CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains an introduction, the purpose of the research, research question, research objective, research significance, previous research, and definition of key terms.

1.1 Background of Research

Sexuality is a term that defines a person's preference for a certain object to meet their sexual desires, both spiritually and physically. According to Foucault (1978), sexuality became a term in the late 19th century, since homosexuality was first recognized then. The exact meaning of sexuality illustrates the sexual values and beliefs present in Western culture at that time. Beforehand, people often considered same-sex moments as a personal action, not a way to define someone's identity. With sexuality being discussed openly, people found that their sexual orientation could result in their being labeled, categorized, and even considered sick. Sexuality refers to one's inner sexual orientation and was recognized as an important aspect of personal identity, the prediction of sexual behavior and the control of sexual urges (Yunwei, 2015). It means sexuality affects more than attraction in physically, as it also becomes part of a person's overall identity. A person's sexuality affects their image of themselves, their feelings in relationships, and their response to what society expects.

In the late 19th century, people introduced the label 'homosexuality' to name a new type of identity. Before this, a special category to identify the sexual identity of a person attracted to their own sex did not exist. (N. Sharma, 2020). Because of this new term, changes appeared in how society thought about sexuality, turning same-sex acts into an important trait of people's identities. The way sexual categories were built helped form today's beliefs on sexual orientation and identity. At that time, words like "pansy" were used to belittle homosexual people. (Weeks, 1977). Even the terms themselves did not simply rename age-old ideas, but referred to new realities for people both inside and outside the relevant communities.

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Many ancient societies were already known for practicing homosexuality. Ever since ancient Chinese civilization began, precarious forms of gay literature have been traced back. Yet, people's biased opinions still often lead to things like rejection and oppression. (Qing, 2011). But just because they've existed for a while, does not mean they were immediately welcomed by everyone. People still deal with bias and are hurt by prejudice, which causes different kinds of rejection and oppression of people who are not heterosexual.

Expressions of sexuality that are not heterosexual are commonly rejected, stigmatized, and repressed. Homosexual identity was always accompanied by a fear of punishment, or later, a fear of rejection in society. (N. Sharma, 2020). It points out that sexual identity is shaped by a system that keeps down sexual behaviors that go against the main cultural rules. During the Edwardian English era or in the early twentieth century, the ruling class asserted that any activity involving same-sex romance could be labeled as a negative act. At the time, there was a much harsher attitude towards homosexual behavior. The first law against sodomy was created in England in the 16th century. In fact, the control of sexual activities between two men was strict until the 1950s (Yunwei, 2015). Building and defining sexuality is influenced not only by beliefs, but even by strict rules in laws that set what counts as acceptable sexual behavior.

In 1885, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, also referred to as the Labouchere Amendment, was passed. "Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or is party to the commission of, or procures the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanour, and being convicted thereof shall be liable at the discretion of the court to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour" (UK Parliament, n.d.). For this reason, anyone charged with gross indecency at home could spend up to two years in jail with possible hard labour, as the law did not define "gross indecency". This was a term that allowed for many different interpretations. The amendment invaded people's personal lives, leaving

homosexuals vulnerable at home and making it possible to punish them for simply living together.

At different times and in different cultures, a similar thing also happens in contemporary Indonesia. Acts of banning discussion activities in academic spaces, discrimination in the workplace and education, and attempts to criminalize LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people through the judiciary and legislation appear to be increasingly common. (Zakiah & Az Zahra, 2018) That's because sexuality is influenced by the norms of society and also managed, regulated, and restricted by the government or official organizations. As a result, sexuality is disputed when personal freedoms meet restrictions set by society and law, and things seen as acceptable are commonly chosen by education, law, and public policies.

According to the report of the Indonesian Legal Defense Fund (LBH) (2019) In Seri Monitor dan Dokumentasi, throughout 2018, there were 253 people who were victims of stigma, discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation, identity and gender expression outside heteronormative binary norms. These victims are spread across various regions with various types of stigma, discrimination, and violence. The largest number of victims targeted the LGBT group in general, 234 people, followed by the transgender group with 11 people, the lesbian group with 5 people, and finally the gay group with 3 people. Based on the monitoring results, the LGBT community occupies the first position as victims. The LGBT community referred to here are all people who belong to LGBTQQIAAP (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Allies, Asexual and Pansexual). From this data, it can be seen that a person who identifies as LGBT is vulnerable to discrimination, stigma, and violence by society. This illustrates that, in general, society believes that homosexuality is abnormal or deviant.

However, in the face of a dominant heteronormative society, some people have begun to challenge such discrimination and rejection, one of which is by using literature. As Yeon (2022) states, the presence of these literary works seems to be able to create a new discourse on non-heteronormative sexuality by presenting a

different perspective than before. For example, these works seem to invite people to reconsider the dichotomous framework that encapsulates a number of ideas about what is normal and abnormal or what is right and wrong in viewing one's sexuality. This insight emphasizes the literature's function as a discursive mechanism that not only reflects but also challenges and rewrites prevailing ideologies regarding sexuality. Damono (1984) also stated that literature was created by its author to be enjoyed, understood, and used as lessons for society in their daily life. In his words, literature has the role of through its aesthetic values as well. Reading literature should be enjoyed through words, plots, and its content, and literature also serves as a valuable tool, showing people things they can apply to their everyday lives. Authors use their characters, stories, and conflicts to get readers to think about the life, values, and norms shown in their stories. That's why books can change how aware and sensitive a person is about society.

Homosexual themed literature is presented not to persuade readers to become homosexual or to adopt a similar way of life, but simply to offer a view on the dualistic sides of human life. (Rejo, 2020). In line with this research, discussing queer topics does not mean supporting, justifying, or promoting homosexuality. This research aims to add perspectives and treasures in queer literature. The aspect relies on the numerous pairs of opposites found in life. Some colors are black, while others are white, some are bright, some are dark, and so on. That's what it means to be human when living in this life. If the dualistic side causes problems, a cultured creature remains tolerant and pays attention to the outcomes that happen later. As a result, harmony is brought into our lives despite the presence of opposing forces.

Edward Morgan Forster, or known as E.M. Forster, was an English novelist, essayist, and social and literary critic born 1st January 1879 in London, England. His fame rests largely on his novels, Howards End (1910) and A Passage to India (1924), as well as on his numerous criticisms. As a teenager, like many other British middle-class people, he went first to public school and then to Cambridge. He studied history, literature, and philosophy. Forster started writing while at college, and he enjoyed participating in debating societies, which began to shape his

worldview. After a few years as a teacher, he went to Greece and Italy to travel and then began his writing career. His debut novel, Where Angels Fear to Tread, was well received, and his subsequent works received increasing recognition from critics and readers.

The novel *Maurice* by E.M. Forster was among the first English novels to deal openly with homosexuality. No other author has approached their message as straightforwardly and boldly as Forster did in *Maurice.* (Yunwei, 2015). The novel was first written between 1913 and 1914 but was not released until 1971, after the author passed away. This novel depicts the journey of Maurice Hall and other queer characters who deal with issues of homosexuality in late Victorian England. *Maurice* is one of the queer novels that does not have a tragic ending for the homosexual protagonist character, which at that time most queer novels ended tragically. (Yunwei, 2015). Narratives about homosexual characters mostly have tragic endings in the form of anguish, banishment, or death. This signifies the opinions of the society then that considered homosexuality a deviant behavior and something that was not acceptable socially or even legally. *Maurice*, however, does not follow this convention, and gives the main protagonist, Maurice Hall, a positive and hopeful ending as he manages to fall in love with Alec Scudder and decides to live with him, even though that is against the social norms. Forster indeed was a homosexual, and *Maurice* existed as one of the ways of narrating his feelings and ideas towards homosexuality. Consciously disavowing the tragic destiny of queer characters inflicted by his contemporaries, Forster also felt that queer people should get a happy ending like the rest.

Indonesia has its own queer literary works and *The Sweet Sins* (2012) by Rangga Wirianto Putra stands among them. Rangga Wirianto Putra, born on October 30, 1988, started writing when he was in junior high school. When he was in high school, he actively wrote short stories and published them on the school bulletin board. His short story entitled "*Bersamamu Meski Hanya Sekejap*" once won the High School Short Story Writing Competition. When he was in college, his short story was published in his campus magazine at the Islamic University of Indonesia,

Yogyakarta. Rangga's hobby is collecting paintings and listening to and studying European opera scores and librettos. In fact, he aspires to write an opera with a complete libretto because of his obsession with his favorite composer, Mozart. This can be seen in the novel *The Sweet Sins,* which uses many opera references. Rangga's first novel, *The Sweet Sins*, is the result of his final assignment, which discusses homosexual life from a psychological perspective. This novel tells about Rei, a straight college student who also works as a sex worker and falls in love with Ardo, a famous young executive with a brilliant career. Both believe that they are brought together by destiny to meet, care for, strengthen, and love each other. But there are too many different views, prohibitive norms, and social and natural boundaries that prevent the two from being eternal lovers. Rei realizes that she must be willing to let go in order to love.

According to Oetomo (2003), there are generally two ideas used to understand homosexuality. The first approach is known as the view of essentialism. As a result, this perspective views homosexuality as something a person is born with, while society presents the biggest obstacles for them. Activists from the lesbian and gay community commonly accept this perspective. Socioconstructivism is the second approach. This view considers that homosexuality is constructed through social influences. Many humanities social scientists have embraced this idea because they have been strongly influenced by Michel Foucault since the 1970s. Often, these social scientists compare the role of homosexuality in societies outside of the West.

Thus, this study aims to see how the characters' sexuality is constructed in contemporary literary works then compares the sexual construction aspects of the works. To discuss this phenomenon, the researcher focuses on two works that have different backgrounds and languages, namely, *Maurice* (1971) by E.M. Forster and *The Sweet Sins* (2013) by Rangga Wirianto Putra. The following outlines the considerations for selecting the two works as research data sources. First, the published works are popular queer novels from each language, namely English and Indonesian. Second, the sexual construction of each protagonist was considered. In other words, the works raise the issue of homosexuality and heterosexuality as an

essential or constructed thing by featuring main characters with homosexual orientation. Thirdly, in order to enrich the conversation on homosexuality, the works will be compared by considering the background and culture of each region.

To examine the characters' sexuality construction in the novel and compare the sexual construction aspect in both works, this research applies a comparative literature approach and queer theory as a framework because the theory covers any kind of sexual activity or identity that is divided into categories that are considered normative and deviant. The core of queer theory is that sexual acts and identities are socially constructed, so there is no biological sexual orientation and no deviant sexual orientation (Lee, 2019). This research also adopts Hu Yunwei's approach to studying how sexuality is constructed. Yunwei (2015) divides Maurice's coming out into four stages, which allow researchers to analyze both novels. His theory experiences four stages: the first is signs of homosexuality, self-recognition of homosexual love, efforts to make himself normal, and acceptance of homosexuality. This method helps to see how sexuality is built through the character's personality and the environment around them in both places.

The term "queer" carries some meanings, especially about concepts of homosexuality. Queer theory is a relatively recent critical approach to literature that questions and challenges norms, and favors performative reading strategies that challenge normative assumptions (Acadia, 2021). Only since early 1990 has queer theory been recognized as a field of study or theoretical inquiry. It sprang from gay/lesbian studies, a very new field that has only been around in any organized form since the middle of the 1980s. In turn, gay/lesbian studies emerged from feminist research and the Theory of Feminism. The phrase "queer theory" was first used informally in the 1990s by academics like Gloria Anzaldúa, and the basic idea was inspired by Michel Foucault in the book *History of Sexuality* which was published in 1976 according to Foucault (1976), sexuality is a construction of society, and identity is not inherited.

There are previous studies used in order to conduct this analysis. One of which is E. M. Forster's Construction of Sexuality in *Maurice* (2015) by Hu Yunwei. This

thesis makes significant use of this research as a key reference. The author studies sexual construction in *Maurice* through the lenses of social constructivism and queer theory. According to the research, Maurice's homosexuality gradually formed in four ways: signs of homosexuality, self-recognition for homosexual love, efforts to make himself normal, and acceptance of homosexuality. Both the novels in this study are analyzed using these stages as a theoretical structure. In addition, Hu does not make comparisons with texts from other cultures; her research only involves *Maurice*. Another previous study was conducted by Lee Yeon entitled *Bingkai Heteroseksisme dalam Karya Sastra Indonesia Kontemporer Bertemakan Homoseksualitas* (2022). The study investigates six Indonesian literary works, among them The Sweet Sins, to see how representations of homosexuality are still affected by heterosexism. Lee's conclusion is that these literary works generally maintain stories in which homosexual characters are tainted by guilt, feel pressured back to heterosexual standards, and are depicted with stereotypical descriptions of childhood loss or fatherlessness as the cause of being gay. For example, in *The Sweet Sins*, the homosexual bond between the main characters Rei and Ardo ends so Ardo can follow the heterosexual path. The findings of this research prove the analysis in this research by offering a context for homosexuality in Indonesia.

1.2 Research Problem.

From the background in this research above, the researcher concludes that there are two questions that will be the main focus of this research:

1. How do the novels of *Maurice* and *The Sweet Sins* construct the main characters' sexuality?
2. What are the comparisons of sexual construction aspects in *Maurice* and *The Sweet Sins*?

1.3 Research Objective

Based on the statement of problems, this research has two objectives set by the researcher:

1. To find how the *Maurice* and *The Sweet Sins* novels construct their characters' sexuality.
2. To compare the sexual construction aspects in *Maurice* and *The Sweet Sins* novels.

1.4 Research Significance

This research aims to provide significant contributions in both theoretical and practical areas regarding the topic of the construction of sexuality in E.M. Forster's *Maurice* and Rangga Wirianto Putra's *The Sweet Sins*.

1. Theoretical Significance

This research expands the conversation about queer theory and how sexuality is constructed in literature by using Yunwei's concept of sexual construction. These studies add to discussions about the ways literature contributes to the constructing of sexual identities, namely those that are not included in common heteronormative paradigm. This research explores how novels show the process by which individuals recognize, negotiate, and accept their sexuality. Through a comparative study of a comparative it shows the way characters understand and experience their sexuality in different times, places, and cultural settings between Edwardian England and contemporary Indonesia. Additionally, this research offers a helpful way to see that sexuality is something constructed, yet essential and lived out by individuals. It supports using literary analysis to discuss identity politics, the ways people perform gender, and the meeting point between personal desire and social norms. In comparing *Maurice*, a classic Western novel, with *The Sweet Sins*, a contemporary Indonesian novel, this research tries to reduce the dominance of Eurocentric views on queer literature and stresses the need for researchers cross-cultural perspectives about sexuality.

2. Practical Significance

This research contributes to learn about non heterosexual perspectives by studying how writers present same-sex desire and lifestyle in novels. Investigation of how individuals with different sexual orientations deal with psychological, emotional and societal pressures sheds light on their life challenges in places where heteronormative cultural rules are strict. For both educators and readers, the research provides a guide to look beyond simple interpretations and think more deeply about how novels can affect our views on identity, gender, and our society's values. It might also help as a resource in literary and gender studies subjects at academic and public education. In the Indonesian context, this research encourages talk about how homosexuality is depicted in literary works. By studying *Maurice* alongside *The Sweet Sins*, the scholar introduces more accepting conversations about sexuality and works to promote empathy and decrease stigma through the literary work

1.5 Previous Studies

In conducting this research, researchers have found several sources that are the primary sources of data and information. The first research has a similar topic of discussion and theory of construction of sexuality, but different objects and approach, the research entitled *E. M. Forster's Construction of Sexuality in Maurice* by Hu Yunwei (2015). She examines in her research how E.M. Forster constructs the sexuality of Maurice and Clive using various methods shaped by the social and psychological pressures of an Edwardian British society. Following the social construction theory promoted by Michel Foucault, the thesis finds that Maurice's homosexuality is portrayed as both inherent and natural, while it is also used as a way to resist the norm of heterosexuality within the family, schools, and society. It proves that Forster deliberately created *Maurice*'s character to deal honestly with sexual identity, stepping aside from his community so that he and Alec could be truly together as partners.

The second research contains another journal that discusses similar topics, but using a different theory. "*Struktur Ketaksadaran Kolektif Tokoh Utama Dalam Novel The Sweet Sins Karya Rangga Wirianto Putra*" (2018) by Alfian

Rokhmansyah and Ratna Asmarani. In this research, Carl Gustav Jung's structure of personality is applied, with the main concept being the collective unconscious made up of persona, anima-animus, shadow, and self. By using qualitative research and descriptive methods, the research finds that Rei, the main character, deals with a difficult conflict between the conscious and subconscious aspects of his identity. Rei uses persona to blend in with society, but anything that clashes with those norms is forgotten and kept in the shadows. Instead of seeing women as his anima, he sees men, confirming that he has internalized a sexuality different from usual male norms. At the same time, Rei demonstrates the self by trying to keep a balance between consciousness and unconsciousness when he breaks away from his partner.

The third research is a journal that discusses similar topics and objects in general, but with different theories. This research is entitled, *Bingkai Heteroseksisme Dalam Karya Sastra Indonesia Kontemporer Bertemakan Homoseksualitas.* (2022) By Lee Yeon, discusses that even today, homosexuality in Indonesian literature is presented from the perspective of heterosexism. Lee shows that even though many more literary works with a homosexual theme have emerged since the early 2000s, it does not automatically mean there is greater acceptance or care for people who are homosexual. The gay characters in these works are usually depicted as uncertain and confused about being homosexual, act like the stereotyped homosexual do and keep their relationships based on heteronormative gender roles. The study demonstrates that the presence of homosexual themes in books from Indonesia regularly reinforces heterosexuality as the main standard.

The fourth research is a journal that discusses a similar topic, but with different objects and discussions. Research in the article *Homosexuality in the Development of Contemporary Indonesian Literature* (Rejo, 2020) Written by Uman Rejo. This research analyzes writings involving homosexuality, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT), found in the field of contemporary Indonesian literature. This research investigates how homosexuality is expressed in literature, beginning with works such as Serat Centhini, up to Indonesian films since the seventies, including novels, short novels, story collections, and writings found online. It is found that authors in Indonesian literature discuss homosexuality in

many different ways and scenarios, introducing the important social and cultural details surrounding it. Moreover, Uman Rejo pointed out that increasing numbers of these dissertations and scientific articles examine the representation of homosexuality in Indonesian literature using contemporary literary theories.

The fifth research is a journal that discusses a similar topic and object, but with different theories and discussions. *Homosexual Identity Development in E.M. Forster's Maurice: How Characters accept their Homosexuality?* (2020) by Bayu Prawita Putra, Budi Darma, and Ali Mustofa. This research describes the process of the characters accepting homosexuality as their identity. Richard R. Troiden's homosexual identity development model, which is applied in the study, has four stages: sensitization, identity confusion, identity assumption, and commitment. By using qualitative research and analyzing the context of the text, the author studies Maurice's psychological and emotional dynamics compared to Clive Durham and Alec Scudder. The final result indicates that only after meeting Alec does Maurice truly accept his homosexuality, and the escape at the end reveals the unacceptable treatment of homosexuals in England in the early 20th century.

The sixth research is matters to previous research since it uses comparative literature in this approach, despite clear differences in what each study focuses on. *The Comparative Literature Analysis of Collins' Novel "The Hunger Games" and Veronica Roth's Novel "Divergent"* (2022) by Amirrudin, Ahmad Mustolih, and Charimah Marta Ningrum. The objective of this research is to compare two pieces of fiction literature, Suzanne Collins's The Hunger Games and Veronica Roth's Divergent, with a discussion over the dominant female characters Katniss Everdeen and Tris Prior. The purpose of this paper is to identify and contrast the representations of feminist values by these main characters of the texts and assess possible similarities and differences in their roles in constructing the sociopolitical contexts portrayed in each novel from the feminist perspective. This research adopts a descriptive qualitative research approach and uses text data from The Hunger Games and Divergent. The paper shows that not only Katniss but also Tris are strong, dominant heroines whose personalities reflect the principles of feminism. This comparative analysis not only reveals the personal development of the

protagonists Katniss Everdeen and Tris Prior as to relatability as modern female role models but also as specific attempts to discuss the prevailing rules of their worlds.

The seventh research is a journal that discusses a similar topic and object, but with different theories and discussions. Entitled *"Analysing Homosexual Identity Development in E.M. Forster's Maurice: A Study from the Perspective of the Cass Identity Model"* (2024), conducted by Talpur, Chandio, and Rustamani. By following a qualitative method, the study interpreted the novel's text with the help of the six-stage Cass Identity Model (1979): identity confusion, identity comparison, identity tolerance, identity acceptance, identity pride, and identity synthesis. The study suggests that as a result of strict Edwardian values focused on heterosexuality, Maurice has to learn to know and accept who he truly is. According to the researchers, Maurice's personal search for who he is as a sexual individual includes inner struggles, being abandoned by society, and, in the end, pride, all because of his relationship with Alec Scudder. Based on the study's findings, Maurice considers himself undesirable because of the firm heteronormative values present in Edwardian culture. In time, he manages to accept himself as homosexual by making his way through every stage of the Cass model. This work presents helpful observations on how homosexual identity is shaped in a certain historical and cultural background. However, it studies only the use of a psychological approach with one literary text.

In the eighth research, another journal examines similar topics by using a different theoretical viewpoint. The article *"Literature and Social Construction of Sexuality"* (2022). Priya Ranjan Tiwari looks at how society influences the way sexuality is thought of, instead of it being only biological. In conducting this research, Tiwari uses the social constructionist standpoint with reference to Seidman, Katz, Kitzinger, and Foucault. The research, through cultural and literary review, concluded that sexuality and sexual orientation do not exist in a fixed way because they are influenced by cultural, historical, and political factors. According to the study, ideas about heterosexism and heteronormativity are present in discourse, literature, and social practices, which means they have an effect on

understand and perform people's sexual identities. Literature is shown to be a powerful way to either support or oppose common ideologies. Researchers find this study valuable since it matches the idea that sexuality is constructed by outside social influences.

The ninth prior research that relevant is "*Revealing Characterization of Clive Durham in Maurice (1987) Movie Through an Analysis of Illocutionary Acts: A Study of Speech Acts*" (2023) by Dianita Wulandari and Dwi Wulandari. The research investigates how the character of Clive Durham is presented in the *Maurice* 1987 film, the adaptation of James Ivory based on the novel. The research is a pragmatic linguistic analysis of Clive based on his utterances using Searle's theory of illocutionary acts in order to establish his character traits. The conclusion of its findings is that Clive can be very assertive of himself, but at the same time lacks this assertiveness towards the populace by being afraid of social judgments against him. He is also depicted as a courageous and frank person in conveying his feelings, polite, and thoughtful. It applies to this research since it also has Clive Durham as a topic of research, but has a different orientation of conducting a study since it looks at the film adaptation version rather than the novel in terms of a linguistic approach to the character, as compared to this thesis which examines the novel in terms of a construction of sexuality approach. It is also important that its conclusion that Clive is scared of being judged by society provides linguistic support to the argument presented by this thesis that the change towards being heterosexual is propelled by social pressure and a clash with his social identity.

Another significant studies for this research is provided by Priya Ranjan Tiwari's article, "*Literature and Social Construction of Sexuality*" (2022). This study takes the argument of a social constructionism approach to sexuality, in that it is not a natural aspect or part of some persons, and sexuality actually lies in the construction and ability to assign meanings to it, and these meanings differ among cultures and periods. Tiwari finds that gender and sexuality have specific scripts promoted and enforced by society (including family, law, and medicine), which individuals are coerced into adhering to. Literature is offered as a decisive resource in comprehending the formations of these scripts and the enforcement of those

constructs, not only supplying substitute schemes of opposition or re-imagination of these dictated parts. This framework is very relevant because it supports the major theoretical orientation of this research, which shows how novels such as Maurice and The Sweet Sins can be done a cultural products analysis of how such novels reflect and negotiate a notion of identity. Besides, the argumentations of the norms of heterosexism and heteronormativity discussed by Tiwari offer the opportunity to view the circumstances of such characters as Clive and Ardo: they are subjected to a specific societal pressure, which affect their choices and is based on the privileged assumption of normative and acceptable orientation as heterosexual.

There are novelties in this research according to the studies included above, other studies have focused on either *Maurice* or *The Sweet Sins* by themselves, using lenses like queer theory, collective unconsciousness, identity issues or examining cultural criticism, no study has explored in detail how sexuality is constructed in *Maurice* and *The Sweet Sins* when contrasted in Edwardian England and modern Indonesia. To strengthen queer theory studies in Indonesia, this research examines *Maurice* by E.M. Forster and *The Sweet Sins* by Rangga Wirianto Putra and focuses on comparing between the two narratives. Most previous research on homosexuality in literature uses postmodern or psychoanalytic theories to study character development, but without comparing how different cultural settings affect that development. This study uses Hu Yunwei's (2015) thesis, *E.M. Forster's Construction of Sexuality in Maurice,* which proposes a developmental model of how homosexuality and heterosexuality are constructed. Yunwei points out that Forster treats sexuality not as something fixed, but as a result of ongoing struggle. In addition to learning about *Maurice*, this study utilizes the framework in *The Sweet Sins* to show how the approach works in various literary and cultural environments. Through the comparative literature approach, this research compares how the novels represent the construction of sexuality of their main characters, Maurice and Rei, and how these ways of representing sexuality fit in with or challenge the main forms of heterosexual beliefs present in their societies. Looking at the characters' experiences, the study points out both the ways these

stories are similar and how they are different in their representations of queer identities. Using this combined method from Hu Yunwei and the comparative literature approach helps this research break new ground and offer fresh ideas on the cross-cultural construction of sexuality in literature.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

In this, key terms referred to in this research project are defined. Each term is selected as it is a relevant term explaining the focus of research and the data analysis. Definitions are given to prevent confusion and to make the text familiar to both researchers and readers. Terms appearing often in research will be elucidated with theoretical perspectives in line with the scope of the research. Therefore, readers can more fully grasp the primary themes.

- Construction of sexuality: concept that refers to the understanding that sexuality is not solely a biological or innate characteristic but is shaped by social, cultural, and personal influences (DeCecco & Elia, 1993).

- Essentialism: concept that refers to a belief system that states that several categories, both natural and social, contain intrinsic essences which determine their fundamental features and definitions. This essence remains deep within things and cannot be observed, yet it establishes category membership terms along with typical member attributes (Newman & Knobe, 2019).

- Heterosexual: romantic and sexual preferences which exist between people who have different genders, while society treats heterosexuality as a native function of human relations (Overall, 1990).

- Homosexual: The definition of homosexuality encompasses sexual as well as romantic, and emotional connections between people who share the same gender identity. The definition of homosexuality includes sexual behavior and romantic attraction as well as sexual identity, though these elements do not universally match with each other. The term "gay" functions as a synonym for homosexual, and "lesbian" designates female homosexuality specifically (Savin-Williams, 2006).

- Heteronormativity: A norm that considers heterosexuality to be the normal or default type of sexual orientation. It's also premised on the notion that there are only two genders, male and female, and that one's gender should be exactly the same as one's biological sex (Robinson, 2016).