

# Introduction

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In this book, I aim to analyze London, its sexual histories, and geographies by reflecting on Sarah Waters' and Alan Hollinghurst's representations of gay and lesbian histories and the ways in which their characters relate to the spaces that they inhabit. I am interested in the ways in which London has been portrayed across the historical periods that feature in both Waters' and Hollinghurst's works, which present some of English history's most important milestones, and the ways in which these events are entangled with London's geographies of sexuality. These historical periods consist mainly of the late Victorian period, the Second World War, and the Thatcherite Era in the novels that I have chosen to examine.

It is relevant to note that while Waters' literary works have been coined as historical fiction, Hollinghurst's novels have not been discussed within the framework of the historical novel. *The Swimming-Pool Library* and *The Line of Beauty* do not present a significant temporal distance from the historical past they portray, which is the Thatcherite period, given that they were published in 1988 and in 2004 respectively. However, in reading these novels in the second decade of the twenty-first century, it is possible to argue that Hollinghurst discusses many events concerning gay history; these events include the depoliticization of the gay movement, the AIDS crisis, its corollary of hysterical homophobia, which culminated in Section 28,<sup>1</sup> and the debates about cultural and political assimilation brought about by the legalization of gay marriage.<sup>2</sup>

In this book, I take up Linda Hutcheon's definitions concerning the terms 'historical event' and 'historical fact'. In asserting that Waters' and Hollinghurst's historical novels are historiographic metafiction,<sup>3</sup> I follow Hutcheon's explanation that this sub-

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- 1 Section 28 will be examined thoroughly in chapter 6. As we know, Section 28 prohibited local authorities, community centers, and educational institutions from 'promoting' and discussing homosexuality as an 'acceptable' form of sexuality. This seriously compromised society's engagement with the gay community and hampered their ability to offer support for people who had AIDS and their partners (Cf. Watney, *Imagine Hope: AIDS and Gay Identity*, pp. 38–39; 139).
  - 2 Cf. Duggan, "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism" in Castronovo and Nelson (eds.) *Materializing Democracy*; Spade, *Normal Life*; Warner, *The Trouble with Normal*.
  - 3 Hutcheon's concept of 'historiographic metafiction' will be elucidated in chapter 1 and will be analyzed more deeply in relation to Waters' and Hollinghurst's novels in chapter 8.

genre of the postmodernist historical novel questions the very essence of 'historical facts', not in the sense of refusing to acknowledge their existence,<sup>4</sup> but in questioning which *historical events* can become *historical facts*.<sup>5</sup> While it is true that historical documents and archives provide evidence of a specific event in history, the interpretation and narrativization of official documents by historians or by writers, and the specific cultural and ideological context in which historical narratives are produced will determine whether or not a certain historical event will become an established 'truth' about the past.<sup>6</sup> As we know, what we have generally learned as historical facts is that homosexuality is abnormal, deviant, and promiscuous; however, as Foucault has taught us, these historical facts have contributed to the consolidation of heterosexuality as the 'normal'. The rise of gay and lesbian movements worldwide, as well as the introduction of disciplines such as 'women's studies', 'gay and lesbian studies' and finally 'queer studies', have greatly contributed to the assertion of queer subjects in history and in literature. This has, in turn, also created a fertile ground for the emergence of historical novels that deal with queer historiography, such as Waters' and Hollinghurst's works.

In Waters' novels, I reflect on female homosexuality in the late Victorian period in *Tipping the Velvet* and in *Affinity*, and the Second World War in *The Night Watch*. My focus on Hollinghurst's novels mainly pertain to Margaret Thatcher's government and its neoliberal policies regarding the AIDS epidemic and its influence on gay urban culture, especially in *The Swimming-Pool Library* and in *The Line of Beauty*. Lastly, I shift my analysis to the trope of the Edwardian English country house in my reading of Hollinghurst's *The Stranger's Child*. In this novel, the narrative ranges from 1913 until the beginning of the twenty-first century, recounting the stories of 'Two Acres', the country house located in rural Stanmore, which is now part of London's suburbs.

I argue that Waters' and Hollinghurst's representations of London and its queer spaces are crucial for their construction of gay and lesbian histories by following the 'spatial turn' in the humanities, which "assert[s] that space is a social construction relevant to the understanding of the different histories of human subjects and to the production of cultural phenomena".<sup>7</sup> In the novels examined in this book, space is regarded in its textual, physical, and social aspects, and it is considered to be a categorical element in the production of historical fiction. While time has been perceived as a dominating feature of history and historiography, scholars such as Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja, and Doreen Massey have stressed the importance of space to the

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4 It is important to note that questioning how 'historical events' become 'historical facts' does not mean to deny that certain historical events actually took place. As we have unfortunately seen in the last few years, certain groups have reclaimed this idea to deny facts such as the Holocaust, slavery or even current affairs regarding the environmental crises. Historical revisionism as a means to produce post-truth is certainly not the debate that I engage with in this book. Rather, I reflect upon the ways that gender and sexuality have entered the realm of historiography, and how historiography is articulated both in Waters' and Hollinghurst's literary works.

5 Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p. 122.

6 Cf. White, *Tropics of Discourse*, pp. 84–90; *Figural Realism*, pp. 4–15.

7 Warf and Arias, *The Spatial Turn*, p. 1.

production of history and have done so from the 1960s onwards.<sup>8</sup> Massey, for instance, argues that space and time are “inextricably interwoven”,<sup>9</sup> and she suggests that time and space should be considered in relation to each other, instead of prioritizing one category over the other.

Geographers and social scientists have claimed that space is a crucial factor in the understanding of social phenomena.<sup>10</sup> The spatial turn in the humanities is also embraced by other fields, such as cultural studies, literature, and history of art. Space functions within a complex network of knowledges, actively influences the formation of societies, plays a central role in the construction of identity, and serves as a fruitful apparatus in our reflections on cultural phenomena. As Doreen Massey points out, it was in the 1970s that geography became legitimately recognized as a relevant aspect of social analysis with the affirmation that “space is a social construct”, but it was not until the 1980s that this claim was complemented with a second assertion that “the social is spatially constructed too.”<sup>11</sup>

In my readings of Waters’ and Hollinghurst’s novels, I will fall back on the relationship that Massey proposes in the sense that my literary analyses attempt to understand the ways in which the historical past of gays and lesbians is articulated *through* and *within* London’s sexual geographies, and through the relationship that characters maintain with their spatial surroundings. Not only do these novels reflect upon the pasts of gay and lesbian subjects in London, but they also contemplate how national governments, ideology, and shifting notions of sexuality shape and influence London’s geography. As Simon Avery has pointed out, the metropolis played a great role “in the history of formation of the modern sexual subject from the mid-nineteenth century onwards”,<sup>12</sup> having often been described as a site of various sexual possibilities. Houlbrook delves further into this argument by postulating that “sexual practices not only take place *in* the city, but are also shaped *by* the physical and cultural forms of urban life, just as they in turn shape that life”.<sup>13</sup> These forms of control also provide the conditions for urban sexual subcultures to emerge in much the same way that governmental regulation and mappings of non-normative sexualities in urban spaces contribute to coining embodiments of ‘sexual deviancy’; in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries this mainly concerned the figures of the male homosexual and the female prostitute. In turn, as Houlbrook explains, these sexual underworlds influenced the city’s urban landscapes and played an important role throughout the course of gay and lesbian history.

8 Cf. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 38, pp. 275–276; Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, pp. 12–16; Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, p. 254.

9 Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, p. 261.

10 Cf. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*; Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*; Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*; Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*.

11 Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, p. 254.

12 Avery, “Structuring and Interpreting Queer Spaces of London” in Avery and Graham (eds.) *Sex, Time and Place*, p. 8.

13 Houlbrook, “Cities” in Cocks and Houlbrook (eds.) *Palgrave Advances in the Modern History of Sexuality*, p. 136.

However, it is relevant to highlight that urban sexual geographies do not necessarily produce homogeneous experiences in the city. Houlbrook argues that class, gender, and race determine a subject's engagement with urban space. Cook also takes up these different subject positions in his analyses by showing how working-class and upper- and middle-class men did not share the same experiences in London's sexual subculture at the end of the nineteenth century. According to Cook, "[w]orking-class men were apparently unable to shape their own sexual lives in London except as renters or blackmailers",<sup>14</sup> while upper- and middle-class men were able to afford hotel rooms and sexual adventures in the city.

These social differences are also noted in terms of gender. Where gay men have historically had the privilege of circulating in the city under the premises of metropolitan anonymity, women's circulation in urban space has been restricted. This restriction occurred not only in terms of their gender and of the discourses about the city's sexual dangers and the perils of becoming a 'fallen woman', but also due to their financial disadvantage in comparison to men.<sup>15</sup> As I will discuss in chapter 8 of this book, these gender differences are central to comprehending the distinct ways in which gay and lesbian urban cultures were formed in London and, subsequently, in the ways in which Waters and Hollinghurst represent queer spaces in their novels.

Although London is the main spatial trope that this book examines, the city does not feature exclusively in terms of its cultural and sexual geographies. In Waters' *Affinity*, for instance, London is represented through the parallel between female incarceration at Millbank Prison and female confinement in the domestic sphere. In this novel, Waters evokes Foucault's reflections on sexuality as a technology of control, as prominently elucidated in *The History of Sexuality*, as well as the trope of the Benthamite panoptic prison, which Foucault has famously discussed in *Discipline and Punish*. In Waters' novel, Foucauldian thoughts about classifications of 'normal' and 'deviant' sexualities and behavior are articulated alongside the French philosopher's perceptions of the ways in which the utilitarian panopticon has been employed as a model of surveillance in modern society.<sup>16</sup>

In this study, Foucault's reflections on surveillance and sexuality are taken up in tandem with his thoughts about space and biopolitics in order to discuss how controlling and governing individuals came to be a means of optimizing the functioning of the body and the regulation of societies. If, as Foucault contends, "[s]pace is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power",<sup>17</sup> then it is possible to argue that governments became increasingly attentive to the mappings of deviant sexual behavior in cities in the nineteenth century. According to Foucault, it was at the end of the eighteenth century that governments began to be concerned with *how* to govern the people that inhabit a specific territory, just as the idea of society emerged as "a complex and independent reality that has

14 Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885–1914*, p. 39.

15 Cf. Houlbrook, "Cities" in Cocks and Houlbrook (eds.) *Palgrave Advances in the Modern History of Sexuality*, p. 146.

16 Cf. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 206–219.

17 *Idem*, "Space, Knowledge and Power" in Rabinow (ed.) *The Foucault Reader*, p. 252.

its own laws and mechanisms of reaction, its regulations as well as its possibilities of disturbance".<sup>18</sup> The idea of space becomes strongly related to forms of regulation within society, as a necessity in order to govern and to classify subjects within a specific territory, to enable their socialization while knowing, at least to some extent, who circulates where.

According to Foucault, the advances in capitalism between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries in Western countries transformed the politics of death into the politics of life.<sup>19</sup> Sovereign power starts to be exercised through the lives of individuals in the seventeenth century, instead of by way of the threat of death, leading to what Foucault designates as *bio-power*: the form of control and regulation of populations through the discipline of the body and through its optimization as a means by which to reproduce and maximize the potential of life. In the eighteenth century, the discipline of the body and the capacity to manage populations are devised through the employment of demography to evaluate the relationship between resources and inhabitants; this form of management allowed for an analysis of how wealth circulates, for instance. Moreover, Foucault considers institutions such as schools and the army as vital means for the imposition of disciplinary bio-power mechanisms upon individuals. For Foucault, bio-power was an essential element in capitalism's development because it allowed for the controlled entrance of bodies into the mechanisms of production and arranged the new phenomena of population within the economic system.<sup>20</sup>

Bio-power influenced political technologies regarding health, the body, habitation, modes of subsistence, and social spaces. Moreover, it augmented the norm's significance in the guise of operating as law just as the judicial system came to be ingrained into other institutions (i.e., medical, administrative, educational). In operating as law, the norm creates a "normalizing society [that] is the historical outcome of a technology of power centered on life".<sup>21</sup> By the nineteenth century, sexuality was already one of the most powerful technologies of discipline and control, given that sex became inseparable from the notion of sexuality and the latter was deployed as a means to govern, regulate, and order entire populations.

Discourses about sexuality, according to Foucault, are deployed as mechanisms of regulation and control. Along with the shift in the importance of space in governing a population, the eighteenth century was also the period in which sexuality entered the field of knowledge as a technique of power to regulate and control populations: birth and death rates, fertility, illnesses, and health began to be state concerns.<sup>22</sup> Pedagogy, medicine, and economy were already fundamental sources in the proliferation of discourses on sex and sexuality by the end of the eighteenth century, thereby making "sex not only a secular concern but a concern of the state as well; [...] sex became a

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18 *Ibid.*, p. 242.

19 *Idem*, *The History of Sexuality*, pp. 106–107.

20 *Ibid.*, pp. 139–141.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 144.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 24–25.

matter that required the social body as a whole, and virtually all of its individuals, to place themselves under surveillance".<sup>23</sup>

It was also during this period that sex came to be ordered in the medical institution, in terms of defining 'normality' and in discussion of the problems of life and death. In the nineteenth century, the medicine of sex separated from the medicine of the body and formulated a truth about sex that was far removed from an economy of pleasure, but was instead ingrained in a system of knowledge.<sup>24</sup> While discourses on sexuality in the eighteenth century are marked by the division of licit and illicit sex, and often focused on matrimonial relations, discourses on sexuality in the nineteenth century came to focus on perversions, and the multiplicity of sexualities that are not attuned to reproduction, but to the pleasure of the body. The determination and ordering of peripheral sexualities ensued persecution to subjects who embodied or practiced them, thereby leading to judicial regulation of 'perversions' such as prostitution and sodomy.<sup>25</sup> These forms of classifications were also transposed onto the cities' geographies, as I will discuss further in chapter 1.

In Avery's words, "there is a keen focus on the disorderly, undisciplined body which requires policing in its assumed challenges to urban and, by extension, national order".<sup>26</sup> This is especially true because these 'undisciplined' bodies undermined the traditional moral standards of heterosexual marriage. For Chris Waters, it was in the nineteenth century that medical doctors and legislators began mapping cities in terms of 'abnormal' sexual behavior, seemingly sharing the concern that deviant individual bodies could 'contaminate' the social body as a whole and might infringe traditional sexual mores based on heterosexual marriage and on the basis of clear-cut gender divides.<sup>27</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century, Waters explains, "cities were increasingly defined [...] as spaces in which customary moral restraints were being eroded";<sup>28</sup> this is particularly true with respect to metropolitan life which offered considerable anonymity and provided a means for illicit encounters that were not always visible to the authorities and to the ordinary passer-by.

Although molly houses date back to the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in London,<sup>29</sup> it was in the second half of the nineteenth century that specific places in the city came to be associated with male homosexuality. According to Cook, accounts about a gay subculture in London became featured in books on sexology and in literary texts, such as Havelock Ellis' and John Addington Symond's *Sexual Inversion* (1897) and Jack Saul's *The Sins of the Cities of the Plain* (1881), thereby "expos[ing] the risks of homosexual activities in London but also [inculcating] a sense of permanence and

23 *Ibid.*, p. 116.

24 *Ibid.*, pp. 69; 117.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 36–37; 41–45.

26 Avery, "Structuring and Interpreting Queer Spaces of London" in Avery and Graham (eds.) *Sex, Time and Place*, p. 10.

27 Cf. Waters, "Sexology" in Cocks and Houlbrook (eds.) *Palgrave Advances in the Modern History of Sexuality*, p. 43.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

29 Cf. Cook, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality, 1885–1914*, pp. 8–11.

belonging”.<sup>30</sup> Narratives about cruising sites, such as St. James’ Park, about pubs and clubs that were meeting points for gay men, were a testament to the rise of a male homosexual culture in London which underwent several transformations throughout history. The West End, for instance, is one of the areas that was known for its cosmopolitanism and for its sexual subculture, having been well-known for its theatrical scene and was very popular among gay men and prostitutes. It is no coincidence, then, that the West End is a prominent trope of sexual possibilities in both Waters’ *Tipping the Velvet* and in Hollinghurst’s *The Swimming-Pool Library*.

It is important to clarify, however, that the mapping of homosexuality in London in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was almost exclusively related to gay men. As Jennings explains, in the process of tracing histories of sexuality in the modern city, “historians have traced attempts to control deviant behavior through legislation and policing, inevitably focusing on the figures of the male homosexual and the prostitute”.<sup>31</sup> While gay men had been addressed by the law, especially since 1885 with the Labouchère Amendment,<sup>32</sup> it was only in the early twentieth century that lesbian sexuality entered legal discourses as “an evil that requires regulation”.<sup>33</sup> Although there were no laws that criminalized same-sex relationships between women, there were punitive consequences for lesbians that were enacted by other institutions. As Oram and Turnbull note, Church authorities in England had punished women that were caught in romantic relationships with other women since the seventeenth century by sending them off to reformatories and even to prison.<sup>34</sup>

Oram and Turnbull argue that lesbianism in the nineteenth century was often perceived as a threat to heterosexual marriage and as an enactment of immorality, rather than being considered a criminal activity. They interpret the invisibility of female same-sex desire in the nineteenth century juridical discourse as a corollary effect of the “belief in the sexual passivity [...] of women”,<sup>35</sup> since the form of ‘active’ and ‘deviant’ sexuality in the eyes of the law was embodied by the figure of the prostitute. Terry Castle, for instance, argues that lesbians have “been effectively ghosted – or made to seem invisible – by culture itself”, given that “Western civilization has for centuries been haunted by fear of women indifferent or resistant to male desire”.<sup>36</sup> The question of lesbian invisibility will be analyzed in greater detail in chapter 8 and also in my readings of Waters’ novels, having in mind that her body of work largely addresses lesbian urban culture and the creation of a fictional lesbian historiography in the neo-Victorian novels.

While male homosexual subjects have had the material and social conditions to explore urban space and to take part in an urban subculture since the eighteenth

30 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

31 Jennings, *Tomboys and Bachelor Girls*, p. 5.

32 Although the amendment spoke of ‘act of gross indecency’, Cocks contends that it came to be interpreted as ‘act of sodomy’, and therefore it came to mainly address homosexual men (cf. Cocks, “Secrets, Crimes and Diseases, 1800–1914”, p. 108).

33 Oram and Turnbull, *The Lesbian History Sourcebook*, p. 156.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 155.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 157.

36 Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian*, pp. 4–5.



century, Jennings notes that lesbians' spatial experiences have been associated with the private and domestic spheres, given that most women did not have the financial means to be part of a bohemian urban culture.<sup>37</sup> Since the sites of pleasure and leisure were mostly frequented by men, who were financially self-sufficient to afford life in these commercial sites, Jennings contends that the narratives we have of a gay urban subculture in the nineteenth century generally effaces female homosexuality because they were mostly restricted to the domestic sphere. For Jennings, women have had "unequal access to services in urban environment" and have been "excluded from participation in urban design to the extent that their needs have not been met in the built environment".<sup>38</sup> These factors, she explains, are of great importance in contemporary analysis about lesbian spaces in cities and mark pivotal differences in the course of gay and lesbian history in London.

In chapter 1 of this book, I will discuss the most significant conceptions of space, about the mapping of sexualities in London, and about queer spaces as a means to outline the ways in which I will carry out my spatial and historical analyses of Waters' and Hollinghurst's works. I elucidate that space is a product of complex social, cultural, epistemological, and subjective relations by discussing reflections on the production of space, such as those by Henry Lefebvre and David Harvey. Additionally, I introduce key concepts in queer theory in order to contemplate the production of queer spaces by arguing that queer spaces can also reproduce forms of oppression attuned to class, gender, and race, even though these spaces enable encounters between gays and lesbians and the possibility of engaging with meaningful political alliances.

As I will show, my reading of Waters' and Hollinghurst's novels will pursue an intersectional approach that aims to reflect primarily upon the relations between class, gender, and sexuality in the spaces that they represent. Both Waters and Hollinghurst engage with the complexity of spatial formation in their representations of London, as they articulate history, geographical locations, and English culture in distinct historical periods with literary devices that concern genre, narrator, intertextuality, and literary history. I wish to present an overall framework of the ways in which I will engage with the authors' works by providing an analysis that deals with the relationship between queer spaces and historiography, with the subjective relationship the characters maintain with their spatial surroundings, and with the literary strategies Waters and Hollinghurst put forward in their historical novels. In so doing, I will reflect on theories about spaces, London's history of sexuality, its sexual geographies, and queer spaces.

The first part of this book will focus on my readings of Sarah Waters' *Tipping the Velvet* (chapter 2), *Affinity* (chapter 3), and *The Night Watch* (chapter 4). I have chosen to examine these novels because they are set in London and because they relate lesbian culture and identity to the city's history and geography.<sup>39</sup> While I do not analyze

37 Cf. Jennings, *Tomboys and Bachelor Girls*, pp. 5–7.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

39 I take up a brief discussion of the novel *The Paying Guests* in my conclusion, given that it was only published in 2014 when this thesis was already in an advanced stage. This novel is also set in London.



*Fingersmith* and *The Little Stranger* thoroughly in this chapter, I do address these novels in chapter 8. Although *The Little Stranger* does not present a lesbian character, I discuss it in comparison with Hollinghurst's constructions of the country house in *The Stranger's Child*. In the chapters dedicated to Sarah Waters, I argue that her constructions of queer spaces in *Tipping the Velvet*, *Affinity*, and *The Night Watch* enable the narration of lesbian history and portray a notion of lesbian culture from the perspective of feminist autonomy and agency.

As I will show, Waters' works address the question of lesbian cultural and historical invisibility, particularly in the neo-Victorian novels, as she creates spaces in which lesbian culture might have existed. In my reading of *Tipping the Velvet* and *Affinity*, in chapters 2 and 3 respectively, I discuss the ways in which Waters construes Victorian London and the panoptic Millbank prison as a means to create a fictional, spatial, and historical account of lesbian culture in the nineteenth century. In both novels, the representation of same-sex desire between women is conveyed by Waters' employment of late twentieth century discussions about gender and sexuality in order to critically engage with Victorian ideals of femininity and sexuality.

While in *Tipping the Velvet* Waters uses the late-Victorian theatrical scene in London and the prominent male impersonation acts to contemplate notions of gender performance, in *Affinity* it is the trope of the prison and of Victorian spiritualism that contextualizes same-sex desire among women. Unlike Waters' endeavors to create a fictional lesbian historiography in her neo-Victorian novels, in *The Night Watch*, Waters reflects on the rise of a lesbian urban culture in London and the Second World War's effects on gender and sexual relations. The topic of lesbian invisibility in this novel is associated with urban destruction and with the meagre autonomy that women obtained during the war, since they acquired access to salaries (which were obviously lower in comparison to men's salaries) and to a greater degree of participation in both the urban and public realms. This will be thoroughly discussed in chapter 4.

As I will show in my reading of Waters' novels, the articulation of lesbian identity and desire cannot be dissociated from class relations. I will argue that class relations are often reduced to identity categories and social standards that will go on to determine the characters' behavior in *Tipping the Velvet*. In contrast, *Affinity* displays more complex class relations that are attuned to middle and upper-class femininity and their dominating effects in the education of working-class subjects. In *The Night Watch*, class relations are deemed relevant in terms of the positions that women took up during and after the war. In her novel, Waters dismantles the war effort as a unifying force among the population in London, as she emphasizes how individual participation in the war was determined by class, gender, and sexuality in many ways.

In the second part of this book, my analysis will turn to Hollinghurst's *The Swimming-Pool Library* (chapter 5), *The Line of Beauty* (chapter 6), and *The Stranger's Child* (chapter 7). I have chosen to examine *The Swimming-Pool Library* and *The Line of Beauty* because of my specific interest in Hollinghurst's representation of London and of gay culture under Thatcher's government, particularly in terms of how it is reflected in the relationship between neoliberalism and urban space. In *The Stranger's Child*, Hollinghurst introduces his first female protagonist marking a striking difference from having gay protagonists who nurtured intense sex drives and acted out egotistic and hedonistic

behavior in his first novels. In my reading of the novel, I will argue that the lead character, Daphne Sawle, suggestively addresses history and historiography in relation to literary tradition and gay culture.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, his 2011 novel depicts space according to the trope of the country house and its social hierarchies, a topic that I will examine in detail in my reading of the novel and in chapter 8.

My analyses of *The Swimming-Pool Library* and of *The Line of Beauty* concentrate on the relation between class, race, gender, and sexuality by reflecting upon the effects of neoliberalism on gay culture and by exposing the limitations of the period's gay politics. In chapter 5, I will argue that the protagonist and narrator of *The Swimming-Pool Library*, Will Beckwith, epitomizes the neoliberal subject whose sexual relationships consist of objectifying men of color and those from working-class backgrounds. In recounting Will's sexual adventures in London, Hollinghurst shows how the protagonist's privileges of class, whiteness, and of education give him individual freedom in his circulation in London. In Hollinghurst's first novel, London is constructed as a cruising ground in Hyde Park, Bloomsbury, in Soho, and in working-class neighborhoods in East and South-East London. Although AIDS is not mentioned in *The Swimming-Pool Library*, I will focus my reading on the ways in which Will's account is constructed through irony and exaggeration, thereby producing a narrative about gay life in London that sells the image of individual freedom in the summer that directly preceded the outbreak of the AIDS epidemic.

AIDS features as a central theme in *The Line of Beauty* and is directly linked to how London is portrayed in the novel. In Hollinghurst's Booker-Prize winning novel, the AIDS epidemic is related to the Thatcherite government and its negligence towards the spreading of the disease. While the protagonist cruises in various parts of the city in *The Swimming-Pool Library*, seeking new sexual adventures, in *The Line of Beauty* London is depicted mainly in terms of domestic spaces located in Notting Hill (more specifically in Kensington Park Gardens), in Brent, and in Kensington. In the chapter dedicated to this novel, I contend that Hollinghurst's depiction of gay culture in homes, instead of gay venues, displays how hysterical homophobia propagated by the media and the government alike constricted gay men's circulation in London and caused gay life to retreat to the domestic sphere.

Lastly, chapter 7 will discuss Hollinghurst's 2011 novel, *The Stranger's Child*. In this chapter, I will analyze the trope of the country house by examining Hollinghurst's use of metafiction, history, and historiography in the construction of the country house as a textual space. In my reading, I will reflect on the homosocial relations that take place in the novel's country houses in tandem with the writing of literary and gay histories. In focusing my analysis on Daphne Sawle's character, I suggest that Hollinghurst's representation of the country house is articulated through notions of

40 My decision to analyze *The Stranger's Child* instead of *The Spell*, which is also set in neoliberal London, stems from the turn that Hollinghurst undertook in writing *The Stranger's Child* (2011) by including a female protagonist who is fully implicated in the narration of homosexual and literary history. In the conclusion of this book, I will briefly discuss *The Spell* in relation to Hollinghurst's other novels.

homonormativity that entail heterosexist and misogynistic relations<sup>41</sup> which prevent women, especially Daphne's character, from participating in the intellectual realm of authorship.

In chapter 8, I provide an analysis that is situated between Waters' and Hollinghurst's novels by comparing the ways in which they engage with history, with intertextuality, and with queer spaces. In reflecting upon key conceptualizations about historical fiction,<sup>42</sup> I contend that Waters' and Hollinghurst's works can be read as historiographic metafiction because their historical novels articulate historical and literary discourses, engage with metafictionality, irony, and parody as linguistic tropes and they convey self-reflexivity, which are the main characteristics that Hutcheon postulates in her definition of this subgenre.<sup>43</sup> I will argue that it is mainly gender differences that determine Waters' and Hollinghurst's association between space and homosexuality and, subsequently, the ways in which they represent London. I will show that they create spatial histories of gays and lesbians in London by portraying the idea that the city's sexual landscapes are deeply informed by the constrictions of female circulation in the city and by the freedom that men have historically had in exploring urban space. Although they share common spaces in their representation of gay and lesbian histories, such as the West End, Soho, and East London, the histories that they put forward about these places distinguish themselves not only in terms of the historical periods that they represent, but also in regard to gender differences that have determined social roles for men and women and the ways they have engaged with urban space.

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41 Cf. Ruiz, "The Violence of Assimilation: An Interview with Mattilda aka Matt Bernstein Sycamore", p. 238.

42 Cf. Fleishman, *The English Historical Novel*; Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*; Lukács, *The Historical Novel*.

43 Cf. Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*.

