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Research Article

# Queering Desire and Identity: A Textual Analysis of Ali Smith's "Free Love" Through Queer Theory

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**Abstract**
Ali Smith's *Free Love and Other Stories* (1995) is a collection of twelve stories that engages readers instantaneously with their universal appeal. In this debut collection of stories, Ali Smith explores the issues of sexuality, identity, and memory, among many other issues. The fluid nature of these subjects makes an interesting case for examining these stories to discover fresh insights for a better understanding of her stories. This paper takes up the first story, "Free Love," for analysis using the analytical framework of Queer Theory. The story highlights a teenage girl's sexual encounters during a trip to Amsterdam. This early work of Smith made a prompt impression in the literary circles for the kind of subjects it deals with. In this story, she engages with the ideas of sexual fluidity, gender flexibility, identity exploration, and the subversion of heteronormative principles. Using the queer theory lens for the textual analysis of the story, this paper tries to foreground that "Free Love" presents a provocative critique of heteronormativity and identity politics.

**Keywords:** Ali Smith, sex, identity, queer, gay/lesbian.

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The title of the story, "Free Love," baffles the readers about the meaning of the word "free." The reader is perplexed whether it has to do with the economics of love or the freedom of love. After a close reading of the text, one is inclined to conclude that the adjective "free" is used to mean both. The narrator of the story is a young girl who visits Amsterdam where she has sexual encounters with two different girls. The first encounter was with a prostitute named Suzi, and the second was with her co-traveler Jackie, who is her school friend. Both these contacts were lesbian in nature. During her first meeting with Suzi, she gets a free sex service from her, as Suzi believes, "the first time should always be free" (4). It seems it was Suzi's business strategy to offer free sex service on the first occasion and then charge her customers a fortune when they happened to come back to her for the second time. Suzi's business strategy seems to succeed when the narrator of the story shells out a good amount of money for her second visit, as she reveals, "it [her second sex service] cost me a fortune" (8). During her stay in Amsterdam, the narrator could publicly showcase her sexuality with no one seeming bothered about her sexual preferences. There she could freely participate in lesbian encounters with her school friend Jackie, and nobody had time to pay any heed to what they were doing. She observes, "we [narrator and Jackie] were kissing in the middle of Amsterdam and nobody even noticing" (7). After this analysis, one may deduce that the word "free" seems to denote both (a) love (in the form of sex) without having to pay anything and (b) being able to love freely without any heteronormative expectations. It is intriguing to notice that through both her sexual encounters in Amsterdam, the one with the prostitute and the other with her friend in an open park where she has immense freedom to showcase her sexual preferences, she destabilizes the preferred sexual "norms" of society. The acts of the young girls seem to disrupt the conventional understanding of sexuality by engaging in the subversion of heterosexual norms.

Many a time heteronormativity is confused with heterosexuality. For the analysis of the story, it is

important for this paper to explain these two terms. Berlant and Michael clarify the difference between heteronormativity and heterosexuality:

> By heteronormativity we mean the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent—that is, organized as a sexuality—but also privileged. Its coherence is always provisional, and its privilege can take several (sometimes contradictory) forms: unmarked, as the basic idiom of the personal and the social; or marked as a natural state; or projected as an ideal or moral accomplishment. It consists less of norms that could be summarized as a body of doctrine than of a sense of rightness produced in contradictory manifestations-often unconscious, immanent to practice or to institutions. (548)

The binary of heterosexuality and homosexuality puts heterosexuality in an advantageous position because of the social sanction heterosexuality is bestowed with. Many scholars have argued that sex and gender are two completely different things. They contend sex is natural (biological), whereas gender is a social construct. Beauvoir's assertion, "one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one" (330), underlines the same idea that gender roles and identities are formed under societal expectations and personal experiences. She contends that biology can determine one's sex, but gender is determined by the societal norms attached to different sexes. Butler takes this debate further and claims that gender is based on performance and is essentially a social construct. She believes that an individual's experiences also play a significant role in determining one's gender. She complicates the issue further by emphasizing the fluid nature of gender and sexuality. She argues that designation of gender is attached to the physical body on the basis of performance of gender (178). Therefore, according to Butler, performativity is the most crucial determining factor of gender. Though some recent feminist scholars challenge this contention and believe that some sexual differences are innate rather than "situational." There is a substantial body of research in biology and the social sciences that supports their claim. The feminist scholars are of the opinion that "instead of rejecting "otherness" as an imposed cultural construct, women should cultivate it as a source of self-knowledge and expression, and use it as the basis to critique patriarchal institutions" (Thurman, 14).

"Free Love," with its subtle themes, undermines heterosexuality as well as the canons of heteronormativity. In a heterosexual world, a homosexual encounter is stigmatized for being a deviation from the norm. Heterosexuality is prioritized by attaching the word "natural" to it to give it a social validity, which then provides it a privileged positionality. Some scholars try to reason it through the idea of procreation. They argue that since it is only heterosexual encounters that have the ability to procreate, therefore it is a "natural" sexual preference. "Free Love," through its subtle themes, symbols, and metaphors, challenges the basic premise of heterosexuality and heteronormativity by foregrounding how heterosexuality is founded on man-made principles and is not a "natural" preference.

There is a lot of confusion around the word "queer." Historically, the term "queer" was derogatorily used for the individuals who were involved in non-heterosexual activities. The word was also used to mean "strange," "sick," "abnormal," and an insult against lesbians and gay men. Halperin refers to "queer" simply as "non-normative expression of sexuality" (341). Jagose's observation, "there is no generally acceptable definition of queer; indeed, many of the common understandings of the term contradict each other irresolvably" (99), further creates an impediment in understanding this term. Levy and Johnson draw the attention of readers towards the function of "queer"; they acknowledge that "queer disrupts traditional (and binary) notions of identity as fixed and unitary and replaces them with a conceptualization of self that is constantly changing, multi-dimensional, and fluid" (131-132). The fluidity of the definition gives the word "queer" immense possibilities for being reinterpreted and recharacterized. Warner views, "Queer is also a way of cutting against mandatory gender divisions, though gender continues to be a dividing line" (xxvi).

The emergence of queer theory can be traced back to the early 1990s and has its roots in the works of Michel Foucault, who views sexuality as "something that we ourselves create—it is our own creation, and much more than the discovery of a secret side of our desire. We have to understand that with our desires, go new forms of relationships, new forms of love, new forms of creation. Sex is not a fatality: it's a possibility for creative life" (Downing, 104). Foucault considered sexuality as something that is socially constructed. Drawing upon the ideas of Foucault, queer theorists study how categories, binaries, and language shape the portrayal of sexuality and gender as social and cultural phenomena rather than essential biological facts. This approach proves particularly relevant to analyzing Smith's work, as her stories consistently explore the "interstices" and "stitches" that both connect and disconnect human experiences. In an interview with Kasia Boddy, Ali Smith throws light on the connections and disconnections in her works, "They are like a kind of interstice, they're like the stitches. Even the disconnections are the things that hold things together" (69). Queer theory is essentially a post-structuralist critical theory that means to disrupt normative understandings of sexuality and gender. Parisi maintains, "Queer theory has strictly drawn on post-structuralist feminism to challenge precisely the biological ground of sex at the core of psychoanalysis, and the ontology of nature. Queer theory has taken the post-structuralist opportunity of undoing the biological fixity of sex so as to expose the artificiality of a sexuality, which is always already mediated by language, discourses and the order of the symbolic" (76). Queer theory vies to challenge the established norms of the heteronormative sexuality in which heterosexuality is favored and homosexuality is censured in the binary of heterosexuality and homosexuality. Valocchi upholds, "Queer theory turns this emphasis on its head by deconstructing these

binaries, foregrounding the constructed nature of the sex, gender, and sexuality classification systems and resisting the tendency to congeal these categories into social identities. Because the binaries are revealed to be cultural constructions or ideological fictions, the reality of sexed bodies and gender and sexual identities are fraught with incoherence and instability" (752-753). Queer theory focuses on the study and theorization of gender identification and sexual practices that exist that are not endorsed by heterosexuality. In doing so, it contests the claim that heterosexuality is "natural" and "normal" as propagated through heteronormative narrative. McGlinchey et al. maintain:

> Queer theory emphasises the fluid and humanly performed nature of sexuality—or better, sexualities. It questions socially established norms and dualistic categories with a special focus on challenging sexual (heterosexual/homosexual) gender (male/female), class (rich/poor), racial (white/non-white) classifications. It goes beyond these so-called 'binaries' to contest general political (private/public) as well as international binary orders (democratic/ authoritarian).

Queer theory's emphasis on fluidity and performance is consistent with Smith's literary aesthetic, which values transformation and change over fixed identity classifications. Smith's work, according to Germana, reveals how "desire, above all things, is transformative" (458). This transformational nature of desire is essential to understanding how "Free Love" serves as both a personal discovery story and a broader critique of heteronormative norms.

The story revolves around three characters: Suzi, Jackie, and the narrator. Except for the narrator, the other two characters come out as bisexuals. Suzi, in the advertisement of her sex services, writes, "Love for men also women" (2), where "the also was underlined" (2). The word that comes after "also" generally holds secondary status. In this case too, Suzi seems to advertise heterosexuality as a privileged category, even though she is ready to accommodate same-sex services. The second sexual partner of the narrator, Jackie, too, is seen "heavily kissing the boy who worked on the Caledonian Canal tourist boats" (8). The narrator is the only character who only involves herself in same-sex activity, and she finds heterosexuality "remarkably . . . sordid" (9) when she sees Jackie kissing that boy. The narrator seems to act with a missionary zeal to set things right in favor of non-normative sexual preferences.

"Free Love" makes an intervention in reinterpreting the rigid boundaries of heteronormativity. The location of negotiation is an important factor in analyzing any contribution to the subversion of the dominant narrative. The story juxtaposes two locations in the narration to highlight how two different spaces facilitate two different narratives. The first one is Amsterdam, and the other is the narrator's home country, Britain. After a close analysis of the story, one cannot neglect to infer that Amsterdam is the site of resistance to the dominant narrative, which favors heterosexuality and suppresses same-sex relationships. Smith paints Amsterdam as a place that is conducive to liberation of sexuality from the rigid strictures of heterosexuality, whereas the narrator's home country, Britain, is portrayed as a place that promotes regressive narratives of heterosexuality and streamlines oppression of non-normative sexuality.

There is no denying the fact that geography has a vital role to play in social constructs. Here, two different places stand for two different social constructs that are diametrically opposite to each other. "Free Love" shows Amsterdam as a place that shows open-mindedness and accommodates same-sex activities, whereas the narrator's home country is the location of oppression that displays its narrow mindset by not allowing same-sex activities in the open. The narrator's home country seems to promote heterosexuality by approving it as a morally viable act and homosexuality as an immoral one, as readers notice when Jackie comments on the footsie incident in their hometown's pub, "how disgusting it was" (3). The portrayal of Amsterdam as an inclusive location punctures the rigidity of sexuality and allows a "free" flow of sexual preferences. In the story, Amsterdam represents a place that challenges the established norms of heterosexuality.

The story projects Amsterdam as a "queer space" that fosters queer love activities without any passing of judgment. Korcek maintains that Amsterdam has "a long history of progressive and liberal policies. The progressive propensity of Dutch politics and the practice of "pragmatic tolerance" in legislation attend to the general level of tolerant beliefs toward socially dissident groups and identities" (12). Amsterdam has been a friendly place for those who stand against privileged "normative" principles. Amsterdam sees a deviation from heterosexuality as a position of power rather than a disadvantageous site. During the Holocaust, Nazi concentration camps used a pink triangle insignia as a shame badge to mark inmates as homosexuals. The Nazis used this triangle for identifying the homosexuals to persecute them. Zebracki et al.'s observation validates this paper's contention: "gay and lesbian life of Amsterdam in the 1970s and '80s largely understood the pink triangle as a symbol of pride, or strength, rather than one of victimhood" (302).

"Free Love" subtly tries to foreground how heterosexuality is not natural. It can be argued that the story shows Amsterdam's park as nature and the home country's toilet as man-made society, for the park is an open space with sky up and trees around, whereas the toilet is a concrete structure erected by human labor. The narrator engages in same-sex activities at both these places. Amsterdam's "open" park accommodates same-sex encounters with an "open" mind, whereas the toilet of the home country, with its "cramped" space, shows the "narrow" mentality of home country society. These two places can be seen as the binary of "self" and "other." Amsterdam, for accommodating same-sex activities, "naturally" becomes the "other" of the home country, which keeps a check on homosexual activities and encourages heterosexuality through its dominant narratives. In the story, Amsterdam becomes the "other" of the narrator's home country because it portrays a resistance to ideas of heterosexuality propagated by the

heteronormative society of the home country. The two places symbolize two opposite attributes of competing sexuality narratives: (a) an open park in Amsterdam can be seen as a metaphor of the open-mindedness of inclusive principles of homosexuality, and (b) a cramped women's toilet of the bus station in the home country of the narrator is a metaphor of the narrow-mindedness of the heteronormative principles. Smith tries to present Amsterdam as a queer space that poses an existential threat to the rigid structures of heteronormative expectations, as it transgresses traditional boundaries of sexuality to explore new forms of identities. The way this story treats the subjects of sexual fluidity, identity formation, and desire, it erects a magnificent structure that dwarfs the rigid boundaries of binary structure and also challenges heteronormative sexuality.

The memory of Amsterdam remains in the mind of the narrator as it gives her the "queer space" she desires so much. The narrator confesses the regular raids of such memories: "I think about it from time to time, and when I do the picture that comes first to mind is one of the sun as it breaks apart and coheres on the waters of an unknown city, and I am there, free in the middle of it, high on its air and laughing to myself, a smile all over my face, my wallet in my pocket still full of clean new notes" (9). One can argue that this unknown city is none other than Amsterdam because of the resemblances of the description that she gives. They are uncannily similar to the description of her time in Amsterdam after her first sexual encounter with Suzi. She mentions she felt "in the leafy surfaces of the canals that life was wonderous filled with possibility. I stopped there and leaned on the railings and watched the late sun hitting the water, shimmering apart and coming together again in the same movement, the same moment" (4). The similarity in the pattern of movement of the sun gives credence to the assumption of this paper. For instance, "The sun breaks apart and coheres" in the unknown city of her imagination and "the late sun hitting the water, shimmering apart and coming together again" in Amsterdam are rather similar descriptions of her observation. Moreover, after having her first same-sex encounter, she felt liberated, and she felt "free in the middle of it" (9). Another point that draws the attention of readers is that the narrator's hands were oily when she went to Suzi. Suzi first washed them, and then she did not allow her to pay for the first sex service. So, when the narrator imagines about that unknown place, in her imagination she finds her, "wallet in . . . pocket still full of clean new notes". She finds her wallet "full" and with "clean notes" because she had not paid anything to Suzi in her first sexual encounter and also she hadn't touched those notes with her greasy hands. These astonishing resemblances allow readers to conclude that Amsterdam is the place in her imagination. Imagination plays an important role in queer theory. There is vastness and multiplicity in imagination. The narrator remarks, "Amsterdam was very romantic" (7). It can be said that the fitting place of romance is imagination because there are no restrictions in imagination, and moreover, imagination is "filled with possibility" (4). One can contend that a perfect romance can only stay in an imaginative world. It is the non-normative sexual encounters that cater to multiple choices in sexual preferences and are therefore filled with immense possibilities. It can be argued that there is a similarity in imagination and codes of non-normative sexuality.

In the story, Smith keeps moving between the present and the past to display temporal movement of her desire. The story's temporal structure, which appears to involve retrospective narration, creates what queer theorists recognize as a complex relationship between past experience and present understanding. The act of remembering sexual awakening necessarily involves interpreting past experience through current knowledge and language, creating layers of temporal complexity that exceed linear developmental models. Bernard observes, "Smith's technique to give her stories unbroken spines is one that relentlessly weaves together past and present and merges her voice with that of the departed" (77).

Jackie is an intriguing character to analyze through the theoretical framework of queer theory. Jackie is inherently "queer," but she fails to sustain her sexual identity beyond the "queer space," in this case, that space is Amsterdam. When the narrator tells Jackie about how she felt for her all those years, the narrator notices, "she looked at me [the narrator] woundedly" (7). Jackie's reaction to the narrator's confession tells a great deal about her inherent sexual preference. Furthermore, Jackie confesses that "she felt exactly the same" (7). The narrator as well as Jackie could not express their sexuality back in their home country, for their home country's society considers heterosexuality as something normal and is hostile to same-sex bonds. The narrator and Jackie needed a "queer space" like Amsterdam where they could freely express their sexuality and love the way they wanted. The turn is seen when Jackie goes back to her home country. There she succumbs to the forbidding diktats of the heteronormative society, and she chooses a boyfriend for herself. She does not take this choice willingly, but it is thrust upon her by the authoritative heteronormative society, as the narrator records that "a person who saw us [the narrator and Jackie] holding hands between our seats at the theatre one night thought it was sordid enough to tell our mother about us in anonymous letters. We both had a lot of denying to do" (9). Marinucci's assertion supports my observation about Jakie: "The existence of both homosexuality and heterosexuality is contingent rather than necessary. To describe something as contingent is to claim that, under different circumstances, things could have turned out differently. This should not be confused with voluntarism regarding sexual identity" (8). Another incident that supports the contention that Jackie is inherently "queer" is one when Jackie pays great attention to the picture that was "a huge rectangle of red paint with one thin strip of blue paint down" (6). That picture arrests her attention because that picture resembles the "pride flag," which is rectangular in shape and has a red strip on the top and a blue one down. Her action seem to show her solidarity with the pride flag. Jackie's predicament starts from the

moment they are back in their home country. The narrator reports:

> The first place we really made love was arriving back home after Amsterdam in the women's toilets at the bus station, hands inside, pushed up against the wall and the locked door in the minutes before her father was due to come and take us and our rucksacks home. (8)

For the narrator, "it was one of the most exciting things" (8) she has "ever done in" (8) her life; however, Jackie's experience contrasts with that of the narrator, as Jackie always called it her "sordid first experience" (8). The reasons that could be attributed to two dissimilar responses to the same event are related to the repressive approach of the heterosexual society. For Jackie, the temporal and spatial constraints of the women's toilet of a heteronormative society do not provide a congenial atmosphere for enjoying sex. Jackie's experience of the sex in the toilet was sordid because in her home country the principles of heterosexuality start operating, and she cannot freely enjoy same-sex activities. For the narrator, the same sexual encounter becomes most exciting because she challenges the heterosexual society from within the system. The narrator stays stable in her sexual preference, and it can be argued that she is a champion of the "queer" cause. She does not cower under the hostile conditions of the home country. Unlike Jackie's experience in the women's toilet sex, the sexual encounter in the toilet gives the narrator huge pleasure because that functions as a stimulus to her revolt against the system from within, where dominant forces work against her to bury the sparks of revolt under the cumbersome societal expectations. For the narrator, to challenge the heterosexual expectations from within the system is far more exciting than doing it at a location that is more conducive to same-sex activities and accommodates homosexuality.

Though the story presents Amsterdam as a safe zone for same-sex activities or queer sex, the place provides two sites of sexual encounters that represent two different doctrines of sexuality. Pradhan contends, "The multiplicity of the queer appropriation of the liminal-within-the-visible space coagulates into a plurality – one where the strategic localisation results into a political spatialisation of queer subcultural activities" (3). One is in the red-light area that does not promote same-sex encounters, as when the narrator was cycling around the red-light area, the prostitutes "were scowling at [her] . . . so contemptuously not just because [she] . . . was staring but because [she] . . . wasn't business" (1). The prostitutes do not see any prospects of business in the narrator because the area is guided by heteronormative sexuality. In this heteronormative miniature society, there is clear objectification of the feminine body. The prostitutes were sitting "breast naked or near naked" (1) to allure male customers. For the narrator, "it was the most pleasant red light district" (1) she ever got lost in because when she finds women displaying their physical bodies, she sees those women's rebellion against the norms of the "civilized" heteronormative society. In this red-light area, the narrator has her maiden sexual encounter with Suzi, who accommodates same-sex activities, throwing a challenge to the heterosexual narrative. The place also helps her discover new ways of articulating one's sexuality. What excited the narrator most was Suzi's liking for the lead singer from A-Ha, for "he was a man but he looked like a woman" (2). This was a bold and stimulating statement to make. The idea of fluidity in gender in the lead singer aroused the narrator's imagination because the idea aligned with her own. It was not like there were no expressions of same-sex love in her home country, but they were hidden expressions. Any public display of affection towards the same sex could invite violence in her home country. Her pub story exposes the hypocrisy of the heterosexual society. She narrates what she saw in a pub in her small town:

> I had been sitting in a pub and two girls had been sitting at a table on the other side of the room; they looked conventional, more so than we did really, they had long hair, were wearing a lot of make-up, and it was when I glanced to see what kind of footwear they had on that I noticed one of them had one foot out of her high-heeled shoe and was running it up and down the other one's shin under the table. This was a very brave thing to be doing now that I come to think about it; chances are if anyone had seen them they'd have been beaten up. (3)

The heterosexual society of her home country uses a moral yardstick to allow dominant sexual preferences to flourish. Therefore, to counter their decree, "queer love" thrives inside the closet. Even though the red-light area shows an inclusive sexuality, it is not as inclusive as the other one. McCormack observes that "Queer scholarship institutes the idea that some *things* and *spaces* are more queer than others. It hierarchizes mobility over stillness; opaque being over transparent identities; and liberal politics over religious practices" (11). The other place of sexual encounter in Amsterdam was the park where Jackie and the narrator engage in fondling and sexual activities. This place is portrayed as the site of resistance. Such portrayal of the places seconds the idea that the open park in Amsterdam functions as a site of resistance against the conventional strictures of normative sexuality. Jackie and the narrator can be seen as "modern-day queer couple who compromise the authoritative discourse of patriarchal heteronormativity and undermine the discourse of oppressive gender politics" (Germana, 458).

Moving from one place to another prompts reconfiguration of identity. Jagose highlights the different takes of essentialists and constructionists on the word "queer." She notes, "Whereas essentialists regard identity as natural, fixed and innate, constructionists assume identity is fluid, the effect of social conditioning and available cultural models of understanding oneself" (8). The queer couple of the story, the narrator and Jackie, needed to move from their home country to Amsterdam to rediscover their sexual identity. The place of their visit allows them to exhibit their real identity and shed the assumed identity of the home country that they had worn under the societal expectations of normative sexuality. Marinucci observes, "Categories of identity determine and are determined by the ways in which people understand

themselves and are understood by others. In other words, concepts of identity determine and are determined by the prescriptions and proscriptions that structure and are structured by social existence" (7). In the case of the story, the queer couple gain their identity by realizing that both have been waiting for finding a place and encouraging atmosphere to express their lesbian feelings to each other. This spatial dimension of the story reflects queer theory's attention to how geography and location influence sexual possibilities. The story suggests that sexual awakening requires not just psychological readiness but also the right spatial conditions—a place removed from the surveillance and expectations of home, family, and familiar social structures.

Smith's endeavors to portray queer love are not limited to using places and symbols, but they extend to using popular personalities also for the purpose. It is not for no reason that the narrator mentions the name of Jodie Foster when she says, "I'd thought Jackie was beautiful, I thought she looked like Jodie Foster on whom I had had a crush" (5). In 1991, some critics claimed that Jodie Foster was a lesbian, but Jodie Foster refuted the claim. Hollinger notes:

> Rumors of Foster's lesbianism had circulated from the time of her adolescence, and became a major part of her extra- filmic image, especially as she adamantly refused to address them. Foster would go on to become an icon for lesbian viewers and reputedly to enter a serious lesbian relationship with Cydney Bernard, whom she is said to have met on the set of *Sommersby* in 1993 and whom she refused throughout the nineties to acknowledge openly as her partner. (47)

It is interesting to note that in 2014, Foster married the actress Alexandra Hedison. The narrator of the story finds that Jackie "looked like Jodie Foster only better" (5). The reason why the narrator finds Jackie a better-looking version of Jodie Foster is that Jodie Foster did not confess to being in queer love, whereas Jackie wholeheartedly expresses her queer love.

Smith relies on various narrative techniques to depict queer love. She often drops hints that can be interpreted in umpteen ways. Sometimes she uses circumlocution to maintain ambiguity of the meaning. When the narrator notices, "her [Jakie's] leg was pressing firmly into my leg" (6), and Jackie asks, "Do you like this? . . . looking at the picture" (6), Jackie wanted to ask the narrator about the tactile touch on her leg but kept it ambiguous, keeping up with the attributes of queer theory that manifest gender and sexual ambiguity. Shildrick's assertion on touch and binaries adds a noteworthy aspect to the incident: "the contact of flesh, we experience our other/self not only as surface feeling, but as an emotion: we are touched. The physiological and psychological processes come together such that the skin is less a boundary than an organ of communication, a passage or crossing point, both for the self and towards the other" (116).

Smith's portrayal of "queer sex" and "queer space" in this story does a great service to queer literature, as Smith published the story when queer theory was in its early stages. Now, after having written so much on queer love, she has become one of the important voices of queer literature. In the future, scholars can examine her works to analyze how her literature on queer helped the "queer world" to be in discussion and gather social acceptance. About the future of "queer," Rousselle forecasts that "It is possible that one day the word 'queer' will become acceptable for those in power. Perhaps it already has become integrated by reactionary subject formations, thereby obscuring gender anxieties and conflicts" (84). He further contends that "*the* queer has emerged as an acceptable identity formation, a 'one' within the great multiplicity of 'ones.' When we assert queer identities, we also risk losing ground on the fundamental insight of queer theory: linguistic determination as the prefiguration of identity. We exchange this insight for the more ideological one: that we are somehow capable of stepping outside of these scripts in order to produce identity configurations that no longer determine us" (84).

There is one thing that the practitioners of queer theory must pay attention to, and that is there is an inherent problem in the queer theory. The tenets of the theory talk about inclusivity of sexuality. The problem with queer theory is that it is exclusionary in terms of its proponents, practitioners, and language. The proponents of this theory belong to an elite class, and its practitioners are mostly at academic institutions. The language that it uses is so impenetrable and referential that it excludes a great mass of people. Thus, it is rather an exclusionary pursuit at the theory level. Queer literature and queer theory can work in tandem to expand its reach and acceptability in society. For that, it needs champions like Ali Smith, who, as one critic notes, uses "clean and unsentimental language to make the reader feel a great deal" (A Personal Anthology). Such aesthetic choices can reflect queer theory's attention to how language shapes sexual and gender possibilities.

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