

PALACKÝ UNIVERSITY IN OLMOUC

FACULTY OF ARTS

Department of English and American Studies

**Patricie Kouřilová**

**Coming-of-Age/Coming-Out Novels in Contemporary  
English and American Literature**

Bachelor's Thesis

Supervisor: Mgr. David Livingstone, Ph.D.

Olomouc 2019

Prohlašuji, že jsem svou bakalářskou práci na téma *Coming-of-Age/Coming-Out Novels in Contemporary English and American Literature* vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucího práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V Olomouci dne

.....

Patricie Kouřilová

### **Acknowledgments**

I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to my supervisor and advisor Mgr. David Livingstone, Ph.D. for his enthusiasm and guidance while writing my bachelor's thesis. I would also like to thank Prof. John Howard from King's College in London for his precious advice and opinions about the choice of my primary literature.

## **Table of contents**

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1 Theoretical research .....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 The general position of homosexuality .....	7
1.2 Struggle for equal human rights and recognition .....	11
1.3 Relationship of homosexuality with Ancient Greece and Christianity .	14
1.4 Milestones in homosexual literature .....	19
<b>2 Practical research .....</b>	<b>25</b>
2.1 The choice of primary literature.....	25
2.1.1 Giovanni's Room.....	25
2.1.2 Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit .....	25
2.1.3 Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda .....	26
<b>2.2 A literary analysis .....</b>	<b>27</b>
2.2.1 Homoerotic and homosexual elements in the novels .....	28
2.2.2 Portrayals of homosexual characters in the novels.....	32
2.2.3 The immediate social environment of the characters .....	38
2.2.4 The thing called coming-out.....	42
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Resumé .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Annotation .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Anotace .....</b>	<b>61</b>

## Introduction

My thesis processes the topic of homosexuality and coming out as a homosexual in contemporary English and American literature. The reason for my decision to analyze this topic is its relevance and the fact that it is a burning issue in many countries around the world. The open discussion is another reason why I wanted to look further into this topic and contribute with my own research and observations. Also, apart from deepening the discussion and showing that homosexuality is a natural part of everyday lives, I would like to shed light on the fact that being of a different sexual orientation is not a conscious choice similar to ones human beings do every day. Mary Lou Rasmussen, in her study *The Problem of Coming Out*, describes this same thing by referring to Human Rights Campaign states: “Sexuality and gender identity are not choices any more than being left-handed or having brown eyes or being heterosexual are choices.”<sup>1</sup>

This thesis hopes to point out that modern societies are in need of this literary genre. It educates, gives insights into what homosexuality and, what it feels like to be a homosexual. It also explains that homosexuality is not any superficial one-size-fits-all concept or something that people should be ashamed of or punished for. On the contrary, homosexuality is a highly individual concern and differs from one person to the other.

At this point, I would like to briefly talk about the fact that the lack of open conversations about this topic can often be the cause of an increasing number of people who attempt or commit suicide. Let me give you an example from the 1980s from the USA. A sixteen-year-old Bobby Griffith committed suicide after a long battle of not being accepted for his homosexuality by his extremely religious family. Leroy Aarons, in his non-fiction biographical book *Prayers for Bobby: A Mother's Coming to Terms with the Suicide of Her Gay Son* narrates the story of Bobby's and his mother's journey in accepting homosexuals as human beings worthy of God's love. Aarons opens the story at the point when he is feeling “deeply stirred by the story of Bobby Griffith's suicide, saddened by the waste of this young man's life. The scalding self-hatred

---

<sup>1</sup> Rasmussen, Mary Lou. “The Problem of Coming Out.” *Theory Into Practice* 43, no. 2 (2004): 146.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3701550>.

contained in the excerpts from his diary included in the account was indeed painful to behold. My instinct was to grab hold of the boy who was writing these words and shout, "No, Bobby! You've got it all wrong. You're okay. It's the others who are crazy with hatred and ignorance."<sup>2</sup> Mary Griffith's own struggles with acceptance and religious discrimination toward homosexuals cost her the life of her son. This type of eventual positive self-reflection has the potential to stop the Christian as well as the non-Christian communities from seeing homosexuality as an ultimate sin and as an aberration that should be cured.

In my literary analysis, I am going to compare differences and similarities of several aspects of homosexual literature from three different time periods. Also, I am working with the aspect of individualism when discussing homosexuality because the primary literature illustrates different pictures of what it means to be homosexual. The primary literature that I am working within this thesis goes all the way back to 1956. The most contemporary novel I am analyzing is from 2015. The middle ground of my primary literature represents a novel first published in 1985. The individual sub-chapters of my analysis describe four elements that all three novels share and in what aspects they differ also with respect to the real historical or biographical background.

Lastly, I am examining how the individual authors portrayed their homosexual characters and what types of social aspects might have shaped their characters.

---

<sup>2</sup> Aarons, Leroy. *Prayers for Bobby: A Mother's Coming to Terms with the Suicide of Her Gay Son*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995: 1-2.

# 1 Theoretical research

## 1.1 The general position of homosexuality

The subject of homosexuality had been discussed over the centuries from almost every point of view available to human perception. Nowadays societies all over the world are more or less open to the conversation about it. However, the beginnings were much more difficult. While awareness of the modern concept of sexualities is spreading across the planet and is starting to be seen as a relatively uncontroversial, when we look back in the past we will see that homosexuality was very high on the list of the most taboo topics.

There were a vast number of negative stereotypes. Darrell and Renée Steffensmeier in the article *Sex Differences in Reactions to Homosexuals: Research Continuities and Further Developments* state that “this stereotypes-perceived danger and psychological disturbance-both suggest that a sense of threat is associated with a rejection of the homosexual. A particularly interesting finding was that male subjects are especially rejecting of male homosexuals. Presumably male subjects tend to view the male homosexuals as a sexual failure and to perceive him as personally threatening or dangerous.”<sup>3</sup> The presence of these stereotypes goes hand in hand with another study, more focused on gay rights and persecution of homosexuals as well as attitudes of different societies toward homosexuality. Susan Dicklich, Berwood Yost, and Bryan M. Dougan in their study *Building a Barometer of Gay Rights (BGR): A Case Study of Uganda and the Persecution of Homosexuals* talk about a barometer of gay rights which “measures the degree to which a regime is rights protective, and society rights protective toward gays. The focus of the BGR is on basic human rights that everyone should have regardless of their sexual orientation.”<sup>4</sup> Essentially this barometer is a

---

<sup>3</sup> Steffensmeier, Darrell, and Renée Steffensmeier. "Sex Differences in Reactions to Homosexuals: Research Continuities and Further Developments." *The Journal of Sex Research* 10, no. 1 (1974): 52. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3811747>.

<sup>4</sup> Dicklich, Susan, Berwood Yost, and Bryan M. Dougan. "Building a Barometer of Gay Rights (BGR): A Case Study of Uganda and the Persecution of Homosexuals." *Human Rights Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2012): 451. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23254732>.

resource that shows to what extent human rights are really human rights and not only heteronormative human rights.

The study says that “the BGR focuses on four domains: government, civil society, culture, and economics.”<sup>5</sup> This specific list includes all the domains that are universal for all the countries in the world and thanks to “its relative simplicity, focusing on thirty indices and five levels of possible variance, the BGR can be updated yearly, and can be applied to all countries,” and can be further used “for comparison between countries, within regions, and between developing and developed areas.”<sup>6</sup> However, connecting the efforts in gaining human rights for people with different sexual orientation, Dicklich, Yost and Dougan also state that only “few countries in the world actually embrace homosexuals as valuable members of their society and even fewer bestow full human rights on their homosexual citizens. In fact, homosexuals have been called ‘People without Rights,’ ‘deviants,’ ‘worse than dogs and pigs,’ and ‘invisible.’ They have been vilified as pedophiles, home wreckers, and social outcasts. Yet, homosexuals have been around since antiquity. Countries and societies have dealt differently with homosexuals—some granting full marriage rights and others making homosexuality punishable by death. For example, as of July 2010, Canada, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, Iceland, South Africa, and Argentina allow for gay marriage. Conversely, five countries in the world (and parts of Nigeria and Somalia) impose the death penalty for homosexuality-Mauritania, Sudan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. Seventy-six countries around the world still consider homosexuality illegal.”<sup>7</sup> As I previously stated, the situation in particular parts of the

---

<sup>5</sup> Dicklitch, Susan, Berwood Yost, and Bryan M. Dougan. "Building a Barometer of Gay Rights (BGR): A Case Study of Uganda and the Persecution of Homosexuals." *Human Rights Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2012): 451. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23254732>.

<sup>6</sup> Dicklitch, Susan, Berwood Yost, and Bryan M. Dougan. "Building a Barometer of Gay Rights (BGR): A Case Study of Uganda and the Persecution of Homosexuals." *Human Rights Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2012): 451. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23254732>.

<sup>7</sup> Dicklitch, Susan, Berwood Yost, and Bryan M. Dougan. "Building a Barometer of Gay Rights (BGR): A Case Study of Uganda and the Persecution of Homosexuals." *Human Rights Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2012): 449. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23254732>.



world at present concerning accepting homosexuality is not as difficult as it was in the past years, however, a high degree of negativity is still present and in serious need of overcoming.

Maintaining acceptance is at any case a long term issue. There are many ways to gain acceptance but there are just as many of them as there are obstacles. Greenberg and Bystryn in the study *Christian Intolerance of Homosexuality* link the distinction between the differences in attitudes and acceptance according to Boswell, who put the emphasis on the “variability to urbanization, arguing that exposure to the cultural diversity of cities makes people more tolerant.”<sup>8</sup> The theory formulated in this way is that defending acceptance is insufficient and does not include a vast number of reasons why homosexuality is simply not accepted even in the most urbanized cities. Greenberg and Bystryn explain why Boswell perceived acceptance in this way and partly agree with what his theory says. However, it is impossible to agree with it as a whole. It can be said and agreed with the fact that cities with more culturally diverse infrastructure are more capable of coming to terms with new perceptions of sexuality and sexual orientation. On the other hand, it cannot be said that this diversity is the key that would prevent individual ideologies from treating homosexuality in a hateful way. This generalizing theory seems to be incomplete. It is difficult to say what would make acceptance easier to obtain. A situation that is more likely to happen is that complete acceptance is not likely to occur.

Jeni Loftus in her study *America's Liberalization in Attitudes toward Homosexuality, 1973 to 1998* suggests another few possible attitude-changing factors. These factors also support my own theory about how could people be more accepting of homosexuality. I think that a vast number of the most negative opinions about same-sex love comes from the lack of education and knowledge. Loftus is taking into consideration that education might be one of the main reasons for increasing liberalism toward homosexuality by saying that "the changing demographic makeup of the population, for example, those with more education are more liberal in their attitudes and thus increasing educational levels may account for increasing liberalism in attitudes

---

<sup>8</sup> Greenberg, David F., and Marcia H. Bystryn. "Christian Intolerance of Homosexuality." *American Journal of Sociology* 88, no. 3 (1982): 516. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2779118>.

toward homosexuality."<sup>9</sup> This factor is more logical than the one about urbanization. In my opinion, education is one of the most effective ways how to raise awareness and acceptance. According to this, people's negative perception of homosexuality might certainly be coming from the lack of information, or, in other words, from the lack of knowledge about the matter. It is understandable. Former educational systems not only in the USA and Great Britain but also in other countries in the world were never properly concentrated on thorough sex education or on homosexual education. This might be the case also for elderly generations. However, a countless number of young people who are well educated can still take a negative stance toward homosexuals. Thus, it seems that this argument about education is not bulletproof either. Loftus offers yet another factor that might be able to explain those changing attitudes. This factor is about the "shifts in cultural ideologies."<sup>10</sup> I would suggest that the fusion of both of these factors would be the most powerful tool in the attitude-changing area. It would not have to be applicable only to individual cultures, respectively countries but also to smaller groups of people. For example, I think that if communities consciously educated their members about homosexuality and sexuality in general, it would rapidly improve the overall view on different orientations. Even though it is undeniable that some communities supporting and respecting homosexuals already exist, it is also the case that there is an almost equal number of the ones that are neither supportive nor respectful. Despite this, LGBTQ+ advocacy nowadays works tirelessly in pursuit of respect and acceptance for homosexual subcultures.

---

<sup>9</sup> Loftus, Jeni. "America's Liberalization in Attitudes toward Homosexuality, 1973 to 1998." *American Sociological Review* 66, no. 5 (2001): 762. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3088957>.

<sup>10</sup> Loftus, Jeni. "America's Liberalization in Attitudes toward Homosexuality, 1973 to 1998." *American Sociological Review* 66, no. 5 (2001): 762. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3088957>.

## 1.2 Struggle for equal human rights and recognition

The history of homosexuality, their rights, struggles for acceptance and understanding is a complex issue interfering with other fields of everyday life and studies. Most of the issue lies in the struggle for fundamental human rights. This fight for human rights for homosexual communities, who fight hard to be at least partly legal and socially equal to the heterosexual ones, seem to be one of the most difficult parts.

In order for homosexuals to gain their rights, they have to operate on a multiple level system and climb one level after another. Julie Mertus in the study *The Rejection of Human Rights Framings: The Case of LGBT Advocacy in the US* states that homosexual, respectively LGBT, advocacy “have engaged in two very different kinds of activities on the international human rights stage. First they have engaged in traditional human rights activism, using the traditional human rights techniques of monitoring and reporting to apply existing human rights norms to LGBT lives, in particular: the right to privacy in the criminal law context; the right to equality; the right to family; the right to non-discrimination; the right to freedom from torture (applicable in cases of "forcible cures" for homosexuality and psychiatric mistreatment generally); and the right of transsexuals to recognition of their new gender.”<sup>11</sup> The study that I already mentioned before in this thesis, written by Dicklich, Yost, and Dougan suggests very similar insights about the fights of homosexuals for their rights. Both studies work with almost the same law terminology which shows that homosexuals strive to have the same fundamental human rights as the heterosexual part of the society. In the latter study by Dicklich, Yost, and Dougan it is said that “homosexuals everywhere yearn for the same rights as heterosexuals.” To add to this argument, all the human rights that homosexuals are fighting for are exactly the rights that were given to the human societies by law.”<sup>12</sup> Dicklich, Yost, and Dougan are further developing what are the specific human rights that homosexuals fight for, all of them based on articles from

---

<sup>11</sup> Mertus, Julie. "The Rejection of Human Rights Framings: The Case of LGBT Advocacy in the US." *Human Rights Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (2007): 1038 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20072835>.

<sup>12</sup> Dicklitch, Susan, Berwood Yost, and Bryan M. Dougan. "Building a Barometer of Gay Rights (BGR): A Case Study of Uganda and the Persecution of Homosexuals." *Human Rights Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2012): 449. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23254732>.

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. “These articles focus on fundamental human rights like, freedom and equality in dignity and rights (Article 1), the right to physical security (Articles 3,5), equal protection under the law (Articles 6-11), right to privacy (Article 12), right to marriage (Article 16), freedom of expression or opinion (Article 19), right to peaceful assembly and association (Article 20), equal access to government and services (Article 21), and the right to work (Article 23).”<sup>13</sup>

All those human rights are stages in the imaginary ladder that are essential for the majority of the societies and cultures worldwide, even though there are other exceptions regarding opposition against feminism and equal rights for women. However, LGBT advocacy has to fight for everything that seems to be taken for granted around technically and politically developed countries and societies. For the LGBT community, these rights do not come as a full package. According to Julie Mertus, the other stage that LGBT advocacy has engaged in apart from the traditional techniques are also “human rights culture-building efforts to promote new international human rights that are important to LGBT lives, including “the right to sexuality.”<sup>14</sup> This other stage of homosexual advocacy shows the fact that even though LGBT communities are not so divergent from the heterosexual ones, they need to engage in other affairs in order to secure their lives and prevent them from being attacked only due to a different sexual orientation. The right to sexuality is something that heterosexual communities do not have to think about because the right for sexuality is given naturally. No heterosexual person was ever persecuted or deprived of human rights because of being heterosexual. Heterosexuality is rooted in the world's cultures and social systems thereby homosexuality in many cases does not have a chance to prove itself to be just as normal and natural as heterosexuality. The homosexual lifestyle is different to the extent that it does not fit the tables anymore. The fight for recognition and acceptance for homosexuals is a long process and it will be a long process also in the forthcoming

---

<sup>13</sup> Dicklitch, Susan, Berwood Yost, and Bryan Mcon. Dougan. "Building a Barometer of Gay Rights (BGR): A Case Study of Uganda and the Persecution of Homosexuals." *Human Rights Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2012): 451. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23254732>.

<sup>14</sup> Mertus, Julie. "The Rejection of Human Rights Framings: The Case of LGBT Advocacy in the US." *Human Rights Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (2007): 1039. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20072835>.

future. On the other hand, LGBT advocacy currently has a fairly strong foundation which provides the whole sexual movement with a chance to leave a positive permanent mark on the world's cultures and societies.

### 1.3 Relationship of homosexuality with Ancient Greece and Christianity

One of the most important parts of homosexuality and its evolution from ancient Greece to present days is religion and Christianity. Ancient Greece is one of the best examples of growing homosexual affection without people being exaggeratedly judged or persecuted. There are sources of ancient speeches and writings about homosexuality and how it was perceived in a more positive way.

One of the good further examples of my claim is Pausanias' speech given in Plato's *Symposium*. This speech, in its essence, refers to the so-called "Common Love" which is tied not only to homosexuality but also to bisexuality. It says that people who live according to a practice of this Common Love feel affection toward both, male as well as female. Furthermore, Pausanias' speech talks about lovers in ancient Athens who "were encouraged to "pursue" the object of their affections, and the object to resist or "flee", in order to test the lover's perseverance and seriousness of purpose."<sup>15</sup> This is not the only case when homosexuality was implemented. Homosexuality in some particular form was present even among the figures from higher social classes. I am taking an example from the study by Greenberg and Bystryn called *Christian Intolerance of Homosexuality* where they state that "male homosexuality among the ancient Greeks has been regarded commonly as having arisen as an expression of the 'comradeship of arms' among noble warriors in the Heroic Age or as a part of a primitive religious initiation ceremony for young men. In the classical periods, it usually involved temporary relationships between youths and older men. These relationships played an important role in the young men's education, particularly that of the aristocrats, and were utilized to strengthen the zeal of soldiers; indeed, the Theban army composed of homosexual lovers was reputed to be undefeatable."<sup>16</sup> This connection between homosexuality and military activity is one of the examples where homosexuality proved to be not only natural but also as an effective weapon in a war.

---

<sup>15</sup> Davidson, James. "Dover, Foucault and Greek Homosexuality: Penetration and the Truth of Sex." *Past & Present*, no. 170 (2001): 7. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3600793>.

<sup>16</sup> Greenberg, David F., and Marcia H. Bystryn. "Christian Intolerance of Homosexuality." *American Journal of Sociology* 88, no. 3 (1982): 517. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2779118>.

Nonetheless, I am also going to draw a few examples regarding ancient Greece where the homosexual activity might not be illustrated in the most praising manner. However, I still consider them as a valuable part of the conversation about ancient Greece and its perception of sexuality.

The first example is Timarchus' case which was also included in Pausanias' speech. This case came to be discussed publically "during the bitter struggle in Athens over how to respond to the growing power of Macedon."<sup>17</sup> Timarchus was a politician in the times of his contemporary Demosthenes. The speech is concentrated on Timarchus, charged by Aeschines, with wasting his [Timarchus'] parent's estates and prostitution. These charges "contrasts the supposedly commercial relationships of Timarchus with the *erōs* ('passionate love') of heroic male couples in the past."<sup>18</sup> Here is visible a small amount of oppression toward homosexuality in the Timarchus' case. However, the level of oppression in Ancient Greece generally did not reach extremes.

One of the other examples of ancient Greece and their open public discussion and further characteristics of homosexuality is Aristophanes and his implication "that any boy who has homosexual sex is effeminate."<sup>19</sup> Effeminate homosexuals, in the early days of the evolution of homosexuality, were considered in a more negative way. Even though there are to be found other examples of negative perception on homosexuality similar to the one about effeminacy, Ancient Greece more frequently inclined toward homosexuality in a positive and sometimes even praising, non-discriminating way.

In order to connect Greek sympathy toward homosexuality with its religious counterpart, I am going to move Christianity whose treatment of homosexuality is far more sinister than some of the cases in Ancient Greece. Christianity occupies the other side of the spectrum of acceptance. Most of the Christian beliefs considered and still

---

<sup>17</sup> Davidson, James. "Dover, Foucault and Greek Homosexuality: Penetration and the Truth of Sex." *Past & Present*, no. 170 (2001): 8. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3600793>.

<sup>18</sup> Davidson, James. "Dover, Foucault and Greek Homosexuality: Penetration and the Truth of Sex." *Past & Present*, no. 170 (2001): 8. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3600793>.

<sup>19</sup> Davidson, James. "Dover, Foucault and Greek Homosexuality: Penetration and the Truth of Sex." *Past & Present*, no. 170 (2001): 8. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3600793>.

consider homosexuality as an ultimate sin. It is not surprising that the act of homosexual love used to be sentenced to death. However, a level of acceptance varies from one religion to the other. It also applies to particular traditions of particular religions. Greenberg and Bystryn in the study *Christian Intolerance of Homosexuality* in the introduction ask reasonable questions about preserving some traditions while leaving behind others and vice versa about abandoning some particular traditions and preserving others. However, the perception of homosexuality underwent change according to the change of the church itself. Even though Christian tradition and beliefs underwent a considerable change, its main view of sexuality as a whole still remained acceptable only in order to conceive a baby. Harry A. Woggon, M.A., M. Div., an Episcopal Priest and the Administrator of Alcohol and Drug Programs at the Blue Ridge Community Mental Health Centre, Asheville, North Carolina, in *A Biblical and Historical Study of Homosexuality* states this view as a fear of sexuality and stresses the fact “that sexuality could be used for mutual support and understanding between persons was never considered”<sup>20</sup> and further builds on this by saying that “the only appropriate sexual activity was for the procreation of children.”<sup>21</sup> Christian beliefs did not even consider homosexuality to be possible without a type of punishment, which varied from bad to worse. Specifically, some punishments were said to be a death sentence, “castration followed by stoning to death” and later on also “burying alive as penalty.”<sup>22</sup> An overlooking possibility of homosexuality is similar to overlooking the presence and impact of female hormones and male hormones in one healthily functioning body. Woggon in the study uses a reference to modern psychological studies which confirm the fact that “each person is a combination of both male and female aspects”<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Woggon, Harry A. "A Biblical and Historical Study of Homosexuality." *Journal of Religion and Health* 20, no. 2 (1981): 161. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27505623>.

<sup>21</sup> Woggon, Harry A. "A Biblical and Historical Study of Homosexuality." *Journal of Religion and Health* 20, no. 2 (1981): 161. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27505623>.

<sup>22</sup> Greenberg, David F., and Marcia H. Bystryn. "Christian Intolerance of Homosexuality." *American Journal of Sociology* 88, no. 3 (1982): 515-48. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2779118>.

<sup>23</sup> Woggon, Harry A. "A Biblical and Historical Study of Homosexuality." *Journal of Religion and Health* 20, no. 2 (1981): 161. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27505623>.



The studies by C. G. Jung, who uses the terms for female aspect (anima) and male aspects (animus) state that “the male person has a predominance of animus (male) qualities but a fully functioning man has developed anima qualities as well. Likewise, the female person has a predominance of anima qualities, but a fully functioning female person has developed animus qualities as well.”<sup>24</sup> Woggon uses this assumption of male and female aspects and interchanges them for heterosexual and homosexual conditions. I personally perceive this part of the study as the fact that the combinations of condition are determinative because human diversity occurs naturally.

Another study dealing with intolerance toward homosexuality states that the textbooks of religious tradition “either ignore the issue or deal with it cursorily with reference to the Judeo-Christian tradition.”<sup>25</sup> However, it is not difficult to come to the same conclusion as with the previous study. Ignoring homosexuality as a whole leaves more questions than answers. Greenberg and Bystryl emphasize “that Christian opposition to homosexuality reflected a broader rejection of all sexual experiences not intended to lead to procreation within marriage is evident in the even-handed treatment of heterosexual and homosexual offenses in the writing of the early church fathers.”<sup>26</sup> Majority of studies that are dealing with Christianity and homosexuality agrees on the fact that virginity is a one's most important component of real purity and sexual abstinence is a way how to be closer to the God. Also, in terms of the Christian religion, there was another highly disrespectful opinion about homosexuality being the cause of natural disasters. Needless to say that some, not so rare, cases of homosexuality were recorded among the priests. Greenberg and Bystryl, with reference to Benjamin (1978), show that these cases can naturally occur “as a result of celibacy rule.”<sup>27</sup> This is not

---

<sup>24</sup> Woggon, Harry A. "A Biblical and Historical Study of Homosexuality." *Journal of Religion and Health* 20, no. 2 (1981): 161. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27505623>.

<sup>25</sup> Greenberg, David F., and Marcia H. Bystryl. "Christian Intolerance of Homosexuality." *American Journal of Sociology* 88, no. 3 (1982): 515. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2779118>.

<sup>26</sup> Greenberg, David F., and Marcia H. Bystryl. "Christian Intolerance of Homosexuality." *American Journal of Sociology* 88, no. 3 (1982): 526. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2779118>.

<sup>27</sup> Greenberg, David F., and Marcia H. Bystryl. "Christian Intolerance of Homosexuality." *American Journal of Sociology* 88, no. 3 (1982): 536. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2779118>.

difficult to understand because a kind of sexual need is natural for all human beings. When this need of sexual experience, among other ones as well, is not satisfied in a more acceptable way, in other words in a heterosexual way, it is going to be satisfied in a different way. Greenberg and Bystryn state that this is “especially likely to happen in single-sex milieus, where contact with members of the opposite sex is entirely cut off. High levels of homosexual behavior have, in fact, been associated with prisons, English boarding schools, and Christian, Tibetan, Buddhist, and Islamic monasteries, as well as with some traditional Moslem societies, the classical Greek city-state, and Puritan New England, where heterosexual contacts were suppressed or curtailed.”<sup>28</sup> This statement supports the fact that homosexuality can be present anywhere. In other words, it can be said that homosexuality does not discriminate anyone. It does not matter what age groups, races, religions people are or what they believe in or what they want to achieve in life and world, everyone can experience homosexuality or live the homosexual lifestyle.

The conversation about Christianity and homosexuality will never be over. The pressure that is constantly coming from the societal arrangements will be pushing religions toward the change in perception that seems to be inevitable. The religious development is closely connected with the societal development which is becoming more tolerant every day despite it being a considerably slow process. With changing society, religions are more prone to change as well.

---

<sup>28</sup> Greenberg, David F., and Marcia H. Bystryn. "Christian Intolerance of Homosexuality." *American Journal of Sociology* 88, no. 3 (1982): 536. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2779118>.

## 1.4 Milestones in homosexual literature

Literature has been a source of information about homosexuality since ancient times and continues to be more open to the idea of strong main homosexual characters, optionally also minor characters. Apart from purely homosexual novels with homosexuals characters and topics, today's modern literature started to be aware of other sexualities and their impact on the socio-cultural environment as well. Among the numerous writers of this genre of literature, there are some authors who stand out the most.

One of the first significant milestones in homosexual literature is represented by the female poet Sappho. However, it is not so straight-forward with Sappho's poetry or with Sappho in general. Holt N. Parker in the study *Sappho Schoolmistress* suggests that out of all the information we have access to about Sappho, how much of it can we actually consider truthful? He is further arguing about previous studies made on this topic which all seem to have one thing in common; "the repetition of statements and assumptions from book to book [that] is indicative of what seems to me to be a widespread tendency in the study of Sappho, where statements are taken from previous works without any critical evaluation, frequently without citation, as if they were facts so basic that 'everyone' knows them."<sup>29</sup> Parker attributes this to the fact that a majority of Sappho's texts are not properly examinable. This leaves a vast number of empty spaces in the complete picture of Sappho's life and work. At this point, Parker suggests that "every age creates its own Sappho."<sup>30</sup> Naturally, the fact that Sappho's voice was "the first female voice heard in the West, elevates her to a status where she is forced to be a metonym for all women."<sup>31</sup> The symbolism of Sappho herself and her work is something that builds strong foundations of early lesbianism in literature. In the study by Parker, a further discussion goes into details about Sappho's life and influence on

---

<sup>29</sup> Parker, Holt N. "Sappho Schoolmistress." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-) 123 (1993): 311. doi:10.2307/284334.

<sup>30</sup> Parker, Holt N. "Sappho Schoolmistress." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-) 123 (1993): 312. doi:10.2307/284334.

<sup>31</sup> Parker, Holt N. "Sappho Schoolmistress." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-) 123 (1993): 312. doi:10.2307/284334.

younger girls and women. Also, Parker investigates her involvement in teaching about love and dedicating her poems to a necessarily younger woman than was Sappho herself. He bases this argument upon a statement or assumption that “the relation of Sappho to her lovers is that of *paiderastia*, a power relation of older to younger, teacher to pupil, initiator to initiated.”<sup>32</sup> Sappho’s life might have been full of information that will never be uncovered and understood. However, even though the interpretations of her poetry and her life differ from one study to another, the overall impact on lesbian poetry and literature, in general, is obvious.

One particular notable writer who opened the door for homosexual literature and homosexuality generally like no one before is Oscar Wilde. Even though his literary works were and still are considered phenomenal, his extravagant lifestyle was scandalous. He managed to shock the whole society by having sexual affairs “with twelve men, ten of whom were named.”<sup>33</sup> Wilde’s fondness for young men eventually resulted in him being charged for immoral sexual behavior. This led to the long trials and the end of which Wilde had been pleaded guilty and imprisoned for two years for his “love that dare not speak its name.”<sup>34</sup> However, his literary mastery left an indelible mark on British and world's literature even though both his life and works were scandalous for that time. James Patrick Wilper’s claim, coming from the study called *A Tough Act to Follow: Homosexuality in Fiction after Oscar Wilde*, about Oscar Wilde's personality which had an immense impact on the perception of homosexuality, supports my claim. Wilper says that “the cultural phenomena Wilde cultivated in his

---

<sup>32</sup> Parker, Holt N. "Sappho Schoolmistress." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-) 123 (1993): 322. doi:10.2307/284334.

<sup>33</sup> Wilper, James Patrick. "A Tough Act to Follow: Homosexuality in Fiction after Oscar Wilde." In *Reconsidering the Emergence of the Gay Novel in English and German*, 138. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1wf4dth.11>.

<sup>34</sup> Wilper, James Patrick. "A Tough Act to Follow: Homosexuality in Fiction after Oscar Wilde." In *Reconsidering the Emergence of the Gay Novel in English and German*, 137. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1wf4dth.11>.

public persona would come to be regarded as part and parcel of homosexuality.”<sup>35</sup> His viewpoint on homosexuality as “the love that dare not speak its name” was spread across his works. Until the long trials in the early 1890s, his love might have not dared to speak its name, however, his literature was and still is speaking loudly enough. More than about same-sex orientation, in general, it speaks about same-sex orientation between an older and younger man. Here we can see some possible parallels with Sappho’s poetry that is said to be designated for a relationship between younger and older women. Wilde’s love has very similar characteristics where the only difference is that Sappho refers to lesbianism and Wilde to male homosexuality. Whether it is the first possibility or the other, Wilde’s philosophy about the love between two men, which he said to be natural and matter of daily life, would be applicable to both. Also, the way Wilde is infusing literature with homosexual problematics is not always exceedingly obvious. An example of this is Lord Henry in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. At the beginning of the novel, Lord Henry and Basil Hallward are having a conversation about Lord Henry’s marriage. Lord Henry, who, to some extent, shows slight homosexual behavior, perceives marriage as something that “makes a life of deception absolutely necessary for both parties.”<sup>36</sup> Also, Henry’s growing affection towards Dorian Gray is a prototype of this “love that dare not speak its name” between older and younger man. Wilde’s bold texts with obvious homosexual elements can be perceived as his personal manifestos of same-sex love that is just as inevitable as breathing.

Many writers who were popular after Wilde were inspired by him in different ways. This inspiration was often directed against Wilde’s sexual performance which was considered highly effeminate. His taste in extravagant fashion made this concept of effeminate homosexuality even stronger. According to a study by James Wilper, during the process of the trials and after them, Wilde’s public presentation gave rise to three

---

<sup>35</sup> Wilper, James Patrick. "A Tough Act to Follow: Homosexuality in Fiction after Oscar Wilde." In *Reconsidering the Emergence of the Gay Novel in English and German*, 143. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1wf4dth.11>.

<sup>36</sup> Wilde, Oscar. "The Picture of Dorian Gray." Penguin Books, 2010: 8.

concepts; already mentioned “effeminacy, dandyism, and aestheticism.”<sup>37</sup> Also, according to Wilper’s study, Wilde was considered to be “the embodiment of the Aesthetic Movement and consummate “dandy-aesthete.”<sup>38</sup> A vast number of writers who came after Wilde criticized this Wilde, effeminate, type of homosexuals and created characters that were not at all effeminate but manly, the so-called Whitman type of homosexuals. James Wilper in the study writes that “the positive strand culminates in Whitman, whereas the negative one culminates in Wilde.”<sup>39</sup> Example of an author who attempted to turn away from the Wilde type of homosexuality as much as possible is Edward Prime-Stevenson in his novel *Imre: A Memorandum*. Prime-Stevenson completely rejected Wilde’s homosexual works and thought of him as “a literary and aesthetic charlatan.”<sup>40</sup> Prime-Stevenson’s characters fulfilled the ideals of homosexuality that is intense but masculine. Wipler states another example of turning away from the Wilde type of homosexuality. He writes about E. M. Forster’s novel *Maurice* which, however, fights against effeminacy in a less hostile manner than Prime-Stevenson’s.

Another author who left a significant mark on homosexual literature is already briefly mentioned E. M. Forster. His novel *Maurice* about a young homosexual man created yet another important milestone in this genre of literature. *Maurice* was written back in the years 1913-1914. However, the official publication date goes back to 1971,

---

<sup>37</sup> Wilper, James Patrick. "A Tough Act to Follow: Homosexuality in Fiction after Oscar Wilde." In *Reconsidering the Emergence of the Gay Novel in English and German*, 140. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1wf4dth.11>.

<sup>38</sup> Wilper, James Patrick. "A Tough Act to Follow: Homosexuality in Fiction after Oscar Wilde." In *Reconsidering the Emergence of the Gay Novel in English and German*, 140. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1wf4dth.11>.

<sup>39</sup> Wilper, James Patrick. "A Tough Act to Follow: Homosexuality in Fiction after Oscar Wilde." In *Reconsidering the Emergence of the Gay Novel in English and German*, 147. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1wf4dth.11>.

<sup>40</sup> Wilper, James Patrick. "A Tough Act to Follow: Homosexuality in Fiction after Oscar Wilde." In *Reconsidering the Emergence of the Gay Novel in English and German*, 144. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1wf4dth.11>.

after Forster's death. This time gap between writing the novel and its publication shows that the beginnings of the twentieth century were not open to the idea of a homosexual character and novels. In fact, homosexuality was considered illegal in England until the 1960s. Public trials with Oscar Wilde presented a number of troubles for future generations of authors of homosexual literature. Forster was not an exception. His homosexual literature successfully rebels against society's limited perception of male sexuality. Forster's efforts in creating masculine homosexual that is not similar to Wilde's characters were more of subtle, not so obvious character, as for example in the novel by Prime-Stevenson. However, Maurice's character is considered one of these masculine, manly homosexuals that were popular and searched after Oscar Wilde.

One of the representatives whose work of homosexual literature can be categorized both as classical and modern is Marguerite Radclyffe-Hall, better known only as Radclyffe Hall. Her most famous novel with strong autobiographical elements *The Well of Loneliness* is a classical work of lesbian fiction. The main purpose of her novel was to stress the issues concerning prejudices and persecution of homosexuality. That was, however, a very difficult step to do at that time. Before the word homosexual itself was accepted into general usage, usually, in negative contexts, another term for the same thing was more frequent. The term is sodomy and everyone who displayed any type of same-sex behavior was commonly called sodomite. This is a direct link to the previous subchapters about homosexuality and religion. Homosexuals were commonly blamed for all natural disasters. The term sodomy has a reference in the book of Genesis and also in the New Testament. It refers to a biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah, sinful towns which were burnt down by the God because of its alleged homosexual activity. This perception meant a number of complications for literary authors. Their opportunities in writing novels from homosexual literature were limited.

The old-fashioned perception of homosexuality and lesbianism in literature was the main reason why Radclyffe Hall's literary career almost ended. Her character in *The Well of Loneliness* is characterized in a very natural, likable way. Her novel does not perceive lesbianism as a sin or something that should be punished but more as a celebration of a different but still valuable way of life. For a brief amount of time, *The Well of Loneliness* was banned for its open treatment of lesbianism. Fortunately, Hall's novel was able to gain success and positive attention after all.

There are other authors who in some way contributed to the continually growing collection of literature that discusses a different type of sexualities. Among the most notable authors who are engaging in writing about homosexuality is, for example also William Shakespeare or Walt Whitman. Other authors of works about different views on sexualities include Virginia Woolf and her *Orlando*, Gore Vidal who wrote famous and controversial novel *The City and the Pillar*, James Baldwin and his novel *Giovanni's Room*, Christopher Isherwood and his novel *A Single Man* and also *Christopher and His Kind*, Edmund White and his novel called *Boy's Own Story* or also Jeanette Winterson in her novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*.

One of the more recent authors of homosexual literature is also Annie Proulx. She wrote a critically acclaimed award-winning short story *Brokeback Mountain* which describes the love between two men whose intense relationship must stay secret.

Authors of modern, contemporary works of the young–adult genre include for example Alison Bechdel with her graphic novel *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*, Becky Albertalli, Adam Silvera whose main focus in his novels are usually male homosexuals, David Levithan, André Aciman and others.



## **2 Practical research**

### **2.1 The choice of primary literature**

At this part of my thesis, I wanted to briefly discuss the overall choice of my primary literature and why I made the decision in favor of these three novels. In the process of making the decision, I found a number of novels that would be suitable for the purpose of my literary analysis. However, after considering all of the options, I decided to settle on three novels that depict homosexuality in three distinct viewpoints regarding different gender, age as well as the social environment. This diversity enables me to see how personal individualism makes homosexuality unique for every character.

#### **2.1.1 Giovanni's Room**

This novel is the oldest one that I am working on within this thesis and it was written by James Baldwin. The first reason for choosing this novel is the depiction of homosexuality which combines aspects of expatriation and a contrast between Parisian and American culture. Another reason is the fact that the characters are all male adults which sets the novel free from the pubescent naivety and unreachable idealism that tends to occur when the characters are adolescents. Baldwin works with serious issues and describes homosexuality in terms of the public view of an individual and his or her value in the system of social classes.

#### **2.1.2 Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit**

The second novel that I am analyzing was written by Jeanette Winterson. I chose this novel particularly for the fact that homosexuality is described from the point of view of a female homosexual. Another, even more, crucial reason for choosing this novel is that it shows homosexuality in the direct connection with the extremely religious community. Also, this novel has a strong autobiographical value which is another reason why I chose to work with it. *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* is at the same time the only novel written about a female character by the female author which is the aspect that makes the overall account on homosexuality incredibly reliable and authentic.

### **2.1.3 Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda**

The last novel that I am working with is a contemporary, young–adult view on homosexuality from the viewpoint of a teenage boy. I decided to work with this particular novel because it is one of the most recent works from homosexual literature. Since the concept of my analysis is to work with three different novels from three different time periods I considered this novel to be the most suitable in the place of the most recent work. Another reason why I am working with this novel is the fact that it reflects the picture of today’s modern societies where it is difficult for teenagers to experience the coming out under peaceful circumstances. Out of all three novels, Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda’s attention is focused on the coming out as homosexual the most and it gives a detailed account of the process itself.

## **2.2 A literary analysis**

In this chapter, I am going to focus on some aspects of my primary literature that all three of them share. As I mentioned in the introduction, I created a list of four distinct aspects that all three novels have in common and compare them with the other elements that make them different.

Firstly, I am looking for individual homosexual elements in comparison with homoerotic elements. These terms will be further explained and specified in order to make the part of the analysis clearer.

I am going to continue the analysis by examining the general atmosphere of the novels and how the topic of homosexuality is visualized and perceived by the immediate environment, or society, of the characters, whether there are any negative attitudes or whether the message in the novels are rather positive.

Also, I focused on homosexuality itself and how it is portrayed by a particular author. One novel from my literary analysis shows strong autobiographical elements, which is another reason why I also decided to have a closer look at the connections between the setting of the novels and their real-life counterparts.

Lastly, since this thesis discusses coming out I am putting a great deal of attention on the different ways characters grow to reveal their homosexuality publicly. I am also discussing further aspects of individual coming out and whether they present a celebratory attitude toward homosexuality or on the other hand a more negative attitude.

### 2.2.1 Homoerotic and homosexual elements in the novels

At the beginning of this part of the analysis, I would like to introduce the terms that I am working with. The two main terms which I want to clarify are homosexuality and homoeroticism. These have significant distinctive features when talking about literary works not only published in the past. These terms are also relevant in the analysis of modern literature. Scott Giantvalley in the study *Barnfield, Drayton, and Marlowe: Homoeroticism and Homosexuality in Elizabethan Literature* distinguishes between these two terms where one of them is being homosexual as an adjective which, in the most basic sense “denotes actual participation in sex by members of the same gender. Since actual homosexual activity was rarely depicted explicitly in literature after the classical period and before the mid-twentieth century, this term is not always satisfactory when there is no evidence of actual sexual intercourse. “Homoerotic,” on the other hand, denotes intense physical or spiritual desire, or both, for someone of the same gender, whether or not actual intercourse is involved.”<sup>41</sup>

Even though all three novels discuss the topic of homosexuality with homosexual characters not all of them actually include homosexual elements correspondent to the definition above. What they all have in common is that there are strong homoerotic aspects. It is understandable because when discussing homosexuality and relationships between homosexuals there are always some particularly homoerotic elements involved. It is not possible to have homosexuality without homoeroticism. No matter what the character of the relationship is, homoerotic components will be present. According to the analysis of my primary literature, homoeroticism can be illustrated as flirting, fantasizing, confessing love to somebody without necessarily including sexual activity. In other words, homoeroticism can be any type of emotional affection toward the person of the same gender excluding the sex act itself. This is precisely the aspect that all three novels share. They all possess a certain amount of homoerotic elements. However, novels by James Baldwin and Jeanette Winterson also include some further homosexual elements due to the open treatment and indication of sexual activity.

---

<sup>41</sup> Giantvalley, Scott. "Barnfield, Drayton, and Marlowe: Homoeroticism and Homosexuality in Elizabethan Literature." *Pacific Coast Philology* 16, no. 2 (1981): 9. doi:10.2307/1316454.

The novel by Becky Albertalli does not include any sexual activity nor does it give any indications that sexual activity might happen between the two male homosexual characters. This novel is focused on developing the feelings, affections, and love between the two characters and sex is not even necessary for this emotional development. Also, in my opinion, there are certain degrees to which homoeroticism can still be considered homoeroticism and not homosexuality. Let me give you an example of this. *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* is fantasizing about Blue and himself together. Even though this relationship, at that point in the novel, is nowhere close to becoming reality, in Simon's head, this relationship is limitless. His mind "can picture it. He's in my bedroom, and we're totally alone. He sits beside me on the bed and turns to look at me with his blue-green eyes. And then his hands cup my face, and all of a sudden, he's kissing me. My hands cup my face. Well. My left-hand cups my face. My right hand is occupied." (Albertalli 2018, 81) The situation that I just illustrated is an example of autoeroticism. Simon is being sexually stimulated by himself but I would not consider this to be the straight-forward homosexual activity in terms of the definition by Giantvalley. Also, another version of this situation can emerge. In this second version, Simon figuratively stimulates Blue by stimulating himself. Both of these versions are, however, types of stimulation that are part of Simon's fantasy about what it could be like when he really was with Blue. Neither one of these versions is nowhere near a real sexual act.

In comparison with Jeanette Winterson and *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, all homoerotic, as well as homosexual aspects, are more towards the subtle side. In the course of the book, Winterson is describing both aspects. However, the homosexual ones are not excessively vivid in its description. Homoeroticism in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* is usually consisted of the emotional affection that Jeanette is feeling toward her first lover Melanie. They "told each other how glad we were that the Lord had brought us together. She stroked my head for a long time, and then we hugged and it felt like drowning." (Winterson 1987, 88) Also, there is no aspect of secret identities as it is in *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* so for Jeanette it is easier to show her affection face to face with her lovers. This is limited in Albertalli's novel for the majority of it. On the other hand, as I already mentioned, Winterson never describes homosexual activity in the most evident way. Despite this, it is always obvious that Jeanette is not just fantasizing. When she says that "we were quiet, and I traced the

outline of her marvelous bones and the triangle of muscle in her stomach,” (Winterson 1987, 103) it is not difficult to recognize that the situation is not happening only in Jeanette’s head.

James Baldwin, on the other hand, treats both homoeroticism and homosexuality in a completely different way. David expresses homoerotic feelings, however, his overall attitude is always highlighted by the fact that he tries to keep his manliness intact, untouched by his homosexual activity. However, this does not stop him from fantasizing about men. Example of this is the situation when David is describing his lover as looking “like a baby, his mouth half open, his cheek flushed, his curly hair darkening the pillow and half hiding damp round forehead and his long eyelashes glinting slightly in the summer sun. We were both naked, and the sheet we used as a cover was tangled around our feet. Joey’s body was brown, was sweaty, the most beautiful creation I had ever seen till then.” (Baldwin 2000, 8) David’s homoerotic activity is often closely tied to his homosexual activity. This means when David is expressing homoerotic feelings it is usually as a reflection of his previous sexual experience.

While analyzing the novels in terms of homoeroticism and homosexuality one question kept appearing. What about kissing, is it still homoeroticism or is it already homosexual activity? This had me thinking about the whole concept as a scale with homoeroticism at one side and homosexuality at the other. With this concept in mind, activities such as kissing can be seen on this scale. This way kissing can move from one side to the other according to the situation. As an example of this, I am taking *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* and its last page where the secret identities are no longer relevant. Simon finds himself in a situation where he “kiss him [Blue] on the lips,” (Albertalli 2018, 302) This situation does not precede neither follows any further sexual acts. This situation shows that kissing is closer to the homoerotic side where the characters show their affections and emotional desire toward each other. A similar situation can be found in Winterson as well where Jeanette and Melanie “bustled through the kitchen and [I] stood on the stairs to kiss her.” (Winterson 1987, 103) Neither this situation indicates further sexual acts. On the other hand, as I stated already, in the case of *Giovanni’s Room*, the majority of homoerotic elements have the basic essence of homosexual activity in them. David’s lust for Giovanni is a double-edged sword. He desires Giovanni but at the same time, he has his doubts whether it is the

right thing to do and whether “it was too late; soon it was too late to do anything but moan. He pulled me against him, putting himself into my arms as though he were giving me himself to carry, and slowly pulled me down with him to that bed. With everything in me screaming *No!* yet the sum of me sighed *Yes.*” (Baldwin 2000, 64)

Even though a majority of the elements gravitate toward homosexuality, there are some of the homoerotic ones as well. One, in particular, refers to the flirtation when David “had been accused of a minor sensation by flirting with a soldier.” (Baldwin 2000, 27) Another situation more tilted toward homoeroticism is from Giovanni’s perspective when he is luring David in to go home with him by saying that “I am sure that I am much prettier than your wallpaper-or you concierge. I will smile at you when you wake up. They will not.” (Baldwin 2000, 63) Here, Giovanni expresses his desire for David which at that moment does not go any further into sexual intercourse so this situation cannot be considered as an aspect of homosexuality.

Homoeroticism and homosexuality are relative terms that are particularly useful in order to see to what extent novels are focused on sexual acts or romantic development. In the case of these three novels that I am analyzing the elements are overall very subtle in their treatment of sex and love. As I showed above, *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* is not focused on sex whatsoever. *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* is far less focused on the depiction of homosexual intercourse in comparison with *Giovanni’s Room*. All of them, however, stand out in the treatment of homoerotic aspects even though they all treat them from different perspectives. For example, in the case of Winterson’s novel, homosexual acts are indicated gently and delicately. The reason for this might actually be the female point of view which is significantly distinct in comparison with both the other ones that are from the male point of view. Especially *Giovanni’s Room* is obviously missing the female’s presence since the images of sexual intercourse are more raw and straight-forward in their descriptions.

### 2.2.2 Portrayals of homosexual characters in the novels

The vision of homosexuality and its eventual portrayal has a vast number of possible representations, depending on the particular author. Even though all three novels that I am working with are representations of the same topic, of the same literary genre, in this thesis it is homosexuality, their overall depiction is different, their emphasis is put on different fragments of the topic. They shed light on different parts of the issue. This diversity is, however, crucial in understanding the topic as a whole. It supports the fact that homosexuality has a variety of forms and shapes and it cannot be seen as one simple concept that is working for everyone in the same way.

Baldwin, Winterson, and Albertalli construct their novels and their characters in different ways. However, there is one aspect that all three of the novels unintentionally share. There is a repetitive pattern between the characteristics of the main homosexual couples. For proper explanation, I am using the term scale again. I see those couples on a scale where on one side there is one character and on the other side there is the other character. With this in mind, two out of three couples fail to find the middle ground of their affections and the relationships end. In the case of *Giovanni's Room*, the end of the relationship is tragic.

Firstly, I am taking an example from Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. On one side there is Jeanette who faces her love toward Melanie straight on. She admits loving Melanie "almost as much as I love the Lord." (Winterson 1987, 104) On the other side, there is Melanie who has feelings toward Jeanette but her doubts are stronger than her love, replying "I don't know" (Winterson 1987, 104) to Jeanette's love confession. She was also the one who promised the church community to give up the love in order to pray for forgiveness. Their relationship is inexorably ended and even though it continues for a brief time afterward, Melanie, later on, announces "to be married that autumn to an army man." (Winterson 1987, 124)

The second example is the relationship between Simon and Blue in *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda*. Simon is the one who, sometimes even unintentionally, tries to get to know the real Blue's identity because he thinks he is "a little bit in love with him," (Albertalli 2018, 130) and naturally wants to know who is the person that he is falling in with. On the other hand, there is a Blue who might want to get to know Simon, however, he does not "want [Simon] to put two and two together and figure out



who I am. Whatever it is we're doing here, I don't think it works if we know each other's real identities. I have to admit that it makes me nervous to think of you as someone actually connected with my life, rather than mostly anonymous person on the internet." (Albertalli 2018, 60-61) Luckily, Simon and Blue's story is the only one that actually finds the strength to overcome the difficulties of not only coming out but also how all their environment will see them with the walls down, in a serious relationship.

Lastly, there is a relationship in James Baldwin's novel. On one side there is Giovanni who perceives his love to David as real love that potentially has a chance to survive because Giovanni "is not afraid of the stink of love." (Baldwin 2000, 141) David is, however, not appreciative of this love. Even though he gradually has to face the fact that his homosexual desires are stronger than his efforts to keep his heterosexual manliness untouched, he keeps denying his affection toward Giovanni. David is questioning the possibilities of life together, by asking "what kind of life can two men have together, anyway?" (Baldwin 2000, 142)

The recursive pattern can be seen on the two sides on the scale. One side is occupied by those involved, diligent characters who try to get hold of the relationships and give it a chance to evolve, blossom into something more. On the other hand, these characters on the opposite side of the scale are the ones who hide in the shadows, the ones who give the love only a passive chance to its further development. In *Giovanni's Room* David's passivity toward Giovanni eventually, leads to rejection, disgust and "hatred for Giovanni which was as powerful as my love and which was nourished by the same roots." (Baldwin 2000, 84) David's homosexual desires are strong enough to take over his whole being, however, after "the act of love" (Baldwin 2000, 8) he finds himself in a moment of perfect clarity followed by fear. This happened to him with his lover Joey as well when "it was borne in on me: *But Joey is a boy.*" (Baldwin 2000, 9) Harry Thomas in the study "*Immaculate Manhood*": *The City and the Pillar, Giovanni's Room, and the Straight-Acting Gay Man* suggests that David's behavior comes from the fact that "David attempts to have it both ways: he wants to play the role of the cosmopolitan straight man who is worldly enough not to mind gay men and gay

bars, but who certainly isn't gay himself."<sup>42</sup> Thomas puts emphasis on the fact that David sees his power, strength and also his pride in his manliness that he tries hard to keep intact and seemingly unmarked by his homosexuality. He calls this phenomenon of men like David "straight-acting" gay men: gay men who appear and act masculine, who take pride in differing from heteronormative straight men only in the matter of their sexual object choice."<sup>43</sup> It appears that David's persona in the society works as his shield that must look, at least on the surface, acceptable and without any suspicion. His private life can contain homosexual activities of all sorts as long as it does not change him and as long as it does not make him look any different than the prototype of a spotless masculine man.

David's love for Giovanni is in a certain way genuine, he likes to spend time with him, make love to him. However, when he senses even a small threat of Giovanni's excessive involvement in making David a permanent part of their purely homosexual life, he abandons Giovanni completely because he just "want[s] to get out of this room, I want to get away from you, I want to end this terrible scene." (Baldwin 2000, 141) David's love and hate are two sides of one coin Both this love as well as hate are the cause of the destruction of both David's possible relationships. Harry Thomas also suggests that David is "masculine gay man who hate[s] effeminate men."<sup>44</sup> This goes back to my theoretical research and the study by Derek and Renée Steffensmeier who talk about the heterosexual man behaving hatefully toward homosexual men. They see them as a sexual failure. David sees men like Giovanni as sexual failures because they behave effeminate. The potential effeminacy that Giovanni

---

<sup>42</sup> Thomas, Harry. "'Immaculate Manhood': The City and the Pillar, Giovanni's Room, and the Straight-Acting Gay Man." *Twentieth Century Literature* 59, no. 4 (2013): 607.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24246956>.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas, Harry. "'Immaculate Manhood': The City and the Pillar, Giovanni's Room, and the Straight-Acting Gay Man." *Twentieth Century Literature* 59, no. 4 (2013): 597.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24246956>.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas, Harry. "'Immaculate Manhood': The City and the Pillar, Giovanni's Room, and the Straight-Acting Gay Man." *Twentieth Century Literature* 59, no. 4 (2013): 596-597.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24246956>.

might unintentionally raise in David could damage his masculinity. In David's perception, this damage in his masculinity would mean sexual failure, not only his personal failure but also a social failure of male sex in general and that is something which he wants to prevent from happening.

While David's character is raising the question of masculinity versus effeminacy, the portrayal of Jeanette's character in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* can be perceived as an action taken in order to bring the concept of lesbianism into the daylight and make it more visible. Carol Guess in her study called *Que(e)rying Lesbian Identity* builds on ideas by Adrienne Rich by saying that "not to use the word "lesbian" is to contribute to lesbian invisibility and oppression, and thus to collaborate, however inadvertently, with the institution of compulsory heterosexuality."<sup>45</sup> The fact that Jeanette is growing up in an extremely religious family does not present an obstacle here. Jeanette's realistic portrayal is further developing lesbianism as an individual concept. Winterson breaks the old perception of female sexuality and essentially female homosexuality. Whilst David in *Giovanni's Room* wanted to preserve the perception of a man as a masculine ideal in society unquestioned, Jeanette is decomposing the social view on what is the proper female's position.

Winterson argues that people do not like change, they "do not like to think of you changed, [they] will treat you as they always did, accuse you of being indifferent, when you are only different." (Winterson 1987, 161) This is connecting not only female homosexuality but also feminism. Women do not have to hold the position of the ones creating and raising children anymore. Winterson's Jeanette is not the prototype of a woman who would be preparing herself for motherhood. She is the representation of female sexual revolution. She thinks of herself as a prophet instead of a priest because "the priest has a book with the words set out. Old words, known words, words of power. Words that are always on the surface. Words for every occasion." (Winterson 1987, 161) However, Jeanette is far from being a priest. She is far from being the orderly Christian woman which is exactly what her mother wanted her to be. Jeanette considers herself to be the other option, the prophet because "the prophet has no book. The

---

<sup>45</sup> Guess, Carol. "Que(e)rying Lesbian Identity." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 28, no. 1 (1995): 19. doi:10.2307/1315241.

prophet is a voice that cries in the wilderness, full of sounds that do not always set into meaning. The prophets cry out because they are troubled by demons.” (Winterson 1987, 161) The portrayal of Winterson’s homosexuality is exactly this “voice that cries in the wilderness.” Jeanette stands face to face with the church community that excluded her for her different sexuality in the struggle for acceptance.

Winterson through Jeanette shows that the prize for being different and for embracing this difference is sometimes high. She describes the fact that the community sees homosexuality as something demonic. Jeanette, however, does not see herself the same way. Jeanette says that “they are looking in the wrong place, [I thought] if they want to get at my demon they’ll have to get at me.” (Winterson 1987, 108) Jeanette herself is certainly not a demon. Also, an important factor in the portrayal of Jeanette is the fact that this character is autobiographical. Jeanette in the novel is a mirror image of Jeanette Winterson herself. With this being said, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* is not only one possible representation of lesbianism in homosexual literature. It is also authentic, personal testimonial of homosexuality colliding with Christianity. In *Giovanni’s Room*, David’s passions are variables that lead to the destruction of his relationships whereas Jeanette in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* represents “visibility and voice”<sup>46</sup> of lesbianism.

Even though the depiction of homosexuality in Albertalli’s novel is a work from gay literature similarly as the novels by Jeanette Winterson and James Baldwin, Albertalli puts emphasis on completely different issues. While David is the embodiment of to have everything is to have nothing and Jeanette is a pioneer of lesbian characters in modern literature, Simon is a voice of the contemporary teenage community that still learns how to come to terms with their own distinct sexuality and perception of it in their social environment. Since *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* is especially focused on coming out, Simon’s own sexuality is then defined by this moment of revelation. However, he rejects to be bound to his coming out, he is “tired of coming out. All [I] ever do is come out. I try not to change but I keep changing, in all these tiny

---

<sup>46</sup> Guess, Carol. "Que(e)rying Lesbian Identity." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 28, no. 1 (1995): 19. doi:10.2307/1315241.

ways. I get a girlfriend. I have a beer. And every freaking time, I have to reintroduce myself to the universe all over again.” (Albertalli 2018, 56) Simon’s portrayal raises questions about the inevitable change that comes from the revelation of different sexual orientation. Everyone who comes out does not undergo any change. The person before coming out is the same person after coming out. Albertalli raises the question of what is this revelation about, because “it’s not even about being gay.” (Albertalli 2018, 55) The answer is that the only thing that changes is the perception of people.

### 2.2.3 The immediate social environment of the characters

Apart from other aspects of human life, the immediate social environment is one of the most significant ones. Every individual person is shaped by their society or by their closer community. Their belief, conviction, and lifestyle are the reflection of their society. Novels that I am analyzing in this thesis share this aspect as well. The characters are active participants in their communities and they contribute to the course of social development. However, individual societies vary a great amount from one another.

In comparison with Winterson's extremely religious church community, Baldwin's immediate social environment in *Giovanni's Room* is Parisian homosexual subculture which is characterized by the presence of gay bars. The novel by Becky Albertalli is characterized by adolescent secondary school society. This type of society is depicted as a group of representatives of a highly evolved digital generation that spins around the influence of social media. The negative impact that the internet can have on a person is the one feature that is standing out. Simon's coming out is the example of this negativity. The revelation of his sexual orientation is posted via "the creeksecrets Tumblr: ground zero for Creekwood High School gossip." (Albertalli 2018, 5) It is unexceptionable that the mere existence of social media gives aggressors power to win over weaker individuals. The connection between internet and cyberbullying is apparent here. Cyberbullying is the situation typical for school environments where adolescents have easier access to the internet connection and already mentioned social media. Unfortunately, *Simon in the Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* is the victim of this growing social media impact which, in this case, behaves hostile and disrespectful.

Winterson's novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* in comparison with *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* is more hostile toward homosexuality due to the religious elements. Jeanette lives with her adoptive family who professes Christian religion to such extent that Jeanette, from an early age, does not know anything else. The presence of the religious community shapes Jeanette since her early childhood which later results in her making up fictional biblical stories based on the religious teaching instilled by her mother. Christianity is the key topic of Winterson's novel which is being continuously discussed through the whole course of the novel. The most important part in shaping Jeanette's personality is taken by her strict, religious mother who "would get a child, train it, build it, dedicate it to the Lord: a missionary child, a servant of God, a

blessing.” (Winterson 1987, 10) For Jeanette, her mother is the role model even though “people didn’t understand the way she thought; neither did I, but I loved her because she always knew exactly why things happened.”(Winterson 1987, 43) Jeanette’s immediate environment was her own mother who eventually despised her as much as she loved her. This aspect of love and hate is similar to David’s relationship with Giovanni in the novel by James Baldwin. David, as well as Jeanette’s mother’s love, was easily turned into hate. David sees sexual failure in Giovanni’s effeminacy whereas Jeanette’s mother sees her own failure as a Christian mother in Jeanette’s inability to perform “natural” heterosexual desires. To add to this, Jeanette’s mother is the head of the family. Her husband does not have a significant role in Jeanette’s life. His character is put in the background of the novel. Generally, he does not stand out at all. Jeanette describes him as “poor Dad, he was never quite good enough.” (Winterson 1987, 11) The main focus is on Jeanette’s mother who is in charge of everything.

In the case of James Baldwin’s novel, the relationship between David and his immediate environment is more complicated in comparison with Simon. On the other hand, Winterson’s novel also depicts the complicated social relationship between homosexuality and religion. However, in Baldwin’s novel, David’s complications come from his own denial.

*Giovanni’s Room* is centered in the Parisian homosexual subculture. Baldwin calls this community of homosexual men “le milieu.” (Baldwin 2000, 22) Despite the fact that David is an active participant of this community for the majority of the novel, he does not perceive it to be the place where he belongs even though “this milieu was certainly anxious enough to claim me, I was intent on proving, to them and to myself, that I was not of their company” (Baldwin 2000, 22) This goes back to the discussion in previous subchapter about David’s intention in preserving his masculinity intact and not suspicious of anything that could violate his manhood. There, however, still remains the undeniable fact that David practices some the activities of this subculture. There is a mention in the novel about the boys who sleep with men as well as women. One of David’s closest friends, Jacques, “an aging, Belgian-born, American businessman” (Baldwin 2000, 23) and homosexual who buys men for money and who is known for his “big apartment, his well-meant promises, his whiskey, his marijuana [and] his orgies,” (Baldwin 2000, 23) calls these boys “nasty little beasts” (Baldwin 2000, 30) David, however, considers himself to be “queer for girls” (Baldwin 2000, 30) as well.

Nonetheless, Giovanni is also one of these men who does not mind having sexual affairs with men and women. This common attribute between David and Giovanni, however, is not enough to keep the relationship alive. I see this behavior as a sign of David's fear of the power of his own possible bisexuality. For David, Giovanni's effeminate affection represents a picture of destroyed masculinity. This image terrifies him because he might eventually end up similarly if he lost control over the track of his own bodily and mental desires. Harry Thomas in the study "*Immaculate Manhood*": *The City and the Pillar, Giovanni's Room, and the Straight-Acting Gay Man* which I have also mentioned in the previous subchapter, works with arguments by George Chauncey which discuss that "an old regime—dating to at least the 1890s in New York City—defined a man's sexual normality or abnormality not by the gender of his sexual partner(s), but by his gender performance"<sup>47</sup> and that "men could have sex with men and remain "normal" so long as they conformed to masculine codes of dress, styling, and bodily comportment, and were careful to take only the ostensibly "active" (penetrative) role in sex with other men."<sup>48</sup> According to this argument, men could have had sex with other men without being considered immoral or not normal. As a counterexample of this argument, I would refer to Oscar Wilde again because his extravagant fashion style certainly did not fit this definition. Wilde had not conformed either masculine codes of dress, styling nor bodily comportment.

David, on the other hand, is justifying his decision about not being with Giovanni anymore particularly by his origins in the USA. He claims that "it is a crime [homosexuality]—in my country and, after all, I didn't grow up here, I grew up *there*." (Baldwin 2000, 81) The old regime that I have mentioned above is perhaps no longer relevant around the 1950s, however, David is not planning to go back to the USA

---

<sup>47</sup> Thomas, Harry. "'Immaculate Manhood': The City and the Pillar, Giovanni's Room, and the Straight-Acting Gay Man." *Twentieth Century Literature* 59, no. 4 (2013): 596.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24246956>.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas, Harry. "'Immaculate Manhood': The City and the Pillar, Giovanni's Room, and the Straight-Acting Gay Man." *Twentieth Century Literature* 59, no. 4 (2013): 597-618.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24246956>.



anytime soon. Even though it is a fact that 1950s America still considered homosexuality illegal, Paris was far more tolerant of his sexual preferences.

#### 2.2.4 The thing called coming-out

At the beginning of this part of the analysis, I wanted to implement a definition of coming out. This term can be described as making a public announcement about one's sexual orientation. Building on this, coming out can also be about somebody's gender identity. I am referring to the study by Mary Lou Rasmussen called *The Problem of Coming Out* who uses a definition of coming out by Bochenek & Brown, 2001, p. xiii, which goes accordingly "as becoming aware of one's sexual orientation or gender identity and beginning to disclose it to others. A person may be selective "out" in some situations or to certain people without generally disclosing his or her sexual orientation or gender identity. "Coming out" is a process that takes place over time, in some cases over many years."<sup>49</sup> This definition is especially suitable for *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* because of the main character being selectively out to some particular people for a majority of the novel, however, his complete coming out to the general audience is this novel's climax.

Nonetheless, all three of the novels, that undergo my analysis, observe coming out to some extent. As I already mentioned, *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* observes coming out in a variety of different situations. This novel has a complex plotline related to coming out as a homosexual with further deeper connections with how coming out can have an impact on family and friends as well. In this novel, out of all three that I am working within this thesis, is exactly the one which represents coming out as a whole and where the coming out is the most outstanding feature. From the very beginning of the novel, it is apparent that the most central aspect is how Simon is going to deal with his sexual revelation. One particular element which differentiates *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* from the other two novels is how comprehensively the author treats coming out as an individual concept. Albertalli keeps this topic fairly straightforward which is the reason why this novel can be easier understood by wider audiences of all age groups.

What all three novels share is the fact that there is an inherent risk to every coming out that something may not go well. Baldwin in *Giovanni's Room*, as well as

---

<sup>49</sup> Rasmussen, Mary Lou. "The Problem of Coming Out." *Theory Into Practice* 43, no. 2 (2004): 144. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3701550>.

Winterson in *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* use the most dramatic point of the story as the moment for the characters to face their coming out or they are forced to face their coming out. In *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda*, this event is pushed even further by Simon being blackmailed. Albertalli, however, gives the story yet another plot twist around the blackmailing; Blue [Simon's anonymous pen friend that he is slowly falling in love with] is a private person whose identity is being kept secret for the majority of the novel. This means that Simon is not the only one who is being blackmailed but “by extension, [he]’s blackmailing Blue.” (Albertalli 2018, 6)

Albertalli’s perception of “modern coming-out” story goes even deeper. On the first look, her novel is simply about a boy who has troubles with his process of getting out of the closet to all his friends, family and eventually everyone else. Coming-out, however, is never easy. It is not even easy to initiate. In the course of the story, coming out is brought to the light more than once. I perceive this multiple coming out as a way of showing different situations with different people and their different reactions.

First, Simon comes out to one of his friends where the coming out is sudden and casual, unprepared. It is connected later on with the fact that for Simon it was easier to confess his homosexuality to someone who is close to him but whom he does not “have that kind of a history” (Albertalli, 284) of a long friendship with. Another coming out is initiated by Blue whose situation complicates his fear of not being accepted by his parents’ religion where he says that “it gets complicated when you bring religion to the equation. Like, you read about these gay kids with really churchy Catholic parents, and the parents end up doing PFLAG and Pride Parades and everything. And then you hear about parents who are totally fine with homosexuality but can’t handle it when their own kid comes out. You just never know.” (Albertalli 2018, 106) Even though this small portion of *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* has a connection to Jeanette Winterson’s *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, these two novels treat homosexuality and religion in diametrically distinct ways. Albertalli’s touch on homosexuality and religion ends up well without anyone being forced to pray for forgiveness. That is certainly not the case for Winterson. Jeanette and her lover Melanie are said to “have fallen under Satan’s spell,” (Winterson 1987, 104) and are forced “to give up this sin and beg Lord to forgive,” (Winterson 1987, 105) because “it’s not too late for those who truly repent.” (Winterson 1987, 105) Jeanette’s coming out was brought in front of the whole church community as an ultimate sin against Lord and nature. Jeanette’s love for her first lover

Melanie is rejected because the love she feels towards her is “love reserved for man and wife.” (Winterson 1987, 105) Winterson’s treatment of homosexuality in combination with religion is far more serious than in Albertalli’s novel. The latter is idealistic and in terms of real coming outs within Christian communities, it seems to be almost detached from reality. However, Albertalli chose Jewish and Episcopalian religions which, nowadays, are said to be more tolerant toward homosexuality than Christianity.

Another coming out in *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* is the one that was not initiated by Simon’s personal intervention. This situation is completely out of Simon’s hands because his sexuality is revealed by his classmate who is also blackmailing him from the beginning. This particular coming out is insensitive, difficult and troublesome since the truth about Simon’s sexuality was posted online. In fact, the post about Simon’s homosexuality was not only inappropriate but also humiliating due to the overall mendacious and hostile content (Albertalli, pp. 158):

*December 24, 10:15 A.M.*

*SIMON SPIER’S OPEN INVITATION TO ALL DUDES*

*Dear all dudes of Creekwood,*

*With this missive, I hereby declare that I am supremely gay and open for business. Interested parties may contact me directly to discuss arrangements for anal buttsex. Or blue-jobs. But don’t give me blue balls. Ladies need not apply. That is all.*

At this point, Albertalli is opening the chapter about coming out being personal and the decision to come out should belong to the particular person who is considering coming out. One of the most important things about coming outs and their successful process is the decision itself that should become reality whenever the person feels ready to do it. As Mary Lou Rasmussen suggests, it can take months or even years for someone to feel completely ready to come out. I should add that some people never come out and they live their lives as homosexuals in suppression. In Albertalli’s novel, this important decision is taken away from Simon. Eventually, this situation does not give him any other choice but to come out even though he does not feel one hundred percent ready.

Coming out, in its essence, is about the value of the personal decision. This particular situation in *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* supports this fact. People of all sexual orientations should have a choice to make the decision on their own, at their own pace and under the circumstances that are acceptable and comfortable for them. When this decision making process and in the end the decision itself is taken away from them it has the potential to cause stress, frustration, misunderstandings and in the worst cases even serious downfall. Simon is no exception, he is frustrated and coming out to his family does not even feel relieving, it is quite the contrary, he feels “so exhausted and unhappy right now. I thought it would feel like a weight had been lifted.” However, the weight had not been lifted whatsoever.

David, in *Giovanni's Room*, experiences a similar situation with this forced coming out as well. On the other hand, his situation is more complicated because of his confusion between simultaneously loving Giovanni and his girlfriend Hella. Also, *Giovanni's Room* is focused on coming out in a very subtle way in comparison with *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda*. There is actually only one person David can come out to and that is Hella. His stay in France is completely detached from his life in the USA and his family. The fact that David's coming out is placed toward the very end of the novel and occupies roughly five pages show that coming out as a whole is not the main focus.

The aspect of inability to prepare for the coming out is what all three novels share because neither Simon, Jeanette nor David have a chance to prepare themselves for it but all of them, at one point, have to face their inevitable coming out. The main difference is that every one of them comes face to face with it under very different circumstances. David's parallel life with men is the main variable in the equation when coming out to Hella. While David is trying to drown in alcohol and men his own confusion about whom he loves more, whether Giovanni or Hella, Hella comes looking for him. David was spending the night in a Parisian gay bar, “very drunk. I was almost penniless. In the mirror, suddenly, I saw Hella's face. I thought for a moment that I had gone mad, and I turned. She looked very tired and drab and small.” (Baldwin 2000, 162) In comparison with Simon, both Jeanette and David go into a downward spiral after their coming outs. Simon experiences his own downward spiral as well, however, he mostly faces frustration which eventually reaches its peak when confronting his

blackmailer about forcing his coming out even though “I’m supposed to decide when and where and who knows and how I want to say it.” (Albertalli 2018, 196)

Also, apart from the overall discussion about coming out, Albertalli puts a great deal of emphasis on sexuality in general, not just in terms of homosexuality. This aspect creates yet another cornerstone of the novel. The aspect is a reflection on coming out being an exclusive feature among the LGBT communities. Albertalli asks why only homosexuals have to go through coming out. Simon and Blue, as Albertalli’s media, further discuss that also heterosexuals “should have to declare one way or another, and it should be this big awkward thing whether you’re straight, gay, bi, or whatever.” (Albertalli 2018, 146) Another variation for the same matter that I am discussing at this point is the fact that “it is definitely annoying that straight is the default, and that the only people who have to think about their identity are the ones who don’t fit that mold.” (Albertalli 2018, 147) Albertalli invented her own term for this topic under discussion which she calls “the Homosexual Agenda” or “Homo Sapiens Agenda.” This is also a direct link and an explanation of the title.

Earlier in the text when I am analyzing Albertalli’s novel, I have put the term modern coming-out story into brackets. It is because this novel was published in 2015 and stands high on the list of modern works of homosexual literature. However, I would suggest that even though this story is undoubtedly modern, its basic essence resembles the classic coming-out story that was described by Lies Xhonneux in her study about classic coming out novels. She suggests that “the coming out novel is solely concerned with the protagonist’s celebratory assumption of a visible gay or lesbian identity after a painful period of hiding in the closet.”<sup>50</sup> Simon’s story is a good example of this definition because his story is a way of celebrating the coming out and it observes how good Simon feels after he actually comes out, how the burden of the secret is much lighter when it is out. In the case of Winterson and Baldwin, their characters experience coming out that definitely cannot be considered a celebration. Both of the other novels are more about coming to terms with homosexuality and its difficult obstacles that cause more uncertainties than happiness. However, these types of coming out novels where

---

<sup>50</sup> Xhonneux, Lies. "The Classic Coming Out Novel: Unacknowledged Challenges to the Heterosexual Mainstream." *College Literature* 39, no. 1 (2012): 94-118. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23266042>.

the characters have to overcome a vast number of difficulties before their life settles down, are one of the most accurate and plausible reflections of homosexuality. The reason is that coming out is not always granted a happy ending. This is the case for Baldwin's novel. David's eventual, unplanned coming out to Hella is described as imaginary last step over the edge. His behavior is exactly the force that destructs not only Giovanni's and Hella's lives but also David's own life. After the loss of both of his lovers, he started losing himself as well, perceiving his own body to be "under sentence of death." (Baldwin 2000, 168) Giovanni's execution feels almost like David's own execution, as if David's own life was cut short and which he "wonder[s] how it can be redeemed, how I can save it from the knife." (Baldwin 2000, 168) David's self-reflection of his situation is, however, not enough to reconcile neither his relationship with Hella nor his relationship with Giovanni. Especially David's insensitive split from Giovanni leads Giovanni into murdering one of the minor characters. This, later on, leads to Giovanni's arrest with a subsequent death penalty.

## **Conclusion**

The concept of different sexual orientations is an immensely broad topic with a vast number of other subsidiary branches that would be worth further analysis. Due to the limited scope of this thesis, I have decided to focus on male and female homosexuality. This thesis has hoped to point out the most important aspects of homosexuality and British and American homosexual literature and further discuss their impact on contemporary society.

The thesis consists of two parts, theoretical and practical. In the theoretical part, I have been describing homosexuality in terms of the general position in society. At this point, I have worked with an academic study about male homosexuality in connection with its perception by male heterosexuals. At this part of my theoretical research, I have discovered interesting reasons why some male heterosexuals find male homosexuals so repugnant. I have also dwelt on struggles for fundamental human rights for homosexual communities, its relationship with Christianity, and the portrayal of homosexuality in ancient Greece.

Christianity and ancient Greece had and still have a significantly different attitude toward homosexuality. In that particular subchapter, I have chosen several examples where I have demonstrated these distinguishing attitudes. Even though the Christian religion had been mostly intolerant toward homosexuality, there have been cases when the same-sex activity occurred among priests. I have discussed these examples in more details.

In the last subchapter of my theoretical research, I have also engaged in the discussion about the most outstanding milestones from British and American homosexual literature. The history of this type of literature is just as broad as the topic of homosexuality itself. I have mentioned authors and novels whose influence on the development of homosexual literature has been the most significant and crucial. The largest part is dedicated to the literary works by Oscar Wilde. He is one of the few authors of gay literature whose influence reached the topmost recognition. His literary output, however, represented an unprecedented challenge. Not only his public persona but especially his specific style of writing, characterized by elements of effeminacy, was later considered as something to be avoided. A great number of authors who came after Wilde attempted to turn away from Wildean, effeminate type of homosexuals and



create strong homosexuals more acceptable in terms of male masculinity. However, I have chosen two authors, Edward Prime-Stevenson and Edward Morgan Forster, whose efforts in creating masculine homosexuals rather than effeminate ones turned out to be the most significant.

Apart from the outstanding milestones, I have also mentioned several contemporary authors whose novels can be considered cornerstones of the modern, homosexual, young–adult literary community. However, this part of my theoretical research about gay literature is merely an excerpt which could be used for further analyses.

The main part of my practical research is literary analysis. I have analyzed three novels from three distinct time periods. These novels create an imaginary timeline with *Giovanni's Room* by James Baldwin on one side, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* by Jeanette Winterson in the middle and *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* by Becky Albertalli on the other side. The aim of my analysis has been to highlight differences in the novels as well as their similarities. By emphasizing the differences of the novels and comparing them with their similarities I have tried to show how the perception of homosexuality changed throughout the times also according to other factors.

Every novel stress different aspects of homosexuality. For this reason, I have divided the analysis into four individual subchapters. Firstly, I have searched for elements of homoeroticism and homosexuality. These two terms have been further explained for better clarity.

Secondly, I have described the overall portrayals of homosexual characters in the novels. I have analyzed their behavior, general position in the specific society and also a perception of their own sexuality. Apart from this, I have also analyzed the main homosexual couples and their distinguishing attitudes toward relationships. I have used the term scale to illustrate the character of these relationships and to show the recursive pattern in attitudes that stretches across all three novels.

As the next point, I have discussed the immediate social environment and its possible influence on the development of the characters. Every novel had been set in a completely different environment. The distinct social structures create a unique ambiance which further influences the decisions and development of the characters.

Lastly, I have analyzed in detail the process of coming out. It is the aspect that all three novels share but the overall process differs in a vast number of details. Coming out is one of the aspects of homosexuality that can have numerous forms and is extremely diverse and different for every person. This element of individualism is dependent not only on the characteristic of the society but also on the experiences of a particular person and the perception of his or her sexuality and identity in general.

Also, homosexual literature is one of the genres that are expanding at the fastest pace. Since I have read a number of contemporary novels I can see the difference in attitudes in writing about homosexuality. One difference is that the present-day literary authors are more open in the overall treatment of the topic. It is easy to understand because of the fact that back in the past, homosexuality was considered illegal and it was punished by death. I have talked about these issues in my thesis, as well. The authors did not want to take the risk and write about homosexuals and the reasons for this restraint were relevant. In the majority of the developed areas and countries, the attitude toward homosexuality has changed a great deal. Nevertheless, as I have also mentioned in the main body of my thesis, worldwide acceptance of homosexuality is only approximately halfway complete. The general oppression is not something that would make contemporary authors feel the urge to hold themselves back anymore due to the fact that literature with homosexual characters and storylines is growing and the demand for these types of novels is growing at the same time.

A common feature of some of the works from homosexual literature shows homosexuals in a relatively negative way. Example of this is a novel by Gore Vidal, *The City and the Pillar*. In this novel, homosexuality is not depicted as a celebration of different sexual orientation. Contemporary novels treat homosexual stories more as a celebration. Even though there are modern novels whose plotlines do not seem to be the most positive, common practice is that overall underlying feeling from the novels comes out positive. This is not the case of Gore Vidal's novel. Harry Thomas, whose study "*Immaculate Manhood*": *The City and the Pillar, Giovanni's Room, and the Straight-Acting Gay Man* I have mentioned in my thesis as well, refers to this more negative portrayal of homosexuals by mentioning "the original 1948 edition of *The City and the Pillar* [where] Jim Willard murders Bob Ford, the man he has loved since high

school, when Bob rejects his sexual advances; in the revised edition of 1965, Jim rapes Bob instead of murdering him.”<sup>51</sup> It is evident that the main homosexual character is not the ideal of the celebration of homosexuality. I see Jim Willard as an example of a dissociated character who tries to protect himself from the rejection which works as a type of emotional trauma. It is, however, obvious that this type of protection leaves more disarray.

One of the novels that I have analyzed in this thesis is also an example of this unexpected violent plot twist. *Giovanni's Room* does not depict David's nor Giovanni's character in the most flattering light. On the contrary, David's behavior in general causes the most important people in his life turn into a serious downfall. Giovanni later on murders another character. This aspect contrasts with Gore Vidal's novel and neither of them can be considered celebratory.

Contemporary novels usually avoid murders and extremely violent scenes definitely due to the fact that modern homosexual literature is predominantly focused on younger readers. This is the case of *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* where the plotline is celebrating Simon as the main homosexual character. I have constructed my literary analysis in order to show this shift in attitude in interpreting homosexuality. I would say that the earlier novels attempted to depict homosexuality in a raw, more realistic way. Modern literature sometimes for the purpose of celebrating turns away from the aspect of reality. I do not necessarily consider this to be inaccurate because a majority of the novels are fictitious. However, the excess of idealism can sometimes be confusing and it may also result in creating an unwanted illusory perception of real life.

In my opinion, homosexual literature is one of the essential parts of valuable conversation about sexuality as a whole. Homosexuality is not only about sexual performance and the choice of a sexual partner. There are many more elements to this topic which can be opened mainly by the presence of homosexual literature. For this reason, I think that the topic of my thesis would be particularly attractive to everyone

---

<sup>51</sup> Thomas, Harry. "'Immaculate Manhood': The City and the Pillar, Giovanni's Room, and the Straight-Acting Gay Man." *Twentieth Century Literature* 59, no. 4 (2013): 596.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24246956>.

who wants to start observing homosexuality in literature and at the same time connect some of its aspects with the actual background. My thesis processes the basics of homosexuality in connection with literature which I think would be useful as an additional step before observing more elaborate and complex studies and works on homosexuality.

## Resumé

Koncept odlišných sexuálních orientací je téma s nesmírně širokým záběrem a bezpočtem vedlejších odvětví, jež by mohla být podnětem k dalším analýzám. Z tohoto důvodu jsem se rozhodla svou bakalářskou práci soustředit na mužskou a ženskou homosexualitu. Touto prací jsem chtěla poukázat na nejdůležitější aspekty homosexuality v rámci britské a americké literatury a dále diskutovat jejich vliv na moderní společnost.

Má bakalářská práce se skládá ze dvou částí, z teoretické a praktické. V teoretické části jsem popisovala všeobecnou pozici homosexuality ve společnosti. Zde jsem uvedla citace z odborné studie zaměřující se na postoj heterosexuálních mužů vůči homosexuálním mužům. Výsledky vyplývající z této studie dokládají, proč heterosexuálové vnímají homosexuály negativně. Kromě tohoto jsem se také zaměřila na tematiku boje za základní lidská práva pro homosexuální komunity, na vztah homosexuality a křesťanství a vyobrazení homosexuality v antickém Řecku.

Křesťanství a antické Řecko se velmi liší ve svém přístupu k homosexualitě. V podkapitole, kde se zabývám touto problematikou, jsem vybrala několik příkladů, na kterých jsem se snažila názorně ukázat, jak moc velký rozdíl v těchto přístupech opravdu je. I přestože křesťanství zastává spíše negativní postoj vůči homosexuálům, ve své práci uvádím i příklady, které diskutují o výskytu homosexuální aktivity mezi kněžími. Uvedené citace následně komentuji.

V poslední podkapitole teoretické části své bakalářské práce se věnuji důležitým milníkům v britské a americké homosexuální literatuře. Je nutné dodat, že tento typ literatury má stejně tak široký záběr jako téma homosexuality samotné. Proto zmiňuji jen několik jmen, která z celkového výčtu vystupují nejvíce a jejichž literární tvorba je jednou z nejstěžejnějších. Největší prostor věnuji literatuře a životu Oscara Wilda. Jako jeden z mála autorů homosexuální literatury dosáhl nejvyššího uznání. Avšak nejen autorova osobnost, ale i jeho literární tvorba představovala nečekanou výzvu, a to zejména kvůli jeho stylu psaní, který se vyznačoval prvky zženštilosti u homosexuálů. Tento aspekt se v pozdějších letech produkce homosexuální literatury považoval spíše za něco, čemu je lepší se vyhnout. Velké množství autorů, kteří psali homosexuální literaturu po Wildovi se snažilo odvrátit od tohoto typu zobrazování homosexuálů co nejvíce prostřednictvím ztvárnění silných maskulinních homosexuálů, kteří by byli lépe

přijati právě díky svému mužnému vzezření a chování. Jako příklady zmiňuji dvě jména, Edward Prime-Stevenson a Edward Morgan Forster, jejichž tvorba se tímto směrem vydává nejvíce očividným způsobem.

Vedle zmíněných osobností také uvádím i několik dalších autorů, jejichž díla výrazně rozšířila moderní young adult literaturu. Tato díla působí jako základní kameny současné homosexuální literární komunity. Ovšem podobně důležitých jmen je bezpočet a všechno, co uvádím ve své práci je jen malý výčet z celkového rozsahu tohoto tématu, který by se dal použít k dalšímu, podrobnějšímu rozboru.

Největší část mého praktického výzkumu zaujímá literární analýza. Soustředila jsem se na tři romány ze tří různých časových období. Tato díla vytváří pomyslnou časovou osu s knihou Jamese Baldwina *Giovanni's Room* na jedné straně, s knihou Jeanette Winterson *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* uprostřed a knihou Becky Albertalli *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda* na straně druhé. Hlavním cílem analýzy bylo v těchto knihách zdůraznit rozdíly ve vyobrazení homosexuality, ale zároveň se zaměřit i na to, co mají všechny knihy společné. Zdůrazněním těchto rozdílů a následným porovnáním s jejich podobnostmi jsem se snažila poukázat, jak se pohled na homosexualitu měnil napříč časem i vzhledem k dalším faktorům.

Každá z uvedených knih osvětluje jinou část homosexuality. Z toho důvodu jsem rozdělila svoji analýzu do čtyř podkapitol. V první podkapitole jsem hledala prvky homoerotiky a homosexuality. Pro lepší přehlednost jsem tyto dva termíny na začátku podkapitoly vysvětlila s referencí na akademickou studii, která se na tyto termíny zaměřuje.

V druhé podkapitole jsem se zaměřila na celkové vyobrazení homosexuálních postav, na jejich chování, postavení ve společnosti a také na to, jak vnímají svoji vlastní sexualitu. Kromě toho jsem také popsala hlavní homosexuální páry a odlišné přístupy k jejich vztahům. Pro charakteristiku těchto přístupů jsem použila termín škála, na které jsem dále ukázala ono opakující se schéma v chování, jež se táhne napříč všemi zde zkoumanými knihami.

Dále jsem se zaměřila na analýzu bezprostředního sociálního okolí, které může mít významný vliv na vývoj a chování postav. Každá z knih je zasazena do zcela jiného

prostředí. Tato sociální diverzita vytváří unikátní atmosféru, která má dále vliv na rozhodování postav a jejich další rozvoj.

Nakonec jsem se ve své analýze zabývala problematikou coming-outu u homosexuálů. Tento aspekt mají všechny tři knihy společný, ale jeho celkové vyobrazení se výrazně odlišuje. Každý coming-out má jiný a nesmírně individuální proces. Individualismus coming-outu závisí nejen na již zmíněné bezprostřední společnosti, ale také na zkušenostech každé osoby a jejího celkového pohledu na sexualitu a identitu.

Homosexuální literatura je specifické odvětví, které se na dnešním literárním trhu rozvíjí nesmírně rychlým tempem. Po přečtení většího množství homosexuálních románů lze vidět, jak se v průběhu času proměňoval přístup v psaní této literatury. Jedním z největších rozdílů mezi dnešním a minulým pojetím tématu je ten, že současní autoři popisují homosexualitu z velmi odlišných úhlů. Není těžké pochopit, proč se dřívější homosexuální literární tvorba liší od té dnešní. Bylo to dáno tím, že v minulosti byla homosexualita považována za ilegální a postihovala se nejčastěji smrtí či jinými ne příliš humánními tresty. Autoři tudíž byli opodstatněně zdrženliví, jelikož nechtěli psaním o kontroverzním tématu riskovat své životy. V dnešní době už velká většina rozvinutých zemí výrazným způsobem změnila svůj přístup k homosexualitě. Nicméně, jak také zmiňuji ve své bakalářské práci, cesta za uznáním homosexuality je dokončena přibližně jen z jedné poloviny. To ale nenutí moderní autory, aby se v psaní o homosexualitě drželi zpátky. Naopak je pravdou, že tento typ literatury se rychle rozšiřuje a s rostoucí nabídkou homosexuální literatury roste i její poptávka.

Jedním z rysů dřívější homosexuální literatury je to, že hlavní hrdinové nebyli vždy vyobrazováni zvláště pozitivně. Příkladem toho je román od Gore Vidala, *The City and the Pillar*. Tento román nepředstavuje oslavu odlišné sexuální orientace, nýbrž se vyjevuje pravý opak. Současná literatura se spíše soustředí na oslavné vykreslení homosexuálních postav. A přesto, že existují romány, ve kterých ona úroveň oslavy vyznívá zpočátku poměrně negativně, celkové zpracování vychází stále do jisté míry pozitivně. Zmíněný jev není případem románu *The City and the Pillar*. Harry Thomas, z jehož odborné studie *“Immaculate Manhood”, The City and the Pillar, Giovanni’s Room, and Straight-Acting Gay Man* jsem čerpala i v hlavní části své bakalářské práce, v souvislosti s tímto negativnějším vyobrazováním homosexuálů zmiňuje první vydání

Vidalova románu a jeho odlišně koncipovanou verzi vydanou po sedmnácti letech, jež se navzájem liší. V originálním vydání hlavní postava, Jim Willard, zavraždí objekt svého zájmu poté, co Jima odmítne. V onom pozdějším vydání se mluví o znásilnění. Je více než očividné, že tato postava není ideálem oslavy homosexuálů. Osobně vnímám Jima v tomto ohledu jako disociovaného člověka, který se snaží nějakým způsobem ochránit sám sebe od bolestného odmítnutí, jež působí jako druh psychického traumatu. Nicméně taková forma ochrany za sebou bohužel zanechává jen více otázek a pozdvižení.

Jeden ze zde analyzovaných románů je také příkladem tohoto nečekaného násilného dějového zvratu. *Giovanni's Room* nevyobrazuje ani Davida ani Giovanniho v lichotivém světle. Davidovo chování proměnilo životy jeho nejbližších v trosky. Nakonec i Davidův vlastní život končí fiaskem a nezdarem. Giovanni kvůli Davidovu odmítnutí zavraždí v průběhu knihy jednu z vedlejších postav. Také na příkladech těchto dvou postav je jasně patrné, že ani jedna z nich nemůže představovat onen pomyslný objekt oslavy homosexuality.

Současná, moderní homosexuální literatura se takovým násilným scénám nebo vraždám spíše vyhýbá a to hlavně z toho důvodu, že se tento typ literatury převážně zaměřuje na mladší generaci čtenářů. Není pochyb o tom, že tento typ literatury slouží spíše k edukativním účelům a autoři rozhodně nechtějí učit příští generace vraždám a násilnostem. Příkladem tohoto je *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda*, kde Simon opravdu figuruje jako oslava sexuální orientace a coming-outu.

Analýzu své bakalářské práce jsem se tudíž snažila sestavit tak, abych co nejvíce poukázala na rozdíl v psaní a vyobrazování homosexuality. Myslím si, že dřívější literatura tohoto typu se snažila vyobrazit homosexualitu reálněji, více syrově. Moderní literatura se odvrací od reálnějšího vyobrazení právě za účelem oslavného vyznění odlišné sexuální orientace. Z toho vyplývá přemíra idealismu v současné homosexuální literatuře, která může někdy působit zmatečně a může mít také za následek iluzorní vnímání reálného světa, což považuji za zkreslující okolnosti současného typu literatury o homosexualitě.

Zároveň si ale myslím, že homosexuální literatura je jedním z aspektů kvalitní a hodnotné diskuse na téma sexuality jako takové. Neboť tento literární svět není pouze o sexuálním vyjádření a volbě sexuálního partnera, nýbrž zde existuje ještě velké



množství dalších elementů, které je možné šetrně otevřít právě skrze homosexuální literaturu. Z tohoto důvodu si myslím, že téma mé bakalářské práce by mohlo být atraktivní zejména pro osoby, které si chtějí rozšířit obzory v oblasti homosexuality spojené s literaturou a zároveň propojit některé aspekty i s reálným pozadím tohoto tématu. Má bakalářská práce zpracovává převážně základní informace o homosexualitě a homosexuální literatuře, což je aspekt, který by mohl být počáteční vhled pro někoho, kdo se rozhodne zkoumat komplexněji propracované akademické studie.

## **Bibliography**

### **Primary sources**

Albertalli, Becky. *Simon vs the Homo Sapiens Agenda*. New York, NY: Balzer Bray, an Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2018.

Baldwin, James. *Giovanni's Room*. New York: Delta Trade Paperbacks, 2000.

Winterson, Jeanette. *Oranges are not the only fruit*. New York: Grove Press, 1987.

### **Secondary sources**

Aarons, Leroy. *Prayers for Bobby: A Mother's Coming to Terms with the Suicide of Her Gay Son*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995.

Davidson, James. "Dover, Foucault and Greek Homosexuality: Penetration and the Truth of Sex." *Past & Present*, no. 170 (2001): 3-51. Accessed March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3600793>.

Dicklitch, Susan, Berwood Yost, and Bryan M. Dougan. "Building a Barometer of Gay Rights (BGR): A Case Study of Uganda and the Persecution of Homosexuals." *Human Rights Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2012): 448-71. Accessed March 6<sup>th</sup> 2019. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23254732>.

Giantvalley, Scott. "Barnfield, Drayton, and Marlowe: Homoeroticism and Homosexuality in Elizabethan Literature." *Pacific Coast Philology* 16, no. 2 (1981): 9-24. Accessed March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019. doi:10.2307/1316454.

Greenberg, David F., and Marcia H. Bystry. "Christian Intolerance of Homosexuality." *American Journal of Sociology* 88, no. 3 (1982): 515-48. Accessed March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2779118>.

Guess, Carol. "Que(e)rying Lesbian Identity." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 28, no. 1 (1995): 19-37. Accessed March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019. doi:10.2307/1315241.

Loftus, Jeni. "America's Liberalization in Attitudes toward Homosexuality, 1973 to 1998." *American Sociological Review* 66, no. 5 (2001): 762-82. Accessed March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3088957>.

Mertus, Julie. "The Rejection of Human Rights Framings: The Case of LGBT Advocacy in the US." *Human Rights Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (2007): 1036-064. Accessed March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20072835>.

- Parker, Holt N. "Sappho Schoolmistress." *Transactions of the American Philological Association (1974-)* 123 (1993): 309-51. Accessed March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019. doi:10.2307/284334.
- Rasmussen, Mary Lou. "The Problem of Coming Out." *Theory Into Practice* 43, no. 2 (2004): 144-50. Accessed March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3701550>.
- Steffensmeier, Darrell, and Renée Steffensmeier. "Sex Differences in Reactions to Homosexuals: Research Continuities and Further Developments." *The Journal of Sex Research* 10, no. 1 (1974): 52. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3811747>.
- Thomas, Harry. "'Immaculate Manhood': The City and the Pillar, Giovanni's Room, and the Straight-Acting Gay Man." *Twentieth Century Literature* 59, no. 4 (2013): 596-618. Accessed March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24246956>.
- Wilde, Oscar. "The Picture of Dorian Gray." Penguin Books, 2010
- Wilper, James Patrick. "A Tough Act to Follow: Homosexuality in Fiction after Oscar Wilde." In *Reconsidering the Emergence of the Gay Novel in English and German*, 137-52. Accessed March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1w4dth.11>.
- Woggon, Harry A. "A Biblical and Historical Study of Homosexuality." *Journal of Religion and Health* 20, no. 2 (1981): 156-63. Accessed March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27505623>.
- Xhonneus, Lies. "The Classic Coming Out Novel: Unacknowledged Challenges to the Heterosexual Mainstream." *College Literature* 39, no. 1 (2012): 94-118. Accessed March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23266042>.

## **Annotation**

Author: Patricie Kouřilová

Title: Coming-of-Age/Coming-Out Novels in Contemporary English and American Literature

Faculty and department: Faculty of Arts, Department of English and American Studies

Supervisor: Mgr. David Livingstone, Ph.D.

Number of pages: 61

Olomouc 2019

The main focus of this bachelor's thesis is an analysis of the topic of coming out as a homosexual in contemporary coming-of-age English and American literature from three distinct points of view. Apart from this, in the theoretical research, I discuss the persecution of homosexuals in history, struggles for fundamental human rights for homosexual communities, and the overall portrayal of homosexuality in the Bible and in ancient Greece. In the last section of my theoretical research, I also analyze the crucial milestones in gay literature.

## **Keywords**

Human rights, religion, male homosexuality, female homosexuality, lesbianism, homosexual literature, contemporary literature, coming-of-age novels

## **Anotace**

Autor: Patricie Kouřilová

Název: Romány na téma dospívání a coming out v současné britské a americké literatuře

Fakulta a katedra: Filozofická fakulta, Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. David Livingstone, Ph.D.

Počet stran: 61

Olomouc 2019

Hlavním zaměřením této bakalářské práce je analýza problematiky coming-outu u homosexuálů a jejich celkové vyobrazení v moderní britské a americké literatuře ze tří různých časových období a od tří různých autorů. Kromě tohoto hlavního zaměření se v teoretické části práce věnuji persekuci homosexuálů v minulosti, boji za lidská práva pro homosexuální komunity a vyobrazením homosexuality v Bibli či Antickém Řecku. Vedle toho se v teoretické části věnuji také stěžejním milníkům v homosexuální literatuře.

### **Klíčová slova**

Lidská práva, náboženství, mužská homosexualita, ženská homosexualita, gayové a lesby, homosexuální literatura, současná literatura, coming-of-age romány