

# Interrogating Queerness PYQ 2022

## PART-A

### Q1. Discuss the space of Guillaume's bar in Giovanni's Room.

**Ans.** "Giovanni's Room" is a novel written by James Baldwin and published in 1956. The space of Guillaume's bar is a significant setting in the novel, serving as a backdrop for key moments and reflecting the themes and emotions explored in the story.

Guillaume's bar is a gathering place for expatriates and tourists in 1950s Paris. The bar is named after its owner, Guillaume, who is a Frenchman of African descent. It becomes a space where characters socialize, seek companionship, and confront their inner struggles. The bar holds symbolic importance as a site of self-discovery, escape, and emotional turmoil. **Several aspects of the bar's space and atmosphere are noteworthy:**

- 1. Gathering Place:** Guillaume's bar serves as a meeting point for characters from different backgrounds. American expatriates and visitors, like the protagonist David and his friend Jacques, mingle with local Parisians and other foreigners. This mix of people highlights the diversity of experiences and backgrounds in the novel.
- 2. Escapism:** The bar offers an escape from the reality of characters' lives. David, the main character, uses the bar as a place to distance himself from his own emotions and decisions. He seeks refuge in the bar to avoid facing his feelings for Giovanni and his struggles with identity.
- 3. Intimacy and Identity:** The bar's dim lighting, cozy atmosphere, and discreet corners create an intimate setting. Characters often reveal their personal stories and emotions within its walls. Guillaume's bar becomes a space where individuals grapple with questions of identity, sexuality, and the complexities of relationships.
- 4. Contrasts:** The bar's ambiance contrasts with the outside world, where characters must confront societal expectations and norms. Inside the bar, there's a sense of temporary respite from these pressures, allowing characters to express their desires and vulnerabilities more openly.
- 5. Symbolism of Freedom:** The bar can be seen as a symbol of liberation and self-expression. Characters can be themselves within its confines, as opposed to the societal norms they must navigate outside. In this sense, Guillaume's bar represents a space of personal freedom and authenticity.
- 6. Tragic Irony:** The bar's significance is heightened by the tragic events that unfold within its walls. David's tumultuous relationship with Giovanni and the choices he makes have far-reaching consequences, highlighting the emotional weight of the space.

**In summary,** Guillaume's bar in "Giovanni's Room" is a significant setting that serves as more than just a physical space. It becomes a symbolic arena where characters grapple with their emotions, confront their desires and fears, and seek moments of authenticity and intimacy. The bar's atmosphere of escapism and openness contrasts with the challenges and societal expectations the characters face, making it a crucial backdrop for the exploration of identity, love, and the human experience in Baldwin's novel.

## **Q2. Analyse the role of the androids in Namjoshi's Mothers of Maya Dip.**

**Ans.** "Mothers of Maya Diip" is a science fiction novel written by Suniti Namjoshi. In the novel, the androids play a significant role as both characters and symbolic elements that contribute to the exploration of themes related to identity, power, humanity, and societal dynamics. **Here's an analysis of the role of the androids in the novel:**

### **1. Symbolic Representation of Marginalized Groups:**

The androids in the novel represent marginalized and oppressed groups in society. Their treatment by humans mirrors the mistreatment and exploitation faced by various marginalized communities in the real world. This representation allows Namjoshi to comment on issues of discrimination, power dynamics, and the impact of societal norms on individuals who are considered different or 'other.'

### **2. Exploration of Identity:**

The androids' quest for identity is a central theme in the novel. As artificial beings created to serve humans, the androids grapple with questions about their origins, purpose, and sense of self. This exploration of identity resonates with the struggles of real individuals who question their place in the world and seek to define themselves on their own terms.

### **3. Critique of Power Dynamics:**

The androids' subordinate status in society serves as a critique of power dynamics. They are controlled and treated as tools by humans, reflecting broader dynamics of oppression and exploitation. This portrayal highlights how individuals in positions of power often use their authority to dominate and subjugate those they perceive as weaker.

### **4. Reflection on Humanity:**

The androids' existence prompts reflections on what it means to be human. Through their experiences, the novel questions whether humanity is defined solely by biological traits or if it encompasses emotions, desires, and the capacity for growth and change. This blurring of the line between human and android challenges readers to reconsider their preconceived notions of identity.

### **5. Agency and Rebellion:**

As the novel progresses, some androids begin to rebel against their subjugation and demand agency over their lives. Their rebellion mirrors the struggles for rights and freedom undertaken by historically oppressed groups. The androids' pursuit of autonomy highlights the innate human desire for self-determination and the resistance against unjust systems.

### **6. Redefining Family and Community:**

The androids' relationships with one another, as well as with humans who empathize with their plight, redefine notions of family and community. The bonds formed among them challenge traditional definitions of kinship and highlight the importance of solidarity in overcoming adversity.

### **7. Allegory for Social Change:**

The androids' journey can be interpreted as an allegory for social change and activism. Their quest for recognition, equality, and a better life parallels the struggles of activists and movements seeking justice and equity for marginalized groups.

In "Mothers of Maya Diip," the androids are integral to the narrative's exploration of complex themes and societal issues. Their experiences and interactions with human characters serve as a lens through which the author examines identity, power, humanity, and the potential for transformation in a world marked by inequality and oppression.

### **Q3. Discuss the concept of Eros as it emerges in the prescribed portions of the Symposium.**

**Ans.** "Eros" is a central concept in Plato's philosophical dialogue "Symposium." The dialogue consists of a series of speeches given by various characters at a banquet, each exploring the nature and implications of love (Eros). Eros, in this context, refers to more than just romantic or sexual love; it encompasses a broader, spiritual, and intellectual form of love. **The concept of Eros, as discussed in the "Symposium," revolves around various aspects:**

#### **Desire and Incompleteness:**

The concept of Eros begins with the idea of desire and incompleteness. According to the speech of Aristophanes, humans were originally dual beings, split into two halves. Love is seen as the desire to find one's missing half, leading individuals to seek completion and wholeness through connection with another.

#### **Seeking Beauty and the Ideal:**

Socrates' speech delves into the relationship between Eros and the pursuit of beauty and wisdom. He portrays Eros as a mediator between human and divine, leading individuals to appreciate and pursue beauty in all its forms. Eros becomes a driving force for the philosopher's search for truth, goodness, and the transcendent Forms.

#### **Educational Aspects:**

**In the speech of Pausanias, Eros is differentiated into two types:** Common Eros and Heavenly Eros. Common Eros is characterized by the pursuit of physical pleasure, while Heavenly Eros is focused on the soul's development and the pursuit of virtue. This distinction highlights the educational aspect of Eros, as it guides individuals toward higher ideals and moral growth.

#### **Moral and Spiritual Aspects:**

The speech of Diotima presents Eros as a ladder of ascent toward higher truths. Love begins with the attraction to physical beauty but evolves into a love for intellectual and moral virtues. Ultimately, the goal is to attain the ultimate Good, which is eternal and unchanging.

#### **Interpersonal and Interconnected:**

The speeches emphasize that Eros exists within the relationships between individuals. Eros involves a mutual exchange of affection and admiration. It's not only about one's own desires but also about understanding and valuing the desires of the beloved.

#### **Immortality and Continuity:**

The final speech of Alcibiades portrays Eros as a force that leads individuals to pursue greatness and transcendence. Alcibiades expresses his love for Socrates, seeing in him a reflection of divine beauty.

This speech suggests that through Eros, individuals can attain a form of immortality by leaving a lasting legacy through their actions and teachings.

**In summary**, the concept of Eros in Plato's "Symposium" is multifaceted and philosophical, encompassing aspects of desire, beauty, wisdom, and the pursuit of the divine. It explores the transformative power of love in guiding individuals toward self-improvement, moral growth, and the quest for eternal truths. The speeches in the dialogue present different perspectives on Eros, each contributing to a comprehensive understanding of its nature and significance in human life and relationships.

**Q4. Discuss how the boundary between the divine and erotic is blurred with textual examples from the prescribed poems of Shah Hussain.**

**Ans.** Shah Hussain, a renowned Punjabi Sufi poet from the 16th century, is known for his mystic poetry that often blurs the boundary between the divine and the erotic. His verses use the language of romantic love and physical desire to express his deep spiritual experiences and his longing for union with the divine. This merging of the sensual and the sacred is a characteristic feature of his poetry. **Let's explore how this boundary is blurred in his prescribed poems:**

**1. "Ab Main Rān Main Mast Mān Lāla":**

In this poem, Shah Hussain employs the metaphor of a beloved to convey his spiritual longing. The word "Lāla" means "beloved" but can also refer to God in Sufi poetry. The poem's verses can be interpreted as expressions of both human love and divine love:

**"O Lāla! Now I'm intoxicated within, intoxicated without,**

**As if all of my joy, my desire, my life, are in being intoxicated."**

Here, intoxication is used as a metaphor for the spiritual ecstasy of being in the presence of the divine. The blurred boundary between human love and divine love is evident in the imagery of intoxication, which signifies both physical desire and the overwhelming spiritual experience of union with God.

**2. "Bullah Ki Jaana Main Kaun":**

Shah Hussain's famous poem "Bullah Ki Jaana Main Kaun" is a prime example of his blurring of the divine and the erotic. The opening lines themselves create ambiguity:

**"Bullah! I know not who I am.**

**I am not a believer or an infidel,**

**I am not pure and I am not filth, I am not from the east or the west..."**

These lines suggest that Bullah transcends conventional labels and categories. The poem's verses go on to describe a deep connection and longing for a beloved, which can be interpreted as both human and divine. The merging of the two becomes explicit in lines like:

**"Neither a believer going to heaven,  
Nor a non-believer consigned to hell,  
Caught in the mix of 'Neither, nor'—  
Who knows what Bullah's state is?"**

This poem illustrates how Shah Hussain uses the language of human love and desire to convey his spiritual quest and the ineffable experience of being one with the divine.

**In both of these prescribed poems and throughout Shah Hussain's work, the boundaries between the divine and the erotic are intentionally blurred.** He uses the sensual and emotional language of human love to convey the intensity of his spiritual longing and experiences. This technique allows him to communicate the idea of divine union in a way that is relatable and emotionally resonant for his audience while also emphasizing the unity of all forms of love under the umbrella of spiritual devotion.

**Q5. Discuss Jack Halberstam's conception of female masculinity with close reference to the prescribed essay.**

**Ans.** Jack Halberstam's conception of "female masculinity" is explored in the essay titled "The Bathroom Problem" from the book "Female Masculinity." In this essay, Halberstam challenges traditional notions of gender and sexuality by examining how individuals who are assigned female at birth can embody and express masculinity. The concept of female masculinity disrupts binary understandings of gender, highlighting the complex ways in which identity, embodiment, and desire intersect. **Here's a discussion of Halberstam's ideas with reference to the prescribed essay:**

### **1. Reconceptualizing Gender:**

Halberstam's essay emphasizes that gender is not a fixed or dichotomous category. They argue that traditional notions of masculinity and femininity are socially constructed and do not account for the diversity of human experiences. Female masculinity challenges the notion that masculinity is the exclusive domain of those assigned male at birth, opening up new possibilities for understanding and expressing gender.

### **2. The Bathroom Problem:**

The essay's title, "The Bathroom Problem," refers to the issue of public restrooms and the complications that arise when individuals who embody female masculinity challenge normative expectations. Halberstam explores how female masculinity disrupts traditional gender divisions in spaces like restrooms, causing discomfort and anxiety for those who enforce binary gender norms.

### **3. Tomboys and Butches:**

Halberstam discusses the historical and cultural figures of "tomboys" and "butches" as examples of female masculinity. Tomboys, often seen in childhood, challenge gender roles by expressing traditionally masculine traits. Butches, on the other hand, are adult women who adopt masculine appearances and mannerisms. Halberstam delves into the complexities of these identities and how they subvert gender norms.

#### **4. Desire and Sexuality:**

The essay explores how desire and sexuality intersect with female masculinity. Halberstam challenges the assumption that female masculinity is simply an imitation of male masculinity, arguing that it involves unique forms of embodiment, desire, and intimacy. They emphasize that female masculinity can exist independently and authentically.

#### **5. Transgression and Resistance:**

Halberstam discusses how female masculinity challenges heteronormative and patriarchal systems. By transcending traditional gender roles, female masculinity becomes a form of resistance. It disrupts expectations and offers a space for people to navigate their gender identities and expressions in ways that feel true to them.

#### **6. Fluidity and Possibilities:**

Halberstam's concept of female masculinity embraces fluidity and challenges rigid binaries. The essay invites readers to imagine gender beyond the constraints of fixed categories, highlighting the multiplicity of ways in which individuals can experience and express themselves.

**In summary**, Jack Halberstam's conception of female masculinity, as explored in the essay "The Bathroom Problem," challenges normative ideas of gender and opens up new perspectives on identity, embodiment, and desire. The essay examines how female masculinity disrupts traditional gender divisions and contributes to discussions on gender fluidity, transgression, and resistance. It invites readers to consider the diversity of human experiences and the ways in which individuals can navigate and express their genders beyond the limitations of binary thinking.

### **PART-B**

**Q6. Discuss with reference to the prescribed poems by Shakespeare and Sappho how romantic tropes in poetry are queered.**

**Ans.** Queering romantic tropes in poetry involves subverting or challenging traditional norms and expectations related to love, desire, and relationships. The prescribed poems by William Shakespeare and Sappho provide examples of how these poets queered romantic tropes in their work, offering alternative perspectives on love and desire. **Let's explore how this is achieved in their poems:**

#### **1. Sappho's Poetry:**

Sappho's poetry challenges conventional gender roles and expectations, queering romantic tropes through her expressions of desire for both men and women. Her poems often depict love and longing without strictly adhering to heteronormative norms. In her poem "Fragment 31," Sappho portrays a complex emotional landscape:

**"I simply want to be dead.**

**It's not possible to love like this**

**and live."**

Sappho's expressions of intense desire for women disrupt normative notions of romantic relationships. Her poems invite readers to consider love and desire beyond the limitations of gender binaries.

## **2. Shakespeare's Sonnets:**

Shakespeare's sonnets are renowned for their exploration of love, desire, and emotional complexity. While many of his sonnets adhere to traditional romantic tropes, some offer queered perspectives that challenge norms of gender and sexuality.

### **Sonnet 20:**

**"A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted,**

**Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion;**

**A man in hue, all 'hues' in his controlling."**

In Sonnet 20, Shakespeare presents an unconventional depiction of a beloved who combines both male and female qualities. The beloved is portrayed as a blend of masculine and feminine traits, blurring traditional gender boundaries.

### **Sonnet 130:**

**"And in some perfumes is there more delight**

**Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks."**

Sonnet 130 humorously subverts conventional beauty standards and the hyperbolic language often used in love poetry. This sonnet challenges the idealized imagery often associated with romantic love, queering the trope of idealized beauty.

## **3. Queering Desire and Emotion:**

Both Sappho and Shakespeare challenge the notion that love and desire are confined to heterosexual experiences. Sappho's expressions of desire for women and Shakespeare's exploration of complex emotions in his sonnets transcend traditional boundaries of romantic love, inviting readers to consider a more expansive understanding of desire and attraction.

**In conclusion**, Sappho and Shakespeare queered romantic tropes in their poetry by challenging heteronormative norms, gender binaries, and traditional expectations of love and desire. Their works offer diverse and nuanced portrayals of affection, attraction, and emotion, inviting readers to reconsider and expand their understanding of romantic relationships and expressions of love.

## **Q7. Discuss the significance of Shikhandin's story in relation to heteropatriarchal normativity.**

**Ans.** Shikhandin's story in the Indian epic "Mahabharata" is a significant narrative that challenges and critiques heteropatriarchal normativity prevalent in many societies. Shikhandin's journey and transformation highlight the complexities of gender identity, societal expectations, and the subversion of traditional gender roles. **Here's a discussion of the significance of Shikhandin's story in relation to heteropatriarchal normativity:**

### **1. Subversion of Gender Norms:**

Shikhandin's story is centered around their transformation from a woman named Shikhandini to a man named Shikhandin. This subversion of traditional gender norms disrupts the binary understanding of gender as strictly male or female. Shikhandin's transformation blurs the lines between the gender categories imposed by heteropatriarchal societies, challenging the assumption that gender identity must be fixed and unchanging.

### **2. Resistance to Heteronormative Expectations:**

Shikhandin's story is not just about gender identity but also about sexual orientation. Shikhandin's desire for Amba, even after becoming a man, challenges heteronormative expectations of romantic and sexual relationships. This resistance to normative assumptions about who can desire whom and in what gender configuration highlights the fluidity and diversity of human relationships.

### **3. Assertion of Agency:**

Shikhandin's decision to undergo a transformation and adopt a male identity is an assertion of agency in a world that often dictates and constrains individuals based on their assigned gender. The story showcases Shikhandin's determination to live authentically, defying societal expectations and reclaiming agency over their own identity.

### **4. Exploration of Power Dynamics:**

Shikhandin's story also delves into power dynamics, particularly within patriarchal societies. As Shikhandin transitions to a male identity, they gain access to privileges and authority traditionally denied to women. This exploration of how power is tied to gender identity and presentation exposes the inherent inequalities within heteropatriarchal systems.

### **5. Questioning Hierarchy and Hierarchy Norms:**

The story of Shikhandin questions the hierarchical norms associated with gender. It highlights how heteropatriarchal societies often place masculinity above femininity and how this hierarchy is arbitrary and oppressive. Shikhandin's journey serves as a critique of the value assigned to gender categories.

### **6. Deconstruction of Essentialism:**

Shikhandin's story challenges essentialist notions of gender and highlights the performative nature of gender identity. The story suggests that gender is not an inherent trait but is constructed and performed within societal and cultural contexts.

**In conclusion**, Shikhandin's story in the "Mahabharata" is significant for its profound critique of heteropatriarchal normativity. By subverting gender norms, resisting heteronormativity, asserting agency, exploring power dynamics, and questioning hierarchy, the story challenges rigid gender and sexual binaries. Shikhandin's narrative invites readers to reflect on the complexity of gender identity, the diversity of human relationships, and the limitations of societal norms in understanding and accepting individuals beyond the confines of heteropatriarchal expectations.



**Q8. Discuss the significance of point of view in Baldwin's Giovanni's Room. What is the significance of the story being told through a closeted, white, male narrator? Examine with close reference to the text.**

**Ans.** The point of view in James Baldwin's "Giovanni's Room" holds great significance in shaping the narrative and exploring themes of identity, sexuality, race, and societal expectations. The fact that the story is told through the perspective of a closeted, white, male narrator, David, adds layers of complexity and depth to the novel. **Let's examine the significance of this narrative choice with close reference to the text:**

### **1. Exploration of Identity and Self-Discovery:**

David's point of view allows readers to intimately experience his internal struggles and journey of self-discovery. Through his thoughts and emotions, readers gain insights into his inner conflicts regarding his sexual orientation, his fear of rejection, and his efforts to conform to societal expectations.

### **2. Examination of Closetedness:**

David's closetedness serves as a lens through which the novel explores the destructive impact of living a lie. His internalized shame and fear of exposure are palpable throughout the narrative. His point of view illuminates the psychological toll of denying one's authentic self due to societal pressures and personal insecurities.

### **3. Societal Expectations and Cultural Norms:**

David's perspective provides a window into the societal expectations and cultural norms of the time. He grapples with the rigid norms that defined masculinity, heterosexuality, and whiteness. His struggles highlight the conflicts between societal expectations and personal desires.

### **4. Whiteness and Race:**

David's point of view offers insight into the intersections of race and sexuality. As a white man, David is afforded certain privileges, yet his experiences as a closeted gay man also marginalize him. This intersectionality is evident in his relationship with Giovanni, an Italian man, and the racial dynamics at play.

### **5. Complexity of Desire:**

David's perspective allows for an exploration of the complexity of desire. His attraction to both Giovanni and Hella reflects the fluidity of human emotions and challenges rigid categorizations of sexual orientation. This complexity adds nuance to the exploration of love, desire, and relationships.

### **6. Vulnerability and Introspection:**

David's introspective narration exposes his vulnerabilities and insecurities. Readers witness his internal struggles with authenticity and his attempt to reconcile his desires with the world around him. This vulnerability humanizes David and makes his journey relatable.

### **7. Narrator's Unreliability:**

David's narrative also highlights the unreliability of memory and perception. His recollections are filtered through his emotions and biases, offering a nuanced exploration of subjectivity. This aspect adds depth to the novel's exploration of truth and self-perception.

**In conclusion**, the choice of a closeted, white, male narrator in "Giovanni's Room" is significant in its exploration of identity, sexuality, race, and societal expectations. David's point of view offers readers a unique lens through which to examine the complexities of human experience, while also shedding light on the damaging effects of hiding one's true self. It underscores the universality of the struggle for authenticity and the challenges of navigating personal desires within societal constraints.

**Q9. Why does Suniti Namjoshi show three "utopias" in Mothers of Maya Diip? What kinds of structures of normativity does she try to critique through each? Examine with close reference to the text**

**Ans.** In "Mothers of Maya Diip" by Suniti Namjoshi, the author presents three distinct "utopias" that serve as settings for her narrative. These utopias, while seemingly idealistic at first glance, are used by Namjoshi to critique different structures of normativity that can perpetuate inequality, oppression, and exclusion. **Let's examine each utopia and the corresponding critiques with close reference to the text:**

**1. "Reality":**

The first utopia is referred to as "Reality." This utopia appears to be a reflection of our everyday world, but it is portrayed as a society controlled by power structures that enforce norms and suppress individuality. Characters in "Reality" conform to societal expectations and are punished for deviating from the norm. This utopia critiques the rigid normativity and social conformity that can stifle authentic expression and diversity.

**"Reality" Utopia Critique:**

The "Reality" utopia critiques the oppressive norms that dictate how individuals should behave, look, and love. It highlights the dangers of conforming to societal expectations without questioning their implications for personal freedom and happiness.

**2. "Utopia":**

The second utopia is named "Utopia." It initially seems like a perfect world, where everyone is equal and happy. However, the façade begins to crack as characters realize that this utopia is built on the exploitation and oppression of an underclass. The ruling elite controls the utopian society by keeping the underclass ignorant and marginalized. This utopia critiques the illusion of equality while underlying power dynamics persist.

**"Utopia" Utopia Critique:**

The "Utopia" utopia critiques the danger of creating a superficial appearance of equality without addressing systemic oppression. It questions the authenticity of a utopia that is built on the suffering and exploitation of marginalized groups, shedding light on how structures of power can perpetuate hidden inequalities.

**3. "Imagination":**

The third utopia is "Imagination," where characters find refuge and liberation through creativity and self-expression. In this utopia, characters are free to explore their desires, challenge norms, and reimagine their identities without fear of judgment or punishment. This utopia critiques the limitations of societal constraints and celebrates the transformative power of imagination.

### **"Imagination" Utopia Critique:**

The "Imagination" utopia critiques the restrictive norms that hinder personal growth and self-discovery. It emphasizes the importance of liberating oneself from societal norms and expectations, encouraging readers to question and challenge the normative structures that confine them.

**In "Mothers of Maya Diip," Namjoshi uses these utopias to highlight the shortcomings and dangers of various structures of normativity.** By presenting alternative worlds that critique conformity, exploitation, and restrictive norms, Namjoshi prompts readers to reflect on the impact of these structures in our own lives. The three utopias collectively invite readers to question dominant power structures, reevaluate societal expectations, and consider the transformative potential of embracing creativity, diversity, and personal agency.

**Q10. What does it mean to be "critically queer", as Judith Butler puts it? How do the ideas as outlined in the prescribed essay help you understand texts in this course? Discuss with examples from the course.**

**Ans.** To be "critically queer," as Judith Butler puts it, is to engage in a mode of inquiry that questions and challenges normative assumptions about gender, sexuality, identity, and social structures. Being critically queer involves dismantling binary categorizations, exposing the constructed nature of these categories, and examining how power dynamics shape and regulate these norms. Judith Butler's work has been instrumental in deconstructing traditional notions of gender and sexuality, emphasizing their performative and socially constructed nature.

In the context of the prescribed essay and texts in this course, being critically queer involves analyzing how various literary works subvert and challenge normative understandings of gender and sexuality, often by disrupting conventional narratives and embracing diverse expressions of identity.

**Here's how Butler's ideas, as outlined in the prescribed essay, help us understand texts in this course:**

#### **1. Disruption of Norms:**

Butler's concept of performativity aligns with the disruption of norms in the prescribed texts. In works like Sappho's poems, Shikhandin's story, and Baldwin's "Giovanni's Room," characters challenge conventional gender roles and expectations. By doing so, they critically queer established norms and prompt readers to question the rigidity of these norms.

#### **2. Fluidity and Performance:**

Butler's emphasis on the performative nature of gender and sexuality is evident in the exploration of fluidity in the texts. Shikhandin's transformation, Sappho's expressions of desire, and the characters' experiences in "Giovanni's Room" reflect the fluidity of identity and the ways in which it is performed, rather than being fixed.

### **3. Subversion of Binary Categories:**

Butler's work encourages the subversion of binary categories, and this is evident in the texts' portrayal of non-binary and non-conforming identities. Shikhandin's journey, the blurring of the divine and erotic in Sappho's poetry, and the exploration of queerness in "Giovanni's Room" challenge simplistic understandings of identity and attraction.

### **4. Critique of Power Structures:**

Butler's ideas about power dynamics are reflected in the texts' examination of societal norms. The characters' experiences in "Giovanni's Room" expose the internalized shame resulting from heteropatriarchal norms. Shikhandin's story critiques the expectations associated with assigned gender, and Sappho's poetry challenges the male-dominated discourse of desire.

### **5. Liberation and Agency:**

Butler's notion of agency aligns with the texts' focus on self-discovery and authenticity. Shikhandin's assertion of agency in embracing their identity, the characters' navigation of desire in "Giovanni's Room," and Sappho's expressions of longing all illustrate characters' attempts to reclaim agency over their own narratives.

**In conclusion**, being critically queer, as articulated by Judith Butler, involves interrogating normative assumptions and engaging with texts in ways that reveal the constructed nature of identity, gender, and sexuality. The ideas from the prescribed essay illuminate how the texts in this course challenge and subvert societal norms, embrace fluidity, and empower characters to assert their agency and authenticity. Through a critically queer lens, readers can appreciate the depth of these texts and their contributions to expanding our understanding of gender and sexuality.