities.

But for the purpose of this film analysis, the first female figure to be considered is Dolly, a black working-class mother, under the employ of another important character, Belinda. Dolly does everything to the best of her abilities to provide for her son, Danny, the youth who is being bullied at school for being/seeming gay, about which she is completely ignorant. However, Miss Richards, Danny's violin tutor, has a notion of what might be going on in the young boy's life and tries to help. Her attempts are deflected but her demeanour is nevertheless quite characteristic: kind, slightly detached and professional, as she tries to address the bullying issue without compromising herself. Teenagers at this age can be rather impressionable and Danny is rather frail. Miss Richards meets his frailty with not only tenderness, but respect. There is no indication that she knows the boy is being bullied for being gay, nor that she believes him to be gay to begin with. But still there she is, remarkably calm and kind and poised, just like the divas (whichever their background) gay men often worship.

Differently, Natasha, Theo's overprotective mother, is constantly worried about her son's whereabouts, blind to the boy's destinations, interests or indeed his sexuality. She is convinced he is completely harmless and never wastes a chance to boast about what a good boy he is. That is put paid to when the mother discovers her son is hanging out with the dangerous neighbour she suspects had once been in jail "for interfering with youngsters". That gay men were vicious individuals, sex perverts and potential paedophiles, the world has long got used to hearing about (Cook, 2007b), but in the twenty-

first century it may still come as a shock, especially from seemingly educated people who, supposedly, ought to know better, that such old fashioned and prejudiced ideas still linger on.

On this note, Belinda is the most poised of them all, the dinner party hostess who sees Alfie being taken into the ambulance and gives the most passionate and eloquent speech regarding gay men. As mentioned in the previous chapter, women at times appear with a somewhat protective aura, as though they are both friends and benefactors in a gay man's life, acting at times as inspiration. Belinda, just like Ms. Richards, is presented to the viewers as poised, tender-faced and strong, just like the divas gay men usually worship in pop-culture: Celine Dion, Julie Andrews and Liza Minnelli to name a few (Anderson). What seems undeniable is the fact that the strong female figures of both past and present tend to have a major influence on a gay man's life. Belinda is shocked to hear the comments her guests make about what Alfie might have been doing in a park that late in the evening. "Even if he were sniffing around and fucking like dogs, why does it matter? No one deserves to be treated like that". This moment in the film not only shows a good knowledge of common gay practices and their places of communion, but also expresses rather informative impressions about the subject. Everyone in the dining-room was aware of the usual stroll taken by gay men around public parks where they often met for sex. They use the term *cruising* and *cottaging* which confirms that everyone was familiarised with the practices and their proper names. Despite the fact that there are three women at the dinner party, the only one of the three who feels compassionate is Belinda. Of course, not all women are prone to having a special friendly relationship with a gay man and not all gay men feel this intimate connection with women, for there are such men who for various reasons hate women as much as they are hated by straight men. That much can be observed in Marion Rowan, Julian Rowan's wife who happens to be his *beard*. She is unknowingly married to a closeted gay man who is unfaithful to her and cruises for sex with other men every chance he gets. They have a child together and what is striking the most is to see how Marion talks about gay men, feeling they are "funny and unthreatening" and that she and her husband "have many gay friends".

3.7-Age of consent

Another important subject this film deals with is the age of consent and the degrees of knowledge young people have about sex and sexuality. Since the invention of photography, portraying naked female women in a portable media became instantaneously desirable by those who could afford it. Men were also shown, but not quite as often, and the ones that seem to have made a major impact were those

taken in France, where same-sex love had been decriminalized 80 years before it was in England. Eventually a market was created for gay erotica, the first ever created being *The Sins of the Cities of the Plain* (1881), by John Saul, under the pseudonym Jack Saul. In the film, moody teenager Theo cannot take his eyes off of his older neighbour, Tim, who he frequently sits next to in the library. Theo is portrayed as a sexually active, or at least knowledgeable as far as sex is concerned, for adolescent standards, which seem to tie in well with what Dr Cath Mercer, from UCL Infection & Population Health Sexual, has to say on the matter. She believes that young people “have sex at an earlier age than previous generations did” (Weston, n.p). Sex education at schools has been taught in England and Wales since 1976, often to 11-year-olds onwards and as of 2020 “Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) has been compulsory for all pupils receiving secondary education” (Department for Education, 2023). It goes on by stating that students “should be taught the facts and the law about sex, sexuality, sexual health and gender identity in an age-appropriate and inclusive way” (*ibid*). Many advocate that this governmental action was not enough and as soon as 2019, a TV series called *Sex Education*, created by Laurie Nunn, was released on Netflix where the true information young people, especially teenagers needed was given. It became a major success not only in Britain, but in many other parts of the world. There is diversity in this show, certainly, not to mention that the gay character happens to be the male protagonist’s best friend and is black. This only goes to show how far media is willing to go and make up for the common Governmental lapses. In *Clapham Junction*, a similar cry for help seems to be tended to, and portraying a boy who is hardly fifteen with quite a sexual appetite is not only bold, but worthy of a deeper attention. As someone who desires an older man and is shown to do things of a sexual nature with him, Theo represents the cry for proper guidance concerning teenagers’ sex education. Although he is very independent and comes from a wealthy family, his estrangement is obvious in how he speaks, looks and walks, as though set apart from all the others around him, including his family. It may be easy to say that nowadays parents tend to be more open-minded about sex and sexual orientation, but it is nevertheless confusing and not everyone will feel comfortable to discuss it. Pornography was already widely distributed around the country, for just about anyone who could afford it, and if youngsters could buy drugs, they most certainly could find magazines who would fit to their tastes and desires. The eagerness the boy shows when he meets Tim is highly suggestive of how much he already knows and might have learnt from the porn industry. He is not 15 yet and already displays signs of a deep sexual awareness which indicates a more decided and resolute attitude in comparison to generations previous, to whom very little information was available.

Tim's apartment is said by Natasha to have been set fire to by a petrol bomb. It is believed that youngsters had done it when they heard the rumour that the man who lived there might have done something horrible to other children, which their parents suspected was paedophilia. Whether that really had happened or not, one can only guess. Tim is for all intents and purposes depicted as a scrupulous, although disturbed 29-year-old who tries to live quite set apart from everybody else. Despite Theo's many advances, that is, for the boy is adamant in his quest for love and caresses Tim's face quite gently, the older man is reluctant to go any further. Nevertheless, the desire tangible in their breathing. Tim wants him, even begs the boy to go home, but Theo will not hear of it, and they kiss just as passionately as the two married men in the beginning of the film.

Both the teenager and adult although not in a relationship, have consensual sex. Tim is rather stiff, rigid and miserable, a castaway who understands Theo's need to speak openly to one such as himself who obviously knows what being a man and feeling attracted to another is like:

People, they are scared of being different. And I can understand that. It takes a lot of courage but if you can be what you are and not what you think you should be, you'll be happy enough. You'll understand yourself and you can face anything.

(Clapham Junction)

Such portrayal of a relationship challenges the law completely, for the age of consent for gay men is sixteen and Theo is fourteen. This corroborates Dr Cath Mercer's notion that youngsters are becoming sexually active in their lives sooner than about two decades ago. There seems to be more to this though than first meets the eye. Tim has a pet talk with Theo, praising his courage for coming out to him the way the latter did, which is quite at odds with the fear and mistrust experienced by gay men before and for a considerable while after homosexuality had been decriminalised in Britain.

3.8-Artistic expression and the media

As technology advanced and the internet became more widely available, so did the access to information. Gay men had more means of communicating through their phones and computers and could easily find places to meet. However, while they gained more tools which made their lives more comfortable, those who were not gay learnt about these developments too, and soon what used to be

secret, hushed up and ignored became a subject of conversation even among straight people. Of course, in the film *Clapham Junction*, the decisive dinner conversation is supposed to be between three straight couples and Robin, the only openly gay man at the dinner party, who is astonished when he finds out that Julian not only is a guest but that he also is married and has a child. Robin speaks about being gay quite openly as he feels comfortable with his sexuality, although he rather feels that the “jolt of excitement” had dissipated considerably in recent years, possibly because “gay culture was being “contained” and integrated “into a consumeristic ethic and mainstream culture” (Cook, 2007b, p. 212) dominated by white heterosexual men. This seems to displease Robin and diminish his sense of adventure, which he, and many real people in Britain, believe was what made being gay fun. That is being and acting gay when it was still too dangerous out in the open. The meeting in public toilets may be a good example, but it soon became a dangerous affair for many gay men were being attacked and very little help was given by the police. When someone wanted to protest or try to make further changes, people, not just government, found it difficult to address it as a fair cause worthy of attention as “gays were apparently now comfortably accommodated on television” (*id ibid*). Which in a way may bear some truth. Could it be that the privileged, white heterosexuals preferred these arrangements as they thus need never have to deal with the gay issue directly? A similar idea seems to be going on during the dinner party when Marion engages in what is ultimately an awkward conversation with Robin. “Are you married?”, Marion asks him to which Robin replies “No, I’m gay”. The idea that gay men do not marry is ironic because she has lived with one for quite some time and she has a son, now eighteen months in fact. It is also interesting as a gay marriage is the very subject the film so ostentatiously depicts moneyed gay men who kiss just as passionately as the characters Farr and Laura did in *Victim*, forty-six years previous. Marion later declares she had “always got on well with gay men” for they were “so funny and unthreatening” but dislikes them for “having it away in the bushes” which she believes is “rather irresponsible”. Her condescendence meets its peek giving place to an outright disgust “Some even tend to push it in your face.” What must be understood about this remark is that because gay men feel so unsafe to express their love and affection in broad day light, they might feel tempted to do it in hiding even if the hiding place happens to be right under other people’s noses. One could argue that this much satisfaction is an act of revenge for being rejected and fear of being attacked vanishes at the prospect of having fun and getting away with it. This seems to be corroborated by Marion’s continuing distress “We accept you now, why can’t you behave like normal people?” to which Robin phrases that this *accepting* of straight men and women is “slightly boring”. What he means in fact is that it feels so condescending, they prefer sniffing around for the fun of it which is preferable to being subjected to white-heterosexual

condemning eyes. And again, because many men are attacked by the simple act of holding hands as they walk around the street, it is no wonder that they feel aggravated and will still look for alternatives. But, the questions raised by Marion: “They tend to push it in your face” or “We accept you now, why can’t you behave like normal people?” are not without significance. According to a survey, acceptance towards gay men in Britain has increased hugely for a while, but recently so has violence. If in 2005, Jody Dobrowski, the boy whose story is greatly portrayed in this film, had been attacked in a park, a great deal more of incidents had taken place since. It seems that as of 2015 hate crimes related to sexual orientation and gender identity have increased significantly, 19% and 16 %, respectively (The Guardian, 2021). It rather feels to many as though things are going backwards.

It might have begun in the 1980s stretching all the way into the 90s that “gay men were gaining a higher profile in the arts and media” (Cook, 2007b, p. 210). *Clapham Junction* shows two artists, Robin and Danny, a script writer and a violinist respectively. Robin has a script to pitch to a BBC executive who declines his offer by saying that “the whole gay thing... it’s been done”, going as far as to say that because they have marriage, or rather, civil partnership rights, it is not of greater importance anymore. Robin’s significance in this film is related not only with the fact that he is an openly gay man himself, who writes about being gay, but also because he believes that it is important to discuss this matter even when the struggle for rights seems to have been won. This is not quite true, as Robin tries to explain, but he is discouraged to continue for the executive feels “as it is, it’s not for me” (*ibid*). This is highly revealing, as it suggests that being gay has become an obsolete issue and deserves next to no attention when the film shows murders have been and were still being committed against gay men. These were not spontaneous attacks, but planned and carefully conducted ones, which suggests that the criminals, male individuals whose ages ranged between 20-30, had a considerable knowledge of where, how and when gay men met.

Natasha is an actress who is playing a character hired for a new BBC production of *Howards End*, based on the novel of the same title by E. M. Forster. In fact, it is the same executive who rejected Robin’s project who oversees this production. As mentioned earlier, the reason he gave for rejecting Robin was that “the whole gay thing” (*ibid*) had been done, but has not *Howards End* been adapted to film in the 90s also? The characters seem to know of this and point out just as much, even though they get the date wrong. This suggests that despite what people may say, they are very positive about portraying homosexuality, they will only pay as much attention as it is necessary, or perhaps polite would

be the term, for really what they want is to remain where it is traditionally comfortable with no gays screaming and demanding more rights and protection. Or, in this case, projection? It is also interesting to note that *Howards End* is a good example of heritage, or costume film, which as mentioned earlier was one of the commonest media forms for depicting same-sex love (Dyer). The author of the novel the film is based on was in fact gay and had written one of the most popular autobiographical novels, *Maurice*, which tells about a relationship he had had with an aristocrat, many years previously. To sum up, the executive rejects Robin's project because it concerned itself with being gay in London and does not seem to be important anymore, but he is keen on a reboot of a film that not too long before had been made. This might provide the reader with an insight into the British psyche, for executives and producers are usually quite aware of what their people want and are eager to deliver it to them so long as profits will justify the demand. The representation of same-sex relationships in films then in comparison with heritage film – still a major favourite in the country and a cultural mark of its people's traditions – is not as likely to enjoy much attention or indeed importance. Could this mean that people just cannot be bothered?

Despite the many changes in the BBC, especially those brought about by Sir Hugh Carleton-Greene when he was director general at the company in the 1960s, the channel has always been slightly more conservative regarding the cultural transformations and upheavals when compared to Channel 4. It does not seem to celebrate diversity quite as eagerly as Channel 4, whose vision has "an emphasis on achieving greater inclusion" (The Editors of Channel 4, 2023), whose LGBTQI+ workforce is made up of 6% (*id ibid*), not to mention that its Chief-Executive officer happens to be Alex Mahon, the first ever female CEO leading the company. The BBC, on the other hand, has never had a female leader to this day. This dissertation has already given some powerful evidence that women might just be the force driving the representation of homosexuality in the media.

CHAPTER 4

LOUD AND QUEER

4.1-Introduction

This chapter will concern itself with the differences and similarities between the two films *Victim* (1961) and *Clapham Junction* (2007) and demonstrate how the two seem to have a dialogue with one another despite the 46 years separating them. The choice of chapter title is determined by the fact that nowadays it is possible for gay men to be more at ease with their sexuality or at least it is easier to discuss and find materials about it. These are also times when despite the many changes achieved and the higher representation of gay men in the media, there has been in recent years a considerable rise in violence against gay men in the United Kingdom. The need to discuss it has never been so important, for even though there are victims still, and in the majority of the cases, the criminals are not brought to justice, there are those who will not rest until the situation is rectified. These are the men and women who make history, rising to the occasion and who go out and shout until they are heard, and their point is delivered.

4.2-SIMILARITIES

4.2.1-Gentlemen prefer boys

Both *Victim* and *Clapham* depict gay men, both old and young. As age distinctions become apparent so does class and both are quite intertwined. In *Victim*, a “fine upstanding” lawyer who is very close to becoming a barrister, is in love with the younger boy Barrett, who works at the construction company to which Farr is also linked in a work capacity. The roles are quite clear, Farr is a respectable gentleman from society and Barrett is a simple employee who must answer to him. In *Clapham Junction* Will is a money-making machine who has his own business while Alfie, the boy he is infatuated with, happens to be one of the staff members catering for his expensive wedding. Again, the roles are extremely clear, Will is a confident middle-aged man who has done rather well in life “making money” as opposed to Alfie who has moved to London to begin his life as an adult, and not only has to answer to Will, but he also must please him. In the past, prominent members from society managed to hide their true sexual

desires and affairs by acting upon them in secret with servants who consented. The differences between these two couple arrangements are that in the first film, neither actually ever demonstrate their affection for one another except in a photo when they seem extremely sad because they must never see each other again. They are very close, and the man is patting the boy on the shoulder to comfort him. See now how it differs from the second, for example when Will makes his advances on Alfie when the two are hidden in the pantry drinking expensive champagne and consuming cocaine. They kiss and it seems that more might be coming when, panting for breath, the boy decides against it and pushes the man away.

4.2.2-Discussing homosexuality

Both films stimulate the discussion about homosexuality in the film and in the public arena, it being portrayed as a topic between gay men only and then gay and straight together. Both boys, Barrett and Alfie, have a friend to confide their problems in; Barrett's friend is straight, and Alfie's is gay, and how they meet their friend is also very interesting since it happens in the evening. Barrett meets his friend on the street as he is headed home with his girlfriend. Alfie meets his friend at a gay club, after having helped cater for William and Gavin's wedding ceremony. But in *Clapham Junction*, there is another gay man called Robin who is friends with a straight married man called Roger Hopkirk. In both films the matter of homosexuality is discussed, only in different contexts and for different reasons. *Victim* shows the two friends discussing the dangerous situation of being gay as far from other people as possible, whereas *Clapham Junction* depicts two youths, Alfie and his friend, hanging out in a club and talking about the same subject quite at ease. This is not only circumstantial, for later on during Belinda Hopkirk's dinner party "the gay issue" is literally brought to the table where it is discussed in a fierce manner. But what is striking the most is that Robin and Roger, who had been friends since school, kissed once on the cheek as a form of greeting. It is often assumed that if a straight man is comfortable enough with his sexuality and nothing has to fear about his virility or masculinity being questioned, he will show no discomfort at, for instance, kissing another man. So long as there is a considerable degree of intimacy in their relationship that justifies such display of affection. When Robin and his friend kiss each other on the cheek when they meet at the dinner party, it shows that when a man lives long enough with another who is gay, which is the case between Robin and his straight friend, they are bound to connect and accept one another.

The straight man called Roger is a barrister who is unhappily married to his wonderful wife, Belinda. He wants to have sex with more women, for he greatly misses the action, and wants to have

passionate, uncommitted sex. If before many were prepared to say that gay men were sexual perverts who only thought of cruising and cottaging, this probably goes to show just how as much sexually driven straight men are too, only for the opposite sex.

4.2.3-Gay partners

Earlier in chapter 2 it was mentioned how *Victim* discourses “the contradictory nature of the law” (Griffiths, p. 9) as well as family and marriage. Being gay in the 1960s was completely at odds with the law which forbade any form of homosexual acts, the mere attempt to engage in homosexual activities constituting just as much an offence as being caught in the act itself. In *Victim*, Farr’s marriage to Laura, a primary school teacher, is supposed to safeguard him from any association with homosexuality but would not keep him from feeling attracted to men. *Clapham Junction* shows a similar situation of a gay man called Julian married to a woman with whom he has a child. This wedding has the same purpose as Farr’s and Laura’s, the only difference is that while Farr wants to hide and deny his natural instincts completely, Julian simply wants to hide them while acting upon them. Half a century after *Victim* was released, gay civil partnerships and weddings became a possibility and soon many men were applying for civil partnerships and throwing either grand or modest ceremonies and receptions. In *Clapham*, one of the first moments is William and Gavin’s wedding ceremony where all the same pomp and joy of straight weddings can be observed. What is important to note also is that while Farr remains faithful to his wife in spite of desiring the boy Barrett, William and Julian who had vowed to love and respect their marriage to Gavin and Marion respectively, cheat on them without a trace of remorse. If *Victim* seemed to promote a new image of a gay man who is whole, decent and virtuous, showing how they were both victims and criminals before the law, *Clapham Junction* shows a not so new neither old side. It seems to point out how some gay men struggle to remain faithful to their partners or coming out at all because it is not convenient, which is the case of Julian.

Rich gay men continue as they did centuries before to get away by virtue of their wealth, only in this case it is not the law they run from, but dangers, whereas those who can little more help themselves fall for the traps made to tame or dispose of them. Julian is a doctor just like Gavin, only the latter is openly out, works at a public hospital and is married to another wealthy man, while the former is closeted, has his own private practice and is married to a woman, Marion, his *beard*. He is the one who cruises for sex with other men in public toilets but never gets caught. As for Gavin, being a doctor and married

to another wealthy men enjoys some security Alfie could not even begin to dream, he being considerably less favoured. Julian being a socially better well positioned doctor than Gavin, feels there is a conduct he must uphold, showing to the world the face of a respectable married man with a child, when in the dead of night he seeks for the fun and pleasures of London's sex-subculture.

There are other similarities between the two films. Laura being a primary school teacher and Gavin a doctor at a public hospital, both working on jobs that are dedicated to the care of others. Gavin represents the caring, nurturing and gentil side of being gay, as opposed to the old-fashioned notion of the "sad, tortured and lonely" (*ibid*, p. 189).

4.2.4-Violence, crime and punishment

To begin with, both films portray death. This is a prevailing theme, and it can be observed throughout the ages, when the persecution against gay men began, incidentally enough by the same time women were being burnt at stakes for witchcraft and heresy. Gay men were being punished just as viciously by means of impalement as revealed in the first chapter. It appears that gay men and straight women have since times out of mind been on the same boat. The violence and the crimes made and perpetuated against gay men in different periods and through different ways. *Victim* demonstrates the fear and danger of being gay in the 60s, when the regime was so intent on imprisoning men who had been caught in homosexual activities, or indeed were suspected of doing it. It, too, discourses how the crime of being gay seems to be nothing where breaking the law is regarded, when others are the actual criminals for blackmailing men who love other men. The true crime the film demonstrates is not so much being gay, rather blackmailing is put on the spotlight here since it does nothing but hurt people who only seek to love. A man loving another can hurt nobody. It seems as though there is an echo of the prerogative defended by Wolfenden in his report, that the law has no business in what two consenting adults do in private even where sex is concerned.

There is also the fact that in the film *Victim*, the suicide is but the result of the terrible blackmailing affair which Farr concludes is nothing short of murder and which therefore must be dealt with as a criminal offence. Being gay is therefore put in perspective, for the gays in this film are nothing but victims of the establishment and of the cruelty the state of the law permitted by not protecting gay men and insisting on criminalising their affairs. In *Clapham Junction* the boy who is murdered in the end of the film is very innocent, which helps to send a different message of what being gay constitutes in a

society where, although the law no longer criminalizes same-sex relations, men who love other men are punished by the people. As such gay men are assaulted, bullied, suffer condescension, are discriminated against and not unusually murdered, unless they commit suicide.

4.2.5-Good looks and good manners

Physical attractiveness plays an important role in the two films under consideration. It must be pointed out that the main characters are rather good looking which for mediatic purposes has its value and usefulness. Looking at something that is pleasant and easy on the eyes is always preferable to the opposite. Farr is obviously handsome, and the film underlines that fact. He is respectful towards his wife and wishes to keep her safe even if he is destroyed in his quest to make justice for Barrett, the boy he “wanted” but to whom while he lived never committed. That he remained faithful to his wife despite his natural instincts pointing him the other way, has an enormous significance, for it makes him whole, untarnished and virtuous. These traits enable the film to pass a more positive perspective regarding gay men as opposed to the common belief that they were perverted libertines who ought to be in prison. He did not sin against God for he kept his vows to his wife, while struggling to shake off his desire for Barrett. In *Clapham Junction* a similar idea is at play. Alfie, an indisputably good-looking boy, does not want Will to break the vows he just read to his husband, even though it is so hard to resist the temptation to be with a man so much his senior, and the sexual attraction between the two is quite tangible. A different nuance is apparent with Terry who, although not unattractive, prefers shabby and more practical clothes, his hair slightly unkempt, that is until he is getting ready for going out and praying on his victims. Here he privileges what seems to be his finest clothes, combs his hair neatly and ensures that his white Calvin-Klein underpants remain considerably spottable to reveal the expensive brand name. Gay men are often prone to dressing well and have an eye for fashion, although others prefer a rather more discrete appearance.

Another matter of huge importance is that many significant issues the films debate are dealt with by white men and women with upper-class accents. Could it be, perhaps, that the intention was to pass a message about being gay in a more credible way? This is of course a rather polemical thing to say, but in a society where racism is still a major issue, to address something as provocative as homosexuality and ensure that it is received with as little uproar as possible might need some thoughtful strategies. People are often more prepared to accept something, however scandalous and unseemly it may be, if it

comes from someone whose credibility derives from how well positioned they are in society and because they are white. If they happen to look handsome so much the better as appearances, although superficial, are a major contributing factor regarding acceptance of a message.

4.2.6-Cruising and seduction

In *Victim* the undercover policeman knows how gay men make themselves noticeable to other gay men and meaningfully glance at each other, as though as to seduce. By posing in a slightly affected, subdued manner, he uses this knowledge while on duty not to catch gay men but to determine if they are being blackmailed and who the blackmailer is. This is suggestive of a certain idea and foreknowledge of what being gay might be and what a gay man was likely to look and behave. In *Clapham Junction* it is a whole different story, openly-out gay men use this tactic to cruise for sex and the matter is understood by everyone at the dinner party where it is discussed in a tone where causality and seriousness converge. There is no need for euphemisms or shying away from the subject, in fact everyone – except for Julian who feels uncomfortable – is keen on joining in the conversation and making their views quite plain, whether for or against gay culture and behaviour. At the same time, the film sheds light on how the real criminals glance at their potential victims in order to make themselves obvious. Unknowing and unsuspecting the latter are, they fall for the trap and are attacked. The same tactics the policeman in *Victim* employed to catch the blackmailers are used by Terry who dresses up a certain way and poses slightly more affectedly than he ordinarily would in order to look *gayer* and more attractive to his victims. It is possible to determine how the films converge the real diversity of new and different representations and the stereotypes constructed to understand gays or, as in the past, to vilify and discredit them.

4.2.7-The criminals: are they gay?

Both films hint at the possibility that the criminals might be gay themselves as well as considerably disadvantaged in comparison to the other wealthy characters. It turns out that in *Victim*, one of the blackmailers was in fact one of the many victims being blackmailed by the two main criminals who were exploiting the flawed British law criminalizing homosexuality and profiting from it. The latter represents what used to happen, as these men who were unable to pay their fee, in order to avoid exposure or being sent to prison, gave their friends up to the blackmailers and even to the earnest police. The main criminal's name is Sandy Young and he is presented to the viewer with the same traits

homosexuals were believed to possess during the time the film depicts. He dresses well, walks rather *dandy-ishly* and speaks affectedly. His whole demeanour is reminiscent of a stereotypical gay man, even his accent has a certain flourish about it, and moreover he owns a portrait of *David* by Michelangelo. As aforementioned, it is a statue of a naked man very famous for its representation of beauty and youth in a neoclassicist style. These were exactly some of the themes Victorian Aesthetics admired and as we have determined earlier, some of these Aesthetics were gay and looked up to the Ancient Greeks enormously. One may recall Oscar Wilde again who himself found the principles of beauty in the naked form of the male body.

Terry in *Clapham Junction* knows exactly what to do and where to go, blending in with the gay crowd and lure his prey into his mischievous ends. He is single, deflects his thoughtful grandmothers' suggestions to get himself *someone*, makes himself presentable only to go out to places where he can meet gay men.

4.2.8-The female perspective

Strong-charactered women who act as though they are both protectors and benefactors are presented in the films. Of course, in *Victim* there are two who feel rather appalled about the whole gay issue: Mary dislikes Barrett and wishes that her boyfriend and herself could keep their distance from him, and Miss Benham, one of the blackmailers, wants to punish gay men since in her view the law is too slack where homosexuality is concerned, which is why she takes it upon herself to punish them and profit from their recklessness. But the same movie also portrays a magnificent wife who having known all along that her husband had had in the past not so much an affair but something akin to it with another man, decided to marry and care for him. She is poised, beautiful, kind, has a great sense of style, in short possesses all the qualities that later gay culture would promote and applaud in their divas. The very same *womanly* traits and features appear in *Clapham Junction*. Belinda Hopkirk and Miss Richards are no doubt the perfect embodiment of the early 2000s divas. Tender, beautiful and kind, they tower over the crimes perpetrated against gay men and although in different manners they express the compassion for gay men and in the case of Belinda, the disgust at the hate motivated crimes. *Clapham Junction* differs from *Victim* on this subject in that neither of the female characters happen to be the villain, although one may argue that two of them are rather hypocritical about the gays. Natasha, an actress and mother to a teenage son who without her knowing is a sexually curious gay man, and Marion another

mother to a baby son whose father is a closeted-gay man who cheats on her, cruising for sex in public toilets. The first is quieter than the second but shows just how backward(s) her mind is about gay men by associating them to paedophilia. The second, who begins to praise herself for having “quite a few gay friends”, is more severe and wishes that they were more sensible and did not display themselves so utterly in public. This is suggestive that despite the many claims that society is now more positive and accepting of gay men (Nolsoe), this response can only take so much. People, both men and women, still frown upon the sexual liberality gay men are so famous for and rebuke them for doing so. However, not everyone will be prepared to accept that these practices so widely associated with gay men are just as common between straight couples who also enjoy “the jolt of excitement” if they get the chance. If on the one hand two men may “act normal” as Marion suggests, on the other hand watching two men kissing or holding hands can still afflict a great deal of onlookers who will often show their displeasure in a variety of ways.

4.3-DIFFERENCES

4.3.1-Social standing

Both *Victim* and *Clapham Junction* present characters whose social standing differs considerably. If in the first film the upwardly mobile main character Melville Farr is depicted as quite the hero for willingly risking the comfort his career and marriage afford him by coming out, *Clapham Junction*, on the other hand, is different. There are several wealthy characters, three of whom are gay, but only two, the good Dr Gavin and his partner William are open about it, whereas the other, Dr Julian, is unwilling to come out and is quite the cruiser. The suggestion in *Victim* that rich and socially well positioned gays are more morally self-possessed is crushed utterly by *Clapham Junction's* other view of a morally corrupted upper-class gay man.

4.3.2-Time

A notion of time progressing versus regressing may also be identified. *Victim* was clearly a film ahead of its time for categorically portraying a successful upper-middle class gay man and making clear the intention to go forth, bringing awareness to a more humane and compassionate response of its

audience. The fact that the main gay character was a lawyer is suggestive of an attempt to advocate for legislation and encourage the embryonic gay liberation front of the late 60s.

On the other hand, *Clapham Junction* seems to be pointing to a form of regression after so much having been achieved. With a wedding as a fortunate fairy story-like background in the beginning, crimes and bullying are slid in between suggesting that despite the law foreseeing legal protection for gay people and conferring on them almost as many rights as straight couples, the positive message so necessary to impress upon the people does not seem to have sunk in. It is possible that due to the increased freedom and confidence gay men began to enjoy, those less educated or compassionate decided to take it upon themselves to continue the banned laws against gay men. The prevailing feature in the film of *cruising* may be a possible reaction to this rising hate and ignorance, for afraid of being attacked, or worse murdered, many gay men may prefer the lax, uncommitting practices of old: looking for men in parks and public toilets. Incidentally, those who want to punish gay men for their audacity are more and more aware of their targets' practices and know where to look for them. *Victim* merely mentions that gay men frequent parks to pick up other men, or boys, whereas in *Clapham Junction* not only is the subject discussed between a group of wealthy people, but it is also showed quite overtly.

4.3.3-Gay memory-making

Considering both films there is a connection between memory and the eyes. One relies not only on sight to register moments in time and create one's memory. The sense of smell is reported to be one of the best triggers for one to recall past events. Both *Victim* and *Clapham Junction* are films that depict incidents from the past which have considerable repercussions in the present. They are memory carriers in the sense that they preserve a notion of what it was to be gay and show how gay men were perceived. These films pose as a lasting testimony of a subculture that has been growing since times immemorial and their significance lies in that none shall ever be forgotten. The practices, facts and incidents are retained, preserved and remediated by means of art, in this case specifically cinema, wherein one may encounter the ways in which gay men communicated, congregated and presented themselves to the world. Alfie passes through all these places where people often cruise for sex without ever engaging with them, however it is he who ends up being the victim. The true story about the boy who died in late 2005 and that of the many men who were being blackmailed in the 60s are conveyed through the characters Alfie (*Clapham Junction*) and Farr (*Victim*) respectively, in an attempt to make possible the remembrance

of important marks of the gay history in London (and by extension, Britain). This is clearly important considering that what happened in the past, though not as well publicised as it is today, continues to happen still. As such, memory and media have an important role to play here because they ensure that these crimes are not forgotten, for only by remembering the misdeeds of the past can a change or at least a mild understanding be delivered in the present, or near future. These mediatic accounts also permit discussions that might bring together different individuals whose opinions and beliefs about the subject diverge completely.

The imagery of the eyes, sight and vision are recurrent features in the films and contribute to memory-making. Gays rely quite keenly on sight, for they are very fond of looking good and need the eyes for these are silent and hardly give them away if they know how to act discretely. The eyes, therefore, are the most discrete method to make oneself known and spottable and so they have been as revealed in the beginning of this dissertation for a very long time. *Victim* hints at something along these lines, when Farr suggests in the course of his investigation that fear being the oxygen of blackmail, could be found in the victims' eyes. And *Clapham Junction*, with all its overt depictions of gay men, promotes a wider idea of just how easily gay men can be identified in this day and age. "You've looked at me like I've looked at you" Tim admits to Theo when the latter had insisted that the former must have done so, which constitutes an excellent example of gay men's greater need to look, see and be seen. At the same time, it indicates where they become easy prey for unscrupulous onlookers who little more care for their lives and attack them. These rouges are mildly aware of the to do's and ways of gay life and since they no longer can profit from them, they can lay some form of vengeance upon those they cannot understand. In turn this makes gay representations an important issue to address still, due to the increasing numbers of hate-related crimes against gay men some of which tend to result in the victims' untimely death.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

As demonstrated in Chapter 1, in the past those whose voices were supposed to be silenced were as good as given a microphone to speak up. Victorians in general wanted to silence gay men, seeing them as threats to society, while also maintaining the criminal status from previous eras. They failed, and it seems that their methods backfired completely, for with all the fuss that was made in the nineteenth century gay men gained a) projection, for example via pamphlets advising against the dangerous 'sodomites', and via newspapers where scandals such as the one involving the sexual exploits of gay men fed the masses and spread like wild fire; and b) legislation: the Wolfenden report and all the other societies, communities and institutions established to help make the gay agenda a more united, coherent and politically effective lobby. Despite progress being made in terms of an increasing acceptance of homosexuality by the public, anger and violence against gay men was not in-existent and from time to time after a severe beating or murder there was outrage and a fight back for justice. The media were quick to answer, and a notion that we have seen in the two films analysed in this dissertation, that those who cannot accept gay men are little better than those who burnt witches in the dark ages or are comparable to primitive cavemen, is presented.

The power of the media here is fundamental for its influence on the British psyche has proven quite effective. By constantly and more overtly depicting gay men in films, TV series and a myriad of other platforms, mental constructs can be changed, moulded, and activated in-somuch as to reconstruct what was formerly inaccurate considerations and beliefs. When *Victim* was released, it was the first time a gay man, however closeted he was, had been presented as a homosexual, which was the term they employed. It showed how in the past gay men struggled with the law and their nature, and were thereby prosecuted, discriminated and assaulted. In *Victim*, the boy-Barrett and other men are blackmailed for being gay and the barber is intimidated and even brutalised at his own barbershop – the very treatment in real life that gay men received for being themselves. In *Clapham Junction* one may notice different nuances. The word homosexual is rarely used, gay being the most acceptable term. There is still brutality and injustice from a society that can be prejudiced while at the same time appearing progressive. An example of this masked acceptance may be that of the BBC director who claims that being gay has already been integrated into society and there is no need to address it further. However, he invests in another adaptation of the book *Howards End* even though it had been done years previously. Violence is

once again of utter importance as gay men are very likely to be attacked even in public. That much may be observed when two men chase after Alfie, even though he was not cruising for sex, and assault him. This particular moment in the film is based on a real event which rather appalled the country back in October 2005.

By perpetuating the memory of what it once was like to be gay and continuing to show how it is at present helps remind people of how far they have come and of how much it is still necessary to change. These forms of containing and representing gay men in different times possess "*mnemonic functions*" (Erll, p. 144), for they aid in the process of remembering aspects and experiences of the past important to observe in the present. A form of knowledge is contained here, as the films function as a vehicle for memory which is carried to the present and kept alive and well. Indeed, they store "contents of memory, making them available across time" (*ibid.* pp. 124-126) as encoded messages left for posterity. Memory, or remembrance, in short is a powerful mechanism, a tool which aids the people to understand themselves and, in this case, specifically gay men. By offering stories based on real events that show how mistreated they were and are still, men, women and children have the chance to make their own minds about the subject.

As more protection and supportive legislation is passed concerning homosexuality in general, more hate crimes seem to occur. The answer is not so much to stop the latter but rather to reinforce the former and increase awareness of the fact that people do not just get hurt and get better, or are bullied and get over it, they die in obscurity. Governments ought to protect all their citizens and gay men are part of this community. When the government fails to provide fairly for everyone the media must step forward to assist.

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