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## A Queer Love : The Gay Male in Young Adult Literature

Skot John Arbery  
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**A Queer Love: The Gay Male in  
Young Adult Literature**

**Bachelor of Arts (English) with Honours**

**Skot John Arbery - 0961675**

**Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences**

**Submitted: June 7, 2000**

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## Abstract

The purpose of my thesis - *A Queer Love: The Gay Male in Young Adult Literature* - is to offer an analysis of seven young adult novels that incorporate the construction and representation of white male homosexuality. I intend to explore what it is that can be learnt from these texts about 'being gay'. It is my assertion that I will be able to show that, although taboos have been shifted in young adult literature to allow the exploration of issues relating to gay adolescence, that which is condoned as acceptable 'gay behavior' remains restricted. I propose that in order for gay adolescents to gain a positive reading from a young adult text incorporating homosexuality, those responsible for the production of these texts must move away from promulgating stereotypes of the gay man. What these texts need to focus on is ensuring that homophobia becomes as socially unacceptable as racism has become at the end of the twentieth century.

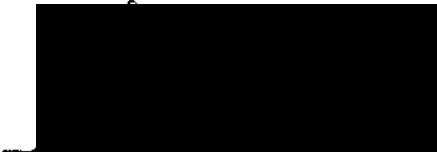
Throughout my thesis I will be endeavoring to place the texts that I am using in to a cultural context which will reflect the influence upon young adult literature by a variety of groups. These include authors, publishers, educators, librarians and parents. Another important influence upon the production of Young Adult Literature is the society in which it is produced. For this reason I have selected texts from North America, Great Britain and Australia in order to investigate how these factors converge to shape the construction of homosexual characters in Young Adult Literature.

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### Signed Declaration

*I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:*

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher learning;*
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or*
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.*



~~(Mr.)~~ Skot J. Arbery = 0961675

June 7, 2000.

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## Introduction

Barbara Gittings is cited as claiming that:

most gays, it seems, at some point  
have gone to books in an effort to  
understand about being gay  
(Fuoss, 1994, p.159).

My essay will focus on how homosexuality has been represented in a selection of young adult texts. These texts are Tom Brown's Schooldays (1857) by Thomas Hughes, The Catcher in the Rye (1951) by J.D. Salinger, I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth The Trip (1969) by John Donovan, A Candle for Saint Antony (1977) by Eleanor Spence, Dance on my Grave (1982) by Aidan Chambers, Two Weeks With The Queen (1986) by Morris Gleitzman and, finally, The Drowning of Stephan Jones (1991) by Bette Greene. I believe this investigation is worthwhile for two reasons. Firstly, if Gittings' claim that most gays do turn to literature in order to gain an understanding about their sexuality is accurate, the question to ask is what is it in these texts which contributes to the development of this understanding. It is important to bear in mind that gays are not the only ones to gain an understanding of "the gay experience" from these texts. Heterosexual readers' understanding of what it is to be gay is also influenced by the same material that is informing the gay reader.

Secondly, and of equal importance, is that the number of critical works which examine homosexuality in young adult literature are few. While Jenkins states:

approximately one hundred young  
adult novels with gay . . . content  
have been published since . . . 1969  
(1998, p.1),

which averages out at 2.9 titles per year, Michael Cart (1997, p.9) is able to source only five significant critical works. Linked to this lack of critical examination is the fact that, of the critical work available, there is a definite American



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bias in the texts that are examined (Hanckel & Cunningham, 1980; Ford, 1994; St. Clair, 1995; Cart, 1997; Jenkins, 1998). The texts which I have selected to examine have been chosen from English and Australian as well as American authors.

In order to investigate how homosexuality is represented in young adult literature, it is necessary to highlight shifts which have occurred in societal attitudes that have influenced the way in which homosexuality is understood. To do this I will, for the most part, be drawing upon the work of Spencer (1995). One such societal change is the coining of the term homosexuality itself in 1869, by Swiss doctor Karoly Maria Benkert. Our contemporary understanding of what it is to be gay arises from this development.

My discussion will also consider the issue of censorship. Literature in all its forms has been subject to censorship, but the field of children's and young adult literature is, perhaps, the most vulnerable. Censorship in young adult literature operates in a multi-layered manner with each group involved in the production, distribution and reception of these texts having an opinion, and the power to act upon that opinion, regarding what is appropriate for the intended audience. Authors, editors, publishers, book-sellers, librarians and parents all influence the way in which texts deal with social issues - in this case, homosexuality. Hence, censorship must be regarded as both influencing and influenced by societal attitudes towards homosexuality.

It is also necessary to define the terms that I will be using, namely: gay, adolescence, and "the problem novel". Throughout this discussion I will use the common, contemporary term "gay" to refer to all aspects of white-male homosexuality. Although a definitive explanation as to whether homosexuality 'is innate or acquired' (McIntosh, 1996, p. 34), has yet to be formulated, Doctor Richard Isay defines homosexuals as men who,

have a predominant erotic attraction to  
others of the same sex. Their fantasies

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are either entirely or almost entirely  
directed toward other men . . .  
[however] a man need not engage in  
sexual activity to be homosexual  
(1989, p. 11).

Although there have always been children, adolescence has not always been recognised as a key period in human development. Machet argues that it was not until,

the second part of Victoria's reign . . . .  
that the concept of the adolescent as a  
distinct and separate stage began to  
develop  
(1990, p. 297).

I define adolescence as that period between the ages of thirteen to around eighteen which is marked by both physical and psychological changes in an individual. The onset of puberty is commonly accepted as marking a child's transition from childhood into adolescence. Puberty results in both a growth spurt and the development of secondary sexual characteristics. Developmental psychologist Robert Havighurst proposes that the psychological changes an adolescent goes through can be divided into eleven phases, and that the successful negotiating of these phases can be seen 'as elements of the overall sense of self that adolescents carry with them' (Ingersoll, n.d., p. 1) into adulthood.

Ingersoll (n.d., p 1-2) explains Havighurst's eleven phases as comprising the following stages. The adolescent must: 1) adjust to a new physical sense of self; 2) adjust to new intellectual abilities; 3) adjust to increased cognitive demands at school; 4) develop expanded verbal skills; 5) develop a personal sense of identity; 6) establish adult vocational goals; 7) establish emotional and psychological independence from his / her parents; 8) develop stable and productive peer relationships; 9) learn to manage his / her sexuality; 10) adopt a personal value system; and 11) develop increased impulse control and behav-

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itorial maturity. The adolescent does not achieve each task separately, however, and can be attempting to balance several of them at the same time.

Despite the fact that adolescents read from a wide variety of genres, specific narrative structures have come to be considered as composing 'the main body of young adult literature' (Donelson & Nilsen, 1980, p.181) and these are narrative structures which involve,

contemporary social issues told in the  
first person or limited third person  
from the viewpoint of a teen  
protagonist

(Jenkins, 1998, p.1).

Egoff (1980, p. 66-79) labels these narratives as "problem novels" whose defining characteristic is that they tend to be issue driven. By this I mean that simple one or two word descriptions can be used to explain what the text is really "about". What then becomes important is the way in which the texts treat the issue at hand. The nature of the genre itself, as well as the intended audience, dictate to a large extent how issues are presented.

Characteristics include a limited vocabulary, short sentences and paragraphs, the use of colloquial language, and a primarily urban setting. One further characteristic that is central to the young adult problem novel is the means by which a conclusion is constructed. Rarely does the problem novel suggest that the adolescent protagonist has solved his / her problem - rather, the vast majority of young adult problem novels involve conclusions which convey the impression that 'the long road to recovery has not even started, or is only just beginning' (Egoff, 1981, p. 72).

A consequence of the short sentences and paragraphs coupled with the fact that these texts are seldom in excess of two hundred and fifty pages is that there is rarely space enough for the construction and development of well-rounded characters. This is especially the case for those characters which occupy a

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secondary position within the narrative. For this reason, the use of stereotyped characters has become a common-place option taken by many authors, especially in those texts which explore gay adolescence.

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## Chapter One

In this chapter I will give a brief overview of homosexuality up until 1857, the year of publication of the first text in my discussion. Katz (1996, p.177) explains that as it is understood today, homosexuality has a history that dates from 1869 when the term first appeared in a German pamphlet. The behaviors which serve to identify the gay, however, have a history which can be traced through western civilisation as far back as the fifth century BC and the ancient civilisation of the Greeks.

The notion that an individual's identity could be largely defined by his sexual practices would have been an entirely alien concept to the ancient Greek. The image of the older man taking a younger boy as a lover and pupil has come to be viewed as one of twentieth-century society's greatest taboos. Fifth-century BC Athenian society, however, took it for granted that just such a relationship would ensure that their boys became men. Once a male citizen reached the age of twenty-five, he was expected to marry and father a small family all the while maintaining,

a balanced bisexuality, whereby a citizen was married, was in love with a boy and was also seen to go with courtesans or had a mistress, was normal behavior

(Spencer, 1995, p. 47).

It is fair to say, as Spencer does (195, p. 47-48), that the idea of bisexuality was as deeply entrenched in Athenian society as is the idea of exclusive heterosexuality in our contemporary western society.

It is important to keep in mind that in fifth-century BC Athenian society,

a relatively small group made up of the adult male citizens held a virtual monopoly of social power and constituted a clearly defined élite

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within the political and social life of  
the city-state

(Halperin, 1993, p.418).

Before the boy became a man, however, he was the passive partner in sexual relations with an older man. In Athenian society from the age of twelve to around fifteen, boys were thought to be of an age whereby they should have found themselves an adult male lover - who fulfilled the role of 'mentor' and instructed the boy in how to become a man. Spencer (1995, p. 50) draws attention to obscene graffiti discovered in the ruins of ancient Thera which specifically makes reference to anal intercourse taking place in such relationships and is believed to have formed part of a male initiation / rite of passage experience.

In most cases, the boy remained the passive partner until the age of eighteen. By the age of twenty-five he was expected to have assumed an active and dominant role. This socially sanctioned bisexuality existed in Greek society until the rise of Christianity - which brought with it serious penalties, first secular and later judicial, against all forms of sexual expression that were not heterosexual and in the missionary position. Interestingly, heterosexual intercourse with the woman above the man was considered deviant sexual behavior for centuries!

According to Spencer, by the mid-fourteenth century, societal views on sexual identity were markedly different from those in the ancient world - brought about by,

the combined autocracy of church  
and state which refused to  
countenance bisexuality

(Spencer, 1995, p. 125).

In fact, as Weeks observes:

the West during the Christian era was  
. . . unique in its taboo against all  
forms of homosexuality

(1996, p. 44).

With both state and church condemning all same-sex acts it would seem strange

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that bisexuality (and later homosexuality) could not be totally erased from society - especially when the offence was a capital one. Spencer offers an explanation, claiming that the persistence of bisexuality in such a restrictive and punitive environment was,

a social one compounded of  
economics, property and masculine  
anxiety over the validity of heirs  
(1995, p. 126).

By the mid-fourteenth century, the idea of same-sex relations had come to be connected with,

heresy and usury, [and] was linked to  
something more sinister - sorcery and  
demonism  
(Spencer, 1995, p. 127).

To be identified as being gay was a sin so heinous that the details of sodomy trials often ended up being burnt along with the offender:

for it was believed that the naming  
and detailing of the acts might pollute  
the hearer and encourage yet more  
sin  
(Spencer, 1995, p. 128).

The Black Death, which killed approximately one-third of the European population between 1348 to 1350, not only profoundly influenced entire economies but also caused widespread social unrest. In the aftermath of this devastation to the population law-makers started 'to see sodomy as a grave threat to the repopulation of society' (Spencer, 1995, p. 128). The result of this attitude can be seen in the punishments dealt out to those convicted of sodomy - convictions that were determined without the benefit of counsel for the defence. Burning was the punishment for men over the age of thirty-three after their property had been forfeited to the city. This was the most serious of punishments

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and would seem to have been only enforced for the more brutal of offenders. Fines, public whippings and exile were more likely the penalties to be expected as punishment in a sodomy trial (Spencer, 1995, p. 128-129).

These attitudes remained in place until the seventeenth century which saw the next major 'shift in the sensibilities of Western society' (Spencer, 1995, p. 171). This shift began in England and coincided with the rise of both Protestantism and Capitalism. Protestant reformers such as Luther and Calvin brought with them:

the idea that all sexual expression  
outside Christian marriage must be  
repressed

(Spencer, 1995, p. 171).

These attitudes quickly strengthened the social power of marriage, and as a result, all forms of same-sex relations became increasingly maligned (Spencer, 1995, p. 172). The seventeenth century also brought with it the beginnings of Capitalism which caused a significant reassessment to take place within society regarding the nature of gender.

As the largely agricultural society of the early seventeenth century was replaced with a mostly mercantile one by century's end, the way in which gender and the family were perceived markedly changed. The middle-classes began to exert their influence and the new petit-bourgeoisie placed a high premium upon self-discipline, hard work and frugality (Spencer, 1995, p. 193-194). The accumulation of wealth was now easier to achieve and could be used to rise in social standing and to positions of influence. While the man was out trading and building his wealth, the wife at home became the visible means by which he could display his success. As Spencer observes:

the need to drive the market economy  
for personal profits becomes . . . an  
overriding obsession and is effective  
in inhibiting any emotional intimacy



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with other males

(1995, p. 194).

Marriage for love had come to prominence by the end of the seventeenth century, replacing the importance of property and class as a criterion. This and the importance of the family as consumers helped to ensure that the gay was not only rejected as a deviant, but also effectively obscured and driven underground by the burgeoning consumerist society.

The Industrial Revolution, in turn, provided employment which gave people money that they were prepared to spend on the growing market of non-essential items being produced in increasing numbers by small rural factories - for example, toys, lace and pins. Textile factories produced new machine-woven materials such as cottons, linens and silks while the printing press made publishing easier and more efficient. As a result publishers were producing journals, stories and novels in great quantities 'and they all had one theme - romantic love' (Spencer, 1995, p. 195).

In this proliferation of production, however, there was no place for the gay. Because the gay does not marry or have children, as it was believed, his position within a consumer society was adversely affected because,

he could find no place in it, few goods  
were made and none mass produced  
with him in mind

(Spencer, 1995, p. 196).

Indeed, it was not until the early 1990's that the profitability of the 'gay dollar' was recognised.

The eighteenth century paved the way for the medicalisation of homosexuality in the late nineteenth century for it was during this period that the,

division of people into two separate  
biological sexes, . . . and genders . . .  
began to predominate

(Spencer, 1995, p. 212).

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The categories of male and female / masculine and feminine allowed behaviors to be ascribed to 'types' of people. It is from this time that the image of the effeminate gay began to be promulgated. The passive male came to be seen, increasingly, as having no place within society. The gay was beginning to be thought of as a blasphemy against heterosexuality which had started to equate itself with orthodoxy - both social and religious. Therefore, during the eighteenth century two significant changes took place in the way sexuality was theorised: firstly was the shift:

from a belief in two genders and  
three sexes to one of three genders  
and two sexes  
(Spencer, 1995, p. 214).

The second was that any traces of male bisexuality came to be firmly associated with the image of the passive sodomite - who was, by the end of the eighteenth century, regarded as little more than a male prostitute with no claim to a masculine identity. It is from this period of history that the concept of masculinity itself became increasingly associated with orthodox heterosexuality and 'increasingly dependent upon the feminine other' (Spencer, 1995, p. 217).

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, the American colonies waged their War of Independence against British rule. In 1776, just one year into the eight year conflict, leading Virginia citizens - including Thomas Jefferson, future President - offered a review of the colony's laws. Their intention was to remove all traces of the British system from their own statutes, thereby more accurately reflecting the principles of the Republican movement of the time. One suggestion offered by Jefferson was that along with rape and bestiality, sodomy should be punished by castration - previously the punishment had been the death penalty (Spencer, 1995, p. 232). It can be argued that Jefferson's suggestion marks the beginning of the medicalisation of the gay. The death penalty had

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proved to be an ineffective deterrent which meant that the cause of same-sex desire must be a biological one - a belief the medical fraternity took up and still pursue. For example, in 1991 neuroscientist Simon LeVay released a paper in which he linked gay behavior to brain structure (Nelkin & Lindee, 1996, p.312).

As the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth, England entered a period of unrivalled prosperity and influence. With the British extending the borders of their empire, the need arose for a particular image to be presented (Spencer, 1995, p. 253). This "age of empire" served to bolster:

the conviction [of] . . . the male as  
superior being, as all-conquering and  
masterful, the ultimate judge and  
arbiter of morals  
(Spencer, 1995, p.253).

The passive male became even more reviled in the face of such attitudes - attitudes that were being spread throughout the British Empire by the middle-class. The gay continued to be associated with images of effeminacy and was perceived as being less than a whole or complete man.

Somewhat paradoxically, however, the nineteenth century also saw the development of the somewhat peculiar concept of "special friendships" between men which appeared to utilise all the devices of romantic love with one very noticeable exclusion. While,

young men of this . . . age walked  
about arm in arm, talked of loving  
friendships and wrote emotional let-  
ters to each other  
(Spencer, 1995, p. 257),

it would seem that they were unaware of any sexual element in these friendships. Many of these "special friendships" that developed were born in the sequestered environment of single-sex boarding schools. Between 1841 and 1870, three times as many of these single-sex schools were founded across England,

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while as late as 1850 boys at boarding schools shared a bed (Spencer, 1995, p. 270). It would come as no surprise then that in such an environment, intimate relationships were to become established between the students. John Addington Symonds, British author and critic, is cited as saying such relationships were common-place when he was a student at Harrow in 1854, aged fourteen (Spencer, 1995, p. 270).

Notwithstanding this, by the middle of the nineteenth century the sodomite was perceived as a social and moral deviate. The passive male had become a potent threat to the innocence and relative defencelessness of the family. While Continental Europe rescinded the death penalty as punishment for sodomy, Britain became more repressive in its attitudes. America had rescinded the death penalty as punishment by the end of the eighteenth century but, like Europe, had put in its place prison sentences ranging from ten years to life. It is in this environment that the now classic Tom Brown's Schooldays was first published in England in 1857.

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## Chapter Two

In this chapter I will examine how the construction and representation of the gay is presented in the three earliest texts of my essay - Tom Brown's Schooldays (1857), The Catcher in the Rye (1951), and I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth The Trip (1969) - which will take the discussion to 1969 and the birth of the modern gay rights movement. The publication of Tom Brown's Schooldays marks, not only the birth of the school story genre (Hibberd, 1976, p. 64) but also, I believe, the first intentional reference by an author to same-sex relationships in a text intended for a child reader. Hughes ostensibly wrote this text for his eight year old son, Maurice, who was preparing to leave home in order to attend Rugby school as a boarding student - just as Hughes had himself, twenty years previously. His intention was to express 'what I should like to say to him before he went to school' (Carpenter & Prichard, 1995, p. 532), in the form of a story. It is for this reason that Tom's encounter with the 'white-handed curly-headed' (Hughes, 1857, p. 182) boy is of significance.

This incident occurs in Part Two of Tom Brown's Schooldays, after a new boy, George Arthur, has been placed under Tom's care by Dr. Arnold, the school head-master. Tom is described as having undergone a noticeable change in his behaviour with this change being attributed to the new found responsibility he feels toward Arthur. Tom treats Arthur as a mother would a child, with Tom seeing Arthur as being 'sadly timid' (Hughes, 1857, p. 180) and:

all over nerves; anything you say  
seems to hurt him like a cut or a blow  
(Hughes, 1857, p. 181).

Tom's friend East draws attention to the way in which Tom is fussing over Arthur, calling him a 'dry-nurse' (Hughes, 1857, p. 181) and claiming:

you'll spoil young hopeful with too  
much coddling . . . he'll never be  
worth a button, if you go on keeping

---

him under your skirts  
(Hughes, 1857, p. 181).

It is after this discussion that Tom and East encounter the 'white-handed curly-headed' (Hughes, 1857, p. 182) boy who is one of those younger fellows who has been,

petted and pampered by some of the  
big fellows, who . . . spoil them for  
everything . . . in this world and the  
next  
(Hughes, 1857, p. 182).

This boy calls on Tom and East to "fag" for a rival school house, to which the boys take offence to and set out to teach him a lesson. Tom and East, therefore, are not attacking him because of what he does with other boys, but because he allows older boys to "spoil" him. He represents a weaker opponent to Tom who can be overcome with no risk of retaliation. Hibberd (1976, p. 66) proposes that Tom and East's encounter with this boy is included so as to remove any gay overtones from the "special friendship" that is to grow between Tom and the new boy, George Arthur. The friendship that is constructed between Tom and Arthur can be read as an almost quintessential example of the non-sexual special friendships that Spencer (1995, p. 262) highlights as being in vogue at this time.

To me, however, the inclusion of this incident would imply that Hughes was aware of the likelihood that his son would encounter other boys who had sex with each other while away at school. This is borne out by the points raised in the previous chapter concerning same-sex boarding schools at this time, and by the fact that Hughes was a past boarding student at the real Rugby school in the 1830's. This reading is also supported by the single foot-note that appears in Tom Brown's Schooldays. This foot-note relates to the description of the white-handed boy, as detailed above. In it, Hughes says:

a kind and wise critic, an old  
Rugbeian, notes here in the margin:

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The 'small friend system was not so utterly bad from 1841-1847.' Before that, too, there were many noble friendships between big and little boys, but I can't strike out the passage; many boys will know why it is left in

(1857, p. 182).

The implication of this foot-note would suggest that Hughes was aware not only of the prevalence of these "noble" friendships (represented by, firstly, the friendship between Tom and East and, later, the friendship between Tom and Arthur), but also of the potential for these friendships to become more physical in nature - rather than the purely emotional attachments associated with the concept of "special" friendships. By incorporating the foot-note in the description of the white-handed boy, Hughes makes a clear distinction between the friendship which is developing between Tom and Arthur (a noble friendship) and the "friendships" the white-handed boy allows himself to be drawn into with the older boys (relationships that are 'utterly bad' and 'spoil' the participants in the eyes of both man and God).

Through the reference to 'noble friendships', it can be read that Hughes does not condone gay relationships but does acknowledge that such relationships do occur in single-sex boarding schools. The fact that Hughes states that he can not remove the reference to gay adolescence would suggest that he had been urged to do so by his publisher / editor. Hughes believes that it is necessary to the over-all story, convinced that his male readers will completely understand why it is included. However, what it is that these young boys allow to be done to them which 'spoil' them is left to the imagination of the reader.

The implication behind this encounter with the white-handed boy then becomes one relating to issues of masculine anxiety about how an individual boy's masculinity is judged by others. East has challenged Tom's identity through his taunts over how he is treating Arthur. The easiest way to demonstrate that he is

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"really" a man is to go out and physically attack a weaker male, which he does, thereby proving his obvious masculinity and removing any suspicion that he may be "spoiling" both Arthur and himself. Also of significance in this text with relation to the representation of the gay is that, for the first time in a young adult text, a physical set of characteristics is used to identify those who engage in same-sex relationships. The white-handed curly-headed boy is just that - a young boy who is both delicate and handsome but without a name.

Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye was published, nearly one hundred years after Hughes' text, in 1951. In that period there were three significant events within western society that had, in my opinion, profound and cumulative effects on the way in which the gay was thought of. The first was the release in England of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill and the Labouchère amendment in the 1880's. The second was the trials of Oscar Wilde at the turn of the century, and the third the two World Wars (1914 - 1918 and 1939 - 1945 respectively).

The Criminal Law Amendment Bill was drafted in response to the growing concern in British society with regard to prostitution. Curiously, most legislation aimed at containing gay men was linked to concerns over female prostitution. The purpose of the Bill was to raise the age of sexual consent for women to sixteen. A series of newspaper articles, detailing 'how girl virgins were for sale at £5 a time' (Spencer, 1995, p. 275), stirred the public morality and the Law passed virtually uncontested in 1861, though not without amendments - Labouchère's amendment, the one relevant to the gay. At first he proposed that the age of consent for women be set at twenty-one but when this was defeated it was lowered to eighteen with the following clause added:

any male person who, in public or private, commits, or is a party to the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male of any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanour,



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and being convicted thereof shall be liable at the discretion of the court to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour

(Spencer, 1995, p. 276).

The effect of this clause was to enable prosecutions for sodomy to become easier to achieve. The ambiguous wording of the clause made all sexual acts between men in private illegal, thereby driving the gay further underground. Meeting places for gays became less defined because they had to be kept secret and were, therefore, often only temporary. From 1879, most American states also revised their sodomy laws. They too made sexual acts between men a crime punishable by imprisonment. The result of the changes to these laws was a steady increase in both criminal persecutions of gay men and their imprisonment (Spencer, 1995, p. 275 - 278).

The most public of these persecutions and imprisonments was that of Oscar Wilde (1854 - 1900), which occurred only nine years after the Labouchère amendment had become law. As Spencer asserts:

there has never been a more towering victim of such an inhuman clause

(1995, p. 281).

Essentially, the three trials of Oscar Wilde were initiated on the grounds of libel and were the outcome of a personal battle between Wilde's lover, Lord Alfred Douglas, and Douglas' father, the Marquess of Queensberry. In the course of the trials Wilde was,

accused of soliciting more than twelve boys, ten of whom were named, to commit sodomy

(Spencer, 1995, p. 284),

on fifteen separate counts. In the first two trials the jury were unable to deter-

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mine Wilde's guilt or innocence. However, in the third trial he was convicted on charges of indecency.

It was during these trials that the phrase "the love that dare not speak its name" was first attributed to Wilde to describe gay attraction (even though it was actually Douglas who coined the phrase in a poem written to Wilde). A far more wide-spread outcome of these trials, though, was to provide a homophobic society with a concrete figure that could be used as a template for identifying the gay in everyday society. Wilde's style of dress, his manners and actions became the defining example of how to recognise the gay on "the street". Homosexuality as a term had only recently entered the English language, with Wilde its first victim. The conviction of Oscar Wilde meant that no gay, despite class or prestige, could live in England without the fear of prison should they be discovered (Spencer, 1995, p. 280 - 288).

The two World Wars had differing effects on how society viewed the gay and how the gay saw himself. The first World War enabled, for the first time, large numbers of gay or gay curious men (and women) to come together without the limitations of home and family and discover that they were not the only one to have a same-sex attraction. This was also the case with the second World War, even though there were efforts to keep gays from serving in the military, at least in the countries of the Allied forces. The United States Army and Navy, for example, established screening tests which were aimed at preventing the gay from enlisting. These tests drew on medical opinion and listed three characteristics to enable the identification of the gay:

feminine bodily characteristics,  
effeminacy in dress and manner and  
a patulous or expanded rectum  
(Spencer, 1995, p. 347-348).

The detection of gays by such blatant physical signs was, as can be expected, ineffective because such signs can be easily covered up or rationally

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explained. Many gays, when it was learnt that they were being refused service, went to great lengths to hide any tell-tale characteristics that may have identified them. Once enlisted, these men quickly formed communities of like-minded individuals. These communities, however, kept all such activities secret, to such an extent that,

even among lovers, the habit was  
never to name or attempt to describe  
their relationships  
(Spencer, 1995, p. 348).

Despite the necessity of keeping their presence secret and hidden, the gays of the post-war years began to appreciate the political power that they held collectively. Just as the first World War had brought together a diverse group of people, so too did the second World War. Homosocial groups quickly became established and networks developed meaning gays no longer had to live a life in isolation (Spencer, 1995, p. 350 -351).

With the birth of the Nuclear Age and the Cold War, however, the gay was once again positioned as a threat to humanity (much in the same way the sodomite was thought of as a threat to the repopulation of society after the devastation of the Black Death) as well as a threat to national security. Moreover, the secrecy needed to live as a gay meant that he was an ideal candidate for blackmail.

In 1948 Alfred Kinsey released the results of his investigation into male sexuality and challenged orthodox sexual values, with Higgins claiming that the release of this report can be seen as 'the single most important event' (1993, p. 161) in the history of the gay male. Kinsey revealed that of those men he questioned:

fifty per cent . . . acknowledged erotic  
responses to their own sex, one-third  
had a post-adolescent experience; 4  
per cent were exclusively

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homosexual as adults; one out of eight males was predominantly homosexual for at least a three year period

(Spencer, 1995, p. 355).

Kinsey's study is not only attributed with the figure of ten percent as signifying the estimated percentage of the entire population who identify as gay in some way but it also served to remind society that gays could be found,

in every age group, in every social level, in every conceivable occupation, in cities, on farms, and in the most remote areas

(Spencer, 1995, p. 355).

America of the early 1950's was a society buoyed by their contribution to the Allied victory in the second World War but also one that was once again at war - this time in Korea. There was a wide-spread hysteria within American society concerning a perceived communist threat, a fear that had grown up in the years after the second World War and a fear that was fed by politicians such as American senator Joseph McCarthy. Communism was regarded as a very real threat to the foundations of western society and it was not long before the gay and the communist became inextricably intertwined in the public consciousness. This was the time of "the red under the bed", and with Kinsey's report they could be under any bed, anywhere in the country.

The gay content of Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye centers around the character of Mr. Antolini and his caress of the sleeping Holden's face (1951, p. 163-174). Mr. Antolini is a teacher from one of Holden's previous schools, now an English professor at New York University, and one of the few adults whom Holden seems to trust. This is evident in the fact that Holden consistently refers to his old teacher as "Mr." Antolini rather than "old", as he refers to everyone else he encounters - for example, he repeatedly refers to his Pencey Preparatory history teacher as 'old Spencer' (Salinger, 1951, p. 4). The encoun-

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ter with Mr. Antolini takes place just after Holden's visit with his younger sister, Phoebe, at his parents' apartment. This is when he reveals his desire to be the catcher in the rye of the title, rescuer of children. To Holden, Mr. Antolini has become 'a role model, a good father' (Miller, 1990, p. 141), although he is around the same age as Holden's eldest brother, D.B.

After Holden and Mr. Antolini discuss the direction that Holden's life is taking, Mr. Antolini makes up a bed for Holden on a couch and Holden quickly falls asleep. He is awoken later, however, when he feels Mr. Antolini patting him on the head. The room is dark and Mr. Antolini is 'sitting on the floor right next to the couch' (Salinger, 1951, p. 172) on which Holden is sleeping. Holden's reaction to this is to automatically assume that Mr. Antolini is 'making a flitty pass' (Salinger, 1951, p.175) at him. Phillips argues that Holden's response to Mr. Antolini's actions as having gay overtones is brought about by 'the pressure of his awakening sexuality' (1999b, p. 2).

Holden's reaction can also be read, however, as him perceiving Mr. Antolini's actions as those of a sexual predator or as a representation of 'the dangers of the larger adult world' (Jenkins, 1998, p. 6) into which Holden is reluctantly moving. The image of the gay as a sexual predator was one that was being actively promoted in this time of McCarthyism, along with the wide-spread linkage of the gay with both the communist and the belief that gays preyed on children in order to recruit them into a "gay lifestyle". To me, this explains Holden's panicked exit from the Antolini apartment. Society has conditioned Holden to fear emotional intimacy with other males so his natural reaction is to flee in a "homosexual panic".

Mr. Antolini's alleged homosexuality, however, is based only on Holden's interpretation of the situation. Mr. Antolini admits to having spoken to Holden's father and sharing his concern that Holden is heading for a fall if he continues along the path he is currently following (Salinger, 1951, p. 167-168). Mr.

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Antolini's actions can, therefore, also be read as the actions of a concerned father-figure unable to do little more to help than sit and watch over the sleeping Holden. It is interesting to note that as he is leaving the Antolini's apartment Holden acknowledges that he has been in a similar situation 'about twenty times since I was a kid' (Salinger, 1951, p.174). The reader can only wonder how Holden would have reacted in those previous situations!

The following morning Holden contemplates returning to the Antolinis' as he had said he would when he hurriedly left the night before. Throughout The Catcher in the Rye, Holden passes judgement on all those he comes into contact with and they are either judged innocent or condemned. Only with Mr. Antolini does Holden question if 'he hasn't pulled the self-righteous trigger too quickly' (Pinsker, 1986, p. 956) when he asks himself:

if just maybe I was wrong about  
thinking he was making a flitty pass at  
me. I wondered if maybe he just liked  
to pat guys on the head when they're  
asleep

(Salinger, 1951, p. 175).

Frangedis proposes that just as Holden reconsidered his judgement of Mr. Antolini, Salinger,

seems to be suggesting that so,  
perhaps should we - despite society's  
. . . demand that we condemn such  
individuals

(1998, p. 74).

Although Salinger's motivation can never be known, this does seem a plausible reading as it contributes to a reader's understanding both Holden's outrage and the almost casual reaction of Mr. Antolini to Holden's behavior, whom he repeatedly calls 'a very, very strange boy' (Salinger, 1951, p. 173).

Phillips argues that Mr. Antolini represents Holden's,

only hope of making a sympathetic

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connection with an adult, a way to  
interact with the world without losing  
his innocence

(1999b, p. 2).

However, the fact that Holden interprets Mr. Antolini's actions as being homosexual in nature reveals that Holden has already lost his childhood innocence and now views the world as an adult does. That is, issues of sexuality were perceived socially as being an adult concern, therefore for Holden to react to the actions of a trusted adult as being sexual in intent marks Holden's final steps through the field of rye towards the unseen cliff of his dream (Salinger, 1951, p. 156).

Phillips states that this field of rye and unseen cliff are symbolic of childhood and the transition from adolescence into adulthood (1999a, p. 2). In this context, Holden's outrage can be seen as symptomatic of his inability to 'connect with anyone in any way' (Miller, 1990, p. 141) as he metaphorically stumbles off the edge of the cliff of childhood and into adulthood. This is indicated by his subsequent breakdown while wandering the winter streets of New York, praying to his dead brother Allie:

Allie, don't let me disappear. Allie,  
don't let me disappear. Allie, don't let  
me disappear. Please Allie  
(Salinger, 1951, p. 178).

Mr. Antolini's reaction, therefore, to Holden's response can be read as that of an adult bewildered by an irrational adolescent who already has a history of self-destructive behavior. It is for this reason that the actions of Mr. Antolini, I believe, are not those of a gay male, but rather those of a concerned adult for a troubled adolescent. Throughout The Catcher in the Rye, Holden has attempted to resist the natural transition from adolescent to adult with his encounter with Mr. Antolini serving as a symbolic representation of the child becoming completely aware of the complexities that accompany the assumption of an

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adult identity. Mr. Antolini's homosexuality is only ever alleged by an unreliable narrator. However, other views are also held. As recently as 1988 Frangedis considered the gay content of this text to be such an issue that he identifies it as one that teachers must place 'into proper perspective' (1988, p. 74).

In the 1960's, gays across the western world became increasingly aware of the need for a more militant approach to the issue of law reform. By the end of the 1960's society had begun to question the old order. Spencer (1995, p. 367) identifies the student revolts in Paris of 1968, a rise in student militancy across the globe, open-air concerts, anger in the United States over the Vietnam War, the 'Prague Spring' in Czechoslovakia, and the "make love, not war" ideology of the hippie movement as all contributing to the sense of social revolution that was filtering through all levels of western society in the late 1960's.

1969 saw what has come to be considered the birth of the modern gay rights movement in the form of the Stonewall Riots in Greenwich Village, New York. This confrontation between the police and gays was precipitated by a police raid of a gay bar and lasted three days. For the first time, the patrons fought back.

1969 also saw the publication of the ground-breaking text I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth The Trip by John Donovan. This text is cited in several studies of young adult literature (Hanckel & Cunningham, 1980; Ford, 1994; Fuoss, 1994; Cart, 1997) as being,

the first YA novel to specifically  
address homosexuality in the lives of  
young adults

(Jenkins, 1998, p. 1).

The means by which Donovan addresses the topic of gay adolescence, however, has influenced the way in which subsequent authors have approached the issue.

In I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth The Trip, thirteen year old Davy moves to New York after the death of his grandmother to live with his alcoholic mother.



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His parents are divorced and his father has a new girl-friend. One of the few things Davy is able to bring with him to New York is his beloved pet dog, Fred, whom Davy has raised from a puppy. At his new school, Davy befriends another boy, Douglas Altschuler, who is also recovering from a recent bereavement - that of a childhood friend to leukemia.

Sutherland and Arbuthnot argue that the 'brief homosexual relationship' (1991, p. 375) which develops between Davy and Altschuler one night is the result of the two boys' bereavement and the fact that they both have divorced parents. This brief relationship is a one night only encounter and takes place off-stage. What actually happened between the boys is never revealed. However, Davy realises that he now has 'a new way of looking at Altschuler because of what we did last night' (Donovan, 1969, p. 126). This is, though, the only indication that anything at all did take place. Davy explains that he and Altschuler had begun by boasting of their alleged sexual prowess which leads them to claim to be 'more or less engaged' (Donovan, 1969, p. 126) to their respective girl-friends. This, he claims, is 'how it happened' (Donovan, 1969, p. 126). However, later in the day after "it" has happened, Davy does question his sexuality:

there's nothing wrong with Altschuler  
and me, is there? I know it's not like  
making out with a girl. It's just  
something that happened. It's not  
dirty, or anything like that. It's all right,  
isn't it?

(Donovan, 1969, p. 128).

Fuoss argues that because I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth The Trip:

grants physical expressions of  
homosexual love all the presence of  
an ellipsis

(1994, p. 164),

any advantages gained by the presence of homosexuality in this text for young

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adults are negated. Placing the actual homosexual acts off-stage and reducing a physical act of love and tenderness merely to "it", makes the text less an open approach to gay adolescence and more 'an unseen moment of unknown sexuality' (Fuoss, 1994, p. 164). This is a device that was taken up and used by many authors in the years following 1969 in texts written for young adults incorporating gay sex. In all the young adult texts that I am using in this essay, if there are any physical expressions of gay sexuality all of them take place off-stage and are referred to in the past tense.

This unseen moment of indeterminate sexuality attains a new significance, though, when Davy's parents' reactions to the possibility that their son may be gay are highlighted. In the week following the incident between the two boys, they act as if nothing has happened between them until Davy finally brings up the topic. In Davy's apartment the boys admit to being virgins, Altschuler stating that he 'wouldn't know what to do' (Donovan, 1969, p. 130) with a girl. Davy and Altschuler then pass out drunk, but not before Davy gives Altschuler a kiss (Donovan, 1969, p.129-131). When Davy's mother arrives home she discovers the boys asleep on the floor with an arm draped over each other's back. Her first (and only) reaction is to assume that they have had sex. Her suspicions are aroused because,

it's not even six thirty, and you [Davy]  
and Douglas are asleep on the floor  
in the dark!

(Donovan, 1969, p. 132).

She refuses to listen to any explanation offered by Davy and insists that Davy's father have a "man to man" talk with his son.

Davy's father, in comparison, is rational and forthright in his approach to his son's awakening sexuality. Davy admits to his father that he and Altschuler 'only made out once' (Donovan, 1969, p. 138), but has already softened this admission with the assertion that he is 'not queer or anything' (Donovan, 1969,

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p. 137). This is precisely what Davy's mother believes he has become. His father is, however, more practical in his discussion, telling Davy that 'a lot of boys play around in a lot of ways when they are growing up' (Donovan, 1969, p. 138). This positions Davy and Altschuler's encounter as a phase most boys go through in one form or another. He assures Davy that this is fine - provided, of course, that he does not 'get involved in some special way of life which will close off other ways' (Donovan, 1969, p. 138). In other words, Davy's father is tolerating his son's supposed exploration of gay sexuality, believing it to be only a phase that he, like most boys, will go through before assuming a full heterosexual identity. It takes the death of Fred, Davy's pet dog, however, to ensure that Davy makes the right decision.

Fred is run over by a car directly after this father-son discussion. Davy blames himself and Altschuler for his death, interpreting the death of his dog as punishment for what they did together. That is, if they had not 'made out' (Donovan, 1969, p. 138) then Davy would not have had to have the discussion with his father which, in turn, means that Fred would not have been on the street and in a position to be hit by a car. As Cart claims:

inevitably the boy - and the  
empathetic reader - infer that this is a  
cause-and-effect punishment for  
doing the now obviously awful "it"  
(1997, p. 3).

In order for the two boys to resolve their falling out, Donovan has them resort to a fist-fight in the school locker-room. Afterwards Davy confronts Altschuler 'about this queer business' (Donovan, 1969, p. 157), quick to claim that he had never done anything like it before. Interestingly, Altschuler is far less disturbed about what they did together than Davy is. He even admits that although it did upset him that "it" happened, 'it didn't feel wrong' (Donovan, 1969, p. 157) and that he certainly does not feel any guilt over what they did together.

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Davy, on the other hand, has convinced himself that the problem is due to them being virgins and not having girl-friends, stating that:

maybe if we made out with some  
girls, we wouldn't have to think about,  
you know, the other  
(Donovan, 1969, p. 158).

Altschuler agrees with him and the boys are left to resume their friendship, seemingly having solved the issue surrounding the "queer" business.

I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth The Trip, while praised for being the first young adult text to "openly" approach the topic of adolescent homosexuality also provided the blue-print for subsequent texts dealing with the subject. Positioning physical acts of gay love off-stage, death as a punishment for exploring the unorthodox and same-sex attraction as a passing phase to be grown out of all appear as narrative themes for the first time in I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth The Trip and are themes that appear again and again in many young adult texts incorporating gay subject matter.

Michael Cart claims that, although I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth The Trip was published in the same year as the,

Stonewall riots and the birth of the  
gay liberation movement . . . there is  
too little else that . . . is liberated  
about it  
(1997, p. 3).

This attitude, however, seems to me to negate the importance of this text. Despite the shortcomings in the method by which I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth The Trip constructs of the gay adolescent, there are some positive aspects to be derived from this text. The two extremes in reaction demonstrated by Davy's parents to the possibility that Davy may be gay are, I feel, a reflection of the shift in the attitudes to homosexuality in western society in the late 1960's.

The way in which Davy's mother reacts to the possibility that he is gay can be

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seen as a reflection of the accepted and socially sanctioned means by which to approach the issue. Davy's father's reaction, on the other hand, can be read as an indication of a more wide-spread acceptance of those who 'are not just what they are expected to be' (Donovan, 1969, p. 138). Altshuler's acceptance and lack of guilt is another liberating aspect of I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth The Trip - for the first time an adolescent boy, in a young adult novel, has a same-sex encounter and does not see it as being something he should be ashamed of. In fact, the reader is left with the impression that "it" was something Altschuler enjoyed and may well search out again.

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## Chapter Three

In this chapter I will be looking at A Candle for Saint Antony (1977) by Eleanor Spence and Dance on my Grave (1982) by Aidan Chambers - texts which predate the full understanding of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Socially in the 1970's, across the globe, the gay male was becoming increasingly vocal and visible within mainstream society. Homosocial support groups began to take on a political aspect and were being formed in many major capital cities - for example, in London in 1970 the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) was formed, describing itself as 'a revolutionary organisation' (Spencer, 1995, p. 368).

These groups of individuals were brought together by 'the unique inebriation that resulted from being open about their gayness' (Spencer, 1995, p. 368). This sense of community manifested itself in street parades and demonstrations with the first American Pride Week celebrated in 1970 to commemorate the Stonewall Riots of the previous year, and by 1972 'two thousand men and women marched under the GLF banner' (Spencer, 1995, p. 369) in a London Gay Pride Week parade. American gay activists campaigned for sodomy laws to be repealed and for police to cease their harassment of gays. They also placed pressure upon the medical world to reconsider homosexuality as an illness. This was finally granted in 1973 when:

the American Psychiatric Association .  
. . . decided to remove homosexuality  
from its official Diagnostic and  
Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders  
(Isay, 1989, p. 14).

From the Stonewall Riots onwards, America set the tone and mode for gay identity which the rest of society has followed. John D'Emilio claims that 'for gay men . . . the 1970's were years of significant achievement' (1993, p. 467), with thousands of men openly assuming a gay identity, victory in some places in

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having sodomy laws repealed, a relaxation in the restrictions against employing gays and the elimination of homosexuality as an illness. In the aftermath of the "Sexual Revolution" of the 1960's, society began to view sex as being not only for the purpose of procreation but also as a source of pleasure. People began to increasingly view traditional marriage as anachronistic, opting instead to pursue de facto relationships. This relaxation of attitudes towards sex and marriage allowed people the relative freedom to explore their sexuality now that 'homosexuality and bisexuality were options' (Spencer, 1995, p. 373) to be explored. This was brought about, largely, by the increased visibility of gays, the idea of alternative lifestyles and the social debate they created.

Eleanor Spence's A Candle for Saint Antony is the first Australian text in my discussion. While it is claimed that this text presents a,

delicate exploration of the potentially  
homosexual relationship between two  
boys

(Grgurich, 1982, p. 35),

the actual gay component of the relationship that develops between the two boys - Rudi and Justin - is reminiscent of the 'special friendships' between boys that were popular in the nineteenth century. Rudi and Justin, both sixteen, come from very different worlds and are brought together at a private boys' school in suburban Sydney.

Rudi is fatherless and lives in a small, run-down second-story flat with his mother, who has to go out to work, and younger sister, Evie. He works part-time in a Greek owned milk-bar in order to pay for the books and uniform to the private school he has selected for himself, and been granted a scholarship, to attend. 'Small, and slight and generally young-looking' (Spence, 1977, p.14) and the only son of poor Austrian immigrants, Rudi has assumed adult responsibilities and, 'sampled independence at an early age' (Spence, 1977, p. 17).

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Justin, on the other hand, comes from an affluent suburb and is the eldest of three children. His father works in the city while his mother stays at home to raise their children. Self-assured, Justin is conscious of 'his own well-built physique and clear brown skin' (Spence, 1977, p. 17), but does not consider himself conceited, instead seeing himself as being the beneficiary of 'Vincent heredity' (Spence, 1977, p. 3). An unofficial leader of sorts among his small clique of childhood companions, Justin is 'a conformist at heart and needs group support' (Grgurich, 1982, p. 35). This is demonstrated throughout A Candle for Saint Antony, but is most evident in the way Justin bows to the peer pressure exerted by his friends to renounce Rudi and return to Sydney when they discover that Rudi has admitted to Justin that he is in love with him and wants Justin to stay in Europe with him (Spence, 1977, p. 119-126).

Initially the two boys are antagonistic towards each other, Justin's racism and Rudi's aloofness the trigger. When Justin destroys sheet music that had belonged to Rudi's father, Rudi responds to Justin's threats of violence with logic and humour, thereby diffusing the situation. In an abrupt change of heart, Justin offers to replace the sheet music and the boys become friends (Spence, 1977, p. 39-41). The two boys become even closer when Rudi and Justin begin to study together in order for Justin to raise his grades, enabling him to participate in a class excursion to Austria.

The construction of these characters, however, can be seen as perpetuating stereotypical representations of the gay. Rudi is delicate, small, youthful, a lover of classical music, a loner, academically gifted and sensitive - all attributes ascribed to the gay in the images proffered by popular culture. Justin is well-built, tanned, at ease with his body, popular, sports-loving, intelligent but unmotivated academically and very much "one of the crowd" - characteristics most often associated with heterosexual youths, especially Australian youths. A more disturbing aspect regarding the representation of the gay adolescent in A



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Candle for Saint Antony is the positioning of a gay identity as one that only an Other, a foreigner, can assume and carry into adulthood.

While in Australia, the friendship between Rudi and Justin remains strictly platonic with no sexual overtones. However, once the boys arrive in Austria Rudi is able to admit his feelings to Justin, urging him to remain in Europe with him so they can pursue a life together. Justin is overwhelmed by this proposition and is, in the end, unable to break free of the peer support and validation that he needs to maintain his own self-identity. Rudi's self-sufficiency and independence have already positioned him, by this stage of the text, as being capable of supporting himself and the reader is left in no doubt that Rudi will carry his adolescent gay identity into adulthood, but only if he severs his connection to Australia and remains in Europe.

Justin's brief flirtation with the possibilities presented by Rudi convey the impression that although he acknowledges an emotional attachment to Rudi, an open gay relationship is too much of a challenge to his self-identity. He returns to Australia, leaving Rudi in Europe and 'for many years to come, Justin would regret that he had let him go' (Spence, 1977, p. 126). The reader is left to assume that he will "grow out" of this phase and once again take on a heterosexual identity, the gay having no place in Australia. This is reinforced at the end of the novel when Justin is able to look at Rudi's sister, Eve, and find 'her pleasant to look at . . . that she hardly resembled Rudi at all in looks' (Spence, 1977, p. 135).

An adolescent reader can only be left with the impression that, according to A Candle for Saint Antony, although homosexuality may be tolerated outside of Australia, it has no place within Australian society. Because Justin returns home and once again begins to notice girls, homosexuality is constructed as being an identity that an Australian adolescent boy may consider, although, ultimately it is a "phase" he will go through before taking on a "complete" heterosexual identity.

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This is similar to the way that Davy's exploration of gay sex is presented in I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth The Trip. However, in this Australian text there are no physical expressions of gay sexuality. Rudi's confession to Justin of his feelings is the only indication that either of the boys consider their relationship to be anything more than a close friendship, or "mateship".

The year after the publication of A Candle for Saint Antony, 1978, the first parade of what has become known as the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras took place - marking the birth of the modern Australian gay rights movement. Based closely on American models, the first Mardi Gras parade was a political march with activists calling for the same changes to be made to Australian laws as was happening in America. Australian laws, modelled on the British legal system, still had many of the punishments for sodomy that had been formulated in the earliest years of white settlement in the late eighteenth century. Homosexual acts between men, regardless of the venue, were punishable by imprisonment. Gays had no recourse to harassment of any kind with the police often the perpetrators of the harassment.

Australian concepts of masculinity and, therefore, attitudes to gays are strongly influenced and shaped by homophobia. The Australian gay, much like gays around the world, are perceived as "failed" men because they "choose" to pursue a gay lifestyle. As Michael Flood states, while Australian boys are growing up they are,

faced with the continual threat of being seen as gay and the continuous challenge of proving that they are not gay . . . step outside the boundaries of masculine behavior and you're immediately faced with verbal and physical attacks

(1995, p. 1).

The result of this is that,

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the fear of being identified as a  
"poofter" leads men to behave in  
hypermasculine and aggressive ways  
(Flood, 1995, p. 1),

with the victimising of gay men a convenient means of asserting a heterosexual identity. Through punitive punishments for those who identify as gay as well as physical attacks upon gay men, heterosexual men are able to assert and reaffirm their own masculinity.

In response to the gay rights movement, anti-gay movements began to challenge the demands of gay activists. They drew upon the Bible to support their cause, despite that,

out of the 31,173 verses contained in  
the Bible, there are less than a dozen  
that allegedly deal with the topic of  
homosexuality . . . Jesus himself said  
nothing

(Shepherd, 1999, p. 10),

arguing that homosexuality was "unnatural" and that 'the lives of homosexuals revolve around sex and the pursuit of sexual encounters' (Shephard, 1999, p. 3). Anti-gay organisations also encouraged the misconceptions that gays are unhappy loners; that gays intentionally flaunt their sexuality; that they are child molesters; opposed to traditional family values and that gays have a hidden agenda which will destroy the moral fabric of society if their demands for equal rights are granted (Shephard, 1999).

However, despite these divergent attitudes to gays, the late 1970's and early 1980's became somewhat of a golden era for the gay male. In spite of the restrictions that were steadfastly held in place by a heterosexist society, gays were able to utilise the lowering of taboos relating to sex to explore their own sexuality and build a sense of community.

Nancy St. Clair claims that 1982 is considered,

to have been the peak year for

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publishing of young adult novels  
dealing with homosexuality  
(1994, p 6),

with Aidan Chambers Dance on my Grave perhaps the most notable of these novels. This text is of significance to the representation of the gay adolescent because for the first time in a young adult text, events are 'narrated in the first person by a character who is unambiguously gay' (Fuoss, 1994, p. 165). Dance on my Grave is also one of the few young adult texts to incorporate male adolescent bisexuality, another factor contributing to the significance of this text.

Chambers is noted for his unconventional approach to narrative construction and in Dance on my Grave he,

mixes elements of different styles,  
changes point of view, incorporates  
reports, scenes, clippings, and  
footnotes  
(Gill, 1997, p. 2),

producing a text that not only incorporates gay adolescence but also explores,

the inability of language to  
adequately capture and communicate  
. . . desire  
(Fuoss, 1994, p. 171).

Hal, the unambiguously gay central character of Dance on my Grave, presents the argument that 'desire . . . not only precedes but also exceeds language' (Fuoss, 1994, p. 171) when he attempts to provide the details of his relationship with Barry, the bisexual, noting:

I was going to write pages more  
about those seven weeks. I wanted  
you to understand what we were like  
together. What Barry was like. Like *to  
me*: how I saw him, knew him,  
thought of him. But . . . it can't be  
done. The words are not right. They  
just ARE NOT RIGHT. They don't say  
what I want them to say. They tell

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lies. They hide the truth . . . the  
meaning is hidden behind them  
(Chambers, 1982, p. 163-164).

Chambers, himself, holds the conviction that it is not our experiences which change us, rather that it is the telling of these experiences, the 'stories we tell about our experiences' (Chambers, 1985, p. 112) which brings about change. This is why Chambers claims that Dance on my Grave is 'a novel about obsession' (1985, p.112) - in the end, an obsession:

with the telling of an experience, that  
imperative, universally felt desire to  
put into words what has happened to  
us

(Chambers, 1985, p 112).

This inability of language to adequately explain experience was an issue that gay activists were debating also in the early 1980's. Raised in a heterosexist society, gays only have heterosexual terms of reference to label their relationships and their positions within these relationships. Activists argued that these terms of reference (for example, boy-friend, lover, husband) do not adequately explain the emotional bonds in a gay relationship and offered alternatives such as "significant other", "long-time companion", and "life-experience partner" to describe these relationships. As yet, a consensus has yet to be reached within the wider gay community as to how best label gay relationships although "boy-friend" has become the most common term used to describe a gay partner.

Hal Robinson is sixteen years old, openly gay, the central character of Dance on my Grave and is first introduced to the reader in a newspaper article which reports that he has been arrested for damaging the grave of eighteen year old Barry Gorman (Chambers, 1982, p. 5). Barry was Hal's boy-friend and dies in a motorcycle accident after he and Hal have an argument over Barry's sexual affair with a Norwegian au pair girl, Kari (Chambers, 1982, p. 179-180). It is this act of vandalism - which is in reality the fulfilment of a promise Hal made to

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Barry - that forces Hal to "come out", or inform those closest to him that he is gay. Homosexuality is not presented as a major concern for adolescents - Hal is not rejected, for example, by his parents over his sexuality. If anything, Hal is "rewarded" at the end of Dance on my Grave when he seduces 'the succulent Spike' (Chambers, 1982, p 15) and gives him 'a present from Southend' (Chambers, 1982, p. 251). The issue of adolescent bisexuality, however, is a completely different matter.

Barry is constructed as being promiscuous with him having (implied) sex with a complete stranger after he and Hal finish their first date (Chambers, 1982, p. 112). Mrs. Gorman reveals that Barry has had many male partners in the past with her reference to 'all of Bubby's boys' (Chambers, 1982, p. 28) and Barry seduces Kari in front of Hal (Chambers, 1982, p. 172-173). During the fight before his death Barry even admits to his promiscuity, stating:

I like change now and then. More  
than that really. I want to get into as  
many different things as I can . . . as  
many different people. One is never  
enough. Not for me

(Chambers, 1982, p. 179).

In an interesting twist for a young adult text with gay content, it is not Hal who is punished for his sexual identity. Rather it is Barry, the bisexual, who dies. The impression that this creates is that Barry is "punished" because he refuses to adopt a consistent sexual identity. This can be seen as a reflection of social attitudes to bisexuality that had arisen out of the advances made by the gay rights movement.

With gays now making significant inroads towards the social acceptance of homosexuality as a genetic predisposition, the bisexual temporarily replaced the gay as an object of derision and contempt. This was facilitated by the outbreak of HIV and AIDS in the early 1980's when the bisexual replaced the homosexual as the most potent threat to the integrity of society and the well-being of the

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family.

Just as I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth The Trip was praised for its open exploration of gay adolescence, so too was Dance on my Grave. However, like the Donovan text Dance on my Grave employs a number of devices which reduces the openness of this exploration. All sexual acts between the boys are referred to in the past tense and by the term 'a present from Southend' (Chambers, 1982, p.149). Chambers explains that even though sex between Barry and Hal is referred to but never described:

anyone who follows the clues can  
piece together precisely what is going  
on  
(1985, p. 112),

although what 'a present from Southend' (Chambers, 1982, p. 149) and 'a present from Southend of a kind I hadn't had before' (Chambers, 1982, p. 157) actually are is, in the end, left entirely to the reader's imagination. The entire relationship between Hal and Barry lasts only seven weeks which perpetuates the myth that gay men are unable to sustain long-term relationships and the fight with the "bikie" gang (Chambers, 1982, p. 131-146) serves to continue the association of homosexuality with violence, when Barry and Hal are attacked by a group of "bikers" when they (correctly) assume that the boys are gay.

By the early 1980's, as reflected in young adult literature among other things, the gay had finally begun to achieve a small degree of social acceptance and legal recognition within the wider heterosexual community. This was tempered by the first mention in an article in the New York Times in July, 1981 (Higgins, 1993, p. 285), of a disease that appeared to be only affecting gay men. AIDS began to decimate gays across the globe and this early association between gays and AIDS led the disease to be labelled the "gay plague". Anti-gay groups and religious leaders were quick to link AIDS with the concept of divine punishment: homosexuality, despite the advances of gay activists, was still thought

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of as unnatural and now God, they argued, was punishing those who continued to pursue a gay lifestyle.



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## Chapter Four

In this chapter I will be looking at how the remaining two texts in my essay, Two Weeks with the Queen (1989) by Morris Gleitzman and The Drowning of Stephan Jones (1991) by Bette Greene, present the issue of homosexuality and the gay male in the years after the arrival of HIV. With moralists and religious leaders promulgating the idea that AIDS was divine retribution in response to the permissiveness of society in general and the unnaturalness of homosexuality specifically, a far-reaching moral panic quickly developed and,

hospital staff became hysterical,  
ambulance drivers disinfected their  
vehicles, policemen refused to give  
the kiss of life to known gays . . . and  
wore gloves and protective clothing  
when they raided gay bars, children  
with the virus were banned from  
schools and theatre personnel  
refused to work with gay actors  
(Spencer, 1995, p. 377).

Throughout the 1980's hostility and homophobia towards gays increased in intensity. In Britain, a 1983 poll asked if the respondent 'approved of homosexual relationships' (Spencer, 1995, p. 381). Sixty-two percent did not. By 1987 that figure had risen to seventy-four percent (Spencer, 1995, p. 381). Although the 1967 Act decriminalised consensual gay sex between men in the privacy of their own bedroom (provided, of course, they were the only ones at the venue), the gay did not have equal citizenship. The Act gave no protection against discrimination, 'abuse, intolerance and violence' (Spencer, 1995, p. 381). In effect this created the impression that there was one set of laws for heterosexuals and another for homosexuals. The most notable of these inequalities is the marked differences in the age of consent for heterosexuals as opposed to homosexuals. Where decriminalised, consensual homosexual sex is legal at twenty-one. Consensual heterosexual sex is legal in most countries from the

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age of sixteen (Legal Age Of Consent, 1999).

It was in this environment of fear and hatred that Two Weeks with the Queen was published. The hostile attitudes of society can be found in the construction of the two gay characters in this text. Jenkins (1999, p. 3) states that in the texts written for young adults with a gay theme published after 1985, there is a return of the gay to the margins of other characters' narratives, usually a heterosexual character. This marks a return to the position gays occupied in young adult texts prior to 1969. That is, the gay adolescent reverted from being the teller of his own story (for example, Davy in I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth The Trip and Hal in Dance on my Grave) to being secondary characters in the narrative of a heterosexual protagonist - just as Ted and Griff are secondary (although crucial) characters in Colin's story in Two Weeks with the Queen.

Twelve year old Colin Mudford is sent to stay with relatives in England when his younger brother is diagnosed as having leukemia. Once in England, Colin quickly embarks upon his plan to visit the Queen. His logic is that as the Queen is one of the most important people in the world, she will have the telephone number of 'The Best Doctor In The World' (Gleitzman, 1989, p. 34), whom he will telephone and convince to return to Australia with him to cure his brother's illness. On the second day that he is in London, Colin manages to navigate a public transport system (London's underground "tube"), that he has only learnt of the day before, to get to Buckingham Palace.

When Colin's plan to scale the walls of Buckingham Palace and lie in wait so he can approach the Queen privately is thwarted he decides that he will search for the best cancer hospital and find the best doctor himself. Colin begins his search for just such a hospital by telephoning his cousin Alistair's doctor. However, the receptionist interprets his question as a school project and hangs up on him. Not deterred, Colin considers who next to try:

The City of London Information  
Centre? The Houses of Parliament?

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*The Times?*  
He rang the Royale Fish Bar in Peckham  
(Gleitzman, 1989, p. 72).

The proprietor of the fish shop reports that his customers agree,

that the best cancer hospital in London  
was the one that had cured Ernie  
Stringfellow's prostate trouble. He told  
Colin the name and the address  
(Gleitzman, 1989, p. 73).

His aunt and uncle have, however, installed locks on all the windows and doors of their house after Colin and Alistair's failed raid on Buckingham Palace but once again Colin is undeterred from his quest to help his brother. Unscrewing the lock on the back door, Colin sets off all the while assuring Alistair that he would be back before Alistair's parents returned. Colin approaches one of the doctors in the hospital when he arrives there but is escorted out when the doctor ignores Colin's plea for help and resents having his routine interrupted.

It is in the car-park after his encounter with 'The Worst Doctor In The World' (Gleitzman, 1989, p. 79) that Colin first encounters Ted. He is surprised to discover that Ted is crying but Colin is reassured when Ted explains that 'once a week I treat myself to a bit of a cry' (Gleitzman, 1989, p. 82), because he has a friend in the hospital who is very ill. Colin assumes that the friend must be his girl-friend because Ted becomes emotional explaining why his friend is in the hospital (Gleitzman, 1989, p. 81-82). It is not until Colin visits Ted's apartment that he realises that Ted is gay. While Colin accepts Ted's homosexuality, he sees it not as a biological identity but rather as a matter of choice when Colin states:

he knew that men sometimes fell in  
love with each other and that it was  
called being gay. The idea had never  
worried him that much, *though he  
didn't think he ever would himself*  
(italics added)

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(Gleitzman, 1989, p. 107).

In Two Weeks with the Queen, Gleitzman incorporates the issues of gay men and AIDS as a means of enabling Colin to realise the importance of loved ones being together in a time of crisis - such as a terminal illness. The implication behind this is that Gleitzman believes that those on the out-side of mainstream society (here it is gays) have the ability to demonstrate to those on the inside of mainstream society, that is heterosexuals, basic acts of "human kindness" because of their struggles against oppression on the margins of society. It is this which leads Roback and Donahue to claim that it is the friendship that develops between Ted and Colin which enables Colin,

to shed his self-centered ways and  
allow a brave, resourceful and loving  
person to emerge

(1991, p. 105).

However, Gleitzman's construction of Ted and his relationship with Griff, contributes to the perpetuation of several myths concerning homosexuality. The first of these is the length of Ted and Griff's relationship - 'six years we've been together' (Gleitzman, 1989, p. 107) - gives no indication of the difficulties associated with maintaining a gay identity and creates the impression that the practicalities of a gay relationship are irrelevant. The use of derogatory terms to refer to gays is condoned when Colin remembers,

he'd heard men at barbeques say  
queens when they were talking about  
gay men. They usually sneered as  
they said it

(Gleitzman, 1989, p. 107).

As in Tom Brown's Schooldays and I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth The Trip, a gay identity is linked with violence. Ted's bashing at the hands of homophobic youths (Gleitzman, 1989, p. 108) suggests to the reader that if an openly gay identity is taken on then the gay male can expect to be the victim of violent

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attacks as a "natural" consequence - much in the way Hal and Barry are attacked in Dance on my Grave. This takes on an even greater negativity when all signs of gay intimacy are positioned off-stage or only alluded to in Two Weeks with the Queen.

Moreover, the fact that it is Griff, a gay man, who dies from AIDS contributes to, and supports, the idea that AIDS is a disease that only affects gay men - a belief that was wide-spread for most of the 1980's. Of significance to the Australian adolescent reader is that, as in A Candle for Saint Antony, a homosexual identity is presented as one that only non-Australians can take into adulthood. Colin acknowledges that gay men are spoken of in Australia, but usually with derision. Ted and Griff are both young men, originally from Wales, who have migrated to London in search of employment. After Griff's death, Ted is left to return to his family in Wales and mourn the loss of his lover.

During the second half of the 1980's gay activists regrouped. They demanded government funding for medical research into AIDS. However, societal attitudes had once again turned against gays and their "lifestyle". The gay male found himself in a curious position. Although consensual sexual acts between men had been decriminalised and a legally recognised age of consent established, penalties and restrictions were introduced that sought to keep gays from gathering and maintaining a coherent sense of community, subsequently restricting the opportunities for gays to protest against these inequalities. Homosexuality was considered an issue that should be kept from adolescents because it was believed that to speak of it was to encourage experimentation.

Bette Greene's The Drowning of Stephan Jones (1991) is my final text and was:

inspired by a true crime, the drowning  
of a gay man by a teenager on a  
"religious" rampage  
(Greene, 1992, p. 1).

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The Drowning of Stephan Jones, through its open, and somewhat brutal, discussion of homophobia:

appears frequently in bibliographies  
for recommended reading that deal  
with issues involving gay and lesbian  
youth

(Finnessy, 1998, p. 2).

I include it in my discussion because it is the first young adult text which openly acknowledges and incorporates the presence of a wider gay community. For the first time in a young adult novel gays are presented as belonging to a social group of like-minded individuals, although they do not occupy centre-stage.

The Drowning of Stephan Jones is the story of Carla Wayland and her involvement in the death of Stephan Jones at the hands of her boy-friend, Andy Harris, and his friends. Carla's mother, Judith, is the local librarian in their small mountain town, Rachelville Arkansas. Judith is considered to be controversial because she,

would stand up and speak out for  
things that others were against, and  
she was often absolutely opposed to  
what others favored

(Greene, 1991, p. 20).

As a teenager, Carla is embarrassed by her mother's actions so when handsome, popular and wealthy Andy Harris asks her out, Carla quickly takes advantage of the opportunity to rise on the high-school social ladder and to be thought of as being popular. As is the case with so many adolescent girls, Carla relinquishes her own beliefs and attitudes and takes on those of her boy-friend - blindly accepting what another tells her.

Andy Harris, however, is a psychologically damaged young man who is victimised and tormented by his father. As Andy admits to Carla, 'he calls me names . . . he calls me 'Miss Andy' like I'm some fag' (Greene, 1991, p. 55).

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Andy has acquired a stereotyped understanding of what it is to be a man from his father, who equates violence and hypermasculine behavior with a masculine identity. Because Andy's masculinity has been constantly questioned and undermined by his father, ironically in an attempt "to make a man out of him", Andy has a lot to prove in his campaign of hate against Stephan - who is openly gay along with his partner, Frank. Greene is cited as explaining that Andy targets Stephan because he is not a fighter and therefore,

with the harassment of Stephan Jones, Andy could prove that he was really a man. That's what he wanted from Stephan. If he vanquished Stephan Jones, wouldn't that prove, once and for all, that he was a man?  
(Alvine, 1994, p. 3).

To me, however, The Drowning of Stephan Jones is as much a call for individuals to stop and analyse what it is that they are being told by the church and the media as it is a novel about the "evil" of homophobia. This is most clearly highlighted, I believe, by Judith's attempts to get Carla to deconstruct a sermon that they have heard in the church of which Andy Harris and his family are members (Greene, 1991, p. 36-48). During this sermon, the minister preaches,

wearing the cross of Jesus, we will be fighters against Satan, and it matters not in which guise he appears. Take warning all you pornographers! . . . Take warning all you child molesters! ... Take warning all you homosexuals! ... We Christian soldiers are going to smite you! . . . we're going to up and *smite you dead!*  
(Greene, 1991, p. 38).

Judith encourages Carla to question the integrity of a man who claims, in his position as minister, to speak for God and yet preach hatred. His sermon can even be read as an incitement to violence. That is, if a member of his

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congregation were to encounter a pornographer, a child molester or a homosexual they have been told that God has sanctioned the killing of these "agents of Satan". Carla refuses to listen to her mother, however, claiming that Judith is just trying to create trouble because she insists on seeing things that are not there (Greene, 1991, p. 43).

In her construction of the gay characters Frank Montgomery and Stephan Jones, Bette Greene exposes,

the reader to several nuances and images of the gay culture . . . for example, she introduces the reader to the pink triangle, a gay pride symbol . . . once used to identify homosexuals during the Holocaust  
(Finnessy, 1998, p. 2).

However, as Patrick Finnessy argues:

while Greene tries to break stereotypes of gays, unfortunately she reinforces other societal stereotypes  
(1998,p.2).

Most of the stereotyping in The Drowning of Stephan Jones concerns the depiction of the townspeople of Ratchetville. As Finnessy claims:

through her book [Greene] . . . consistently portrays the townspeople as ignorant, southern Christian activists  
(1998, p. 2).

The result of stereotyping the American Christian Right and their attitudes and opinions towards gays is to pit one group (the Christian Right) against another (gays). It does not really allow for the growth of individual understandings in either direction. Hence, the novel reinforces the notion of the two groups being separate "camps".



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As I stated above, the reason for the inclusion of this text in my essay is that for the first time in a young adult text, there is a reference to the wider gay community and to the support groups for gay men. This is significant to the representation of the gay because it shows for the first time gay men with access to other gay men. This appearance of the extended gay community must be put into context, though. It is not until after Stephan has been killed and at the sentencing of Andy (after the trial) that the community's presence is made known. More-over, they are positioned as being able to do little more than offer moral support (Greene, 1991, p. 196-198) to Frank, Stephan's lover.

Michael Thomas Ford is cited as saying that The Drowning of Stephan Jones,

does little to advance the provision of positive role models of gay . . . characters, and it potentially enforces other stereotypes by harmfully creating a box around organised religion and implying that it is "bad" to be Christian

(Finnessy, 1998, p. 5-6).

This has resulted in a text which despite its intentions segregates gays and religion, positioning them as mutually exclusive and incapable of integration. For the adolescent reader this may, it can be argued, portray homosexuality as a choice that negates religious values and, more importantly, makes the gay a deviant subject to malicious and premeditated violence.

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## Chapter Five

In this final chapter I will, as I indicated in the introduction, be investigating the issue of censorship in young adult literature. This censorship operates in a multi-layered manner, with all groups involved in the production, distribution and reception of young adult literature in a position to decide what is "appropriate" for an adolescent reader. Mark West lists these groups as editors, publishers, librarians, book-sellers, parents, school principals and teachers, and religious organisations (1996, p. 498). That it was not until 1969 that the first open treatment of homosexuality appeared in a young adult text, gives some indication of how persistent and pervasive the taboos against homosexuality are in both society and young adult fiction.

The need for taboos was born out of 'the growing acceptance of the idea of childhood innocence' (West, 1996, p. 498), which adults interpreted as meaning that children and young adults were to be spared, among other things, the details of unorthodox sexuality. As a result, authors developed 'a tradition of self-censorship' (West, 1996, p. 499). This persisted until the 1960's which saw the taboos against many topics, previously considered the concerns of adults, lifted. Sacco identifies some of these topics which were increasingly deemed suitable for a young adult reader as:

unwed pregnancy and early  
marriage, abortion, physical  
maturation, premarital sex,  
masturbation, . . . problem parents,  
teenage drinking and smoking, drug  
addiction, child abuse, divorce, . . .  
homosexuality . . . and so on  
(1994, p. 63).

It is no surprise that homosexuality is one of the last of these taboos. As I have shown throughout this essay, the way in which homosexuality and gay men are constructed reveals that a full rendering of the gay "lifestyle" has yet to appear in

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a work of young adult fiction. Ford argues that this is largely due to the fact that homophobia has yet to attract the kind of social "guilt" that has been associated with comparable issues such as racism and the oppression of women (1994, p. 4).

The Moral Majority along with other conservative political and religious organisations, in response to the gay rights movement, encouraged their members,

to speak out against sex education,  
the teaching of evolution, and 'sinful'  
children's books

(West, 1996, p. 503),

with the underlying belief that sexuality was an adult issue. Jenkins presents the argument that positive representations of openly gay adolescents would,

challenge the naturalness of gender  
itself and disrupt the notion of sexual  
orientation as a dichotomous variable.  
The shift that adolescents experience  
in viewing themselves, and being . . .  
viewed by others, as sexual beings is  
already disturbing to adults who are  
hoping that their . . . children . . . will  
Just Say No. Further disruption is  
virtually intolerable

(1998, p. 17).

West identifies that the influences the various groups involved in young adult publishing have takes many different forms. He points out that, even before a book reaches its intended audience,

a cautious editor may require the  
potentially controversial passages be  
deleted . . . [and] further deletions . . .  
made by the publisher . . . especially if  
the . . . publisher markets books  
through . . . schools

(West, 1996, p. 498).

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Michael Thomas Ford claims that,

despite the abundance of gay . . .  
editors, writers, publishers; book-  
sellers and librarians, the door to the  
children's book closet seems to be  
firmly shut

(1994, p. 2),

with most major publishing houses reluctant to be seen as 'that house that publishes gay books' (Ford, 1994, p. 2). In such a restrictive environment the primary concern becomes a matter of sales and profits. Ford states that,

publishers and writers . . . hesitate to  
write or publish books that, while  
obviously needed, are at best a  
financial risk and at worst an  
invitation for backlash from groups  
opposed to homosexuality

(1994, p.5).

Authors are reluctant to include homosexuality in their texts because of the potential threat that their work will be subjected to censorship and because there is the very real fear that sales will be lost and school appearances cancelled.

The fact that a book is in print does not remove the threat of censorship. If the content of the text is deemed unsuitable, measures can be taken to restrict the accessibility of the text. West identifies the banning of the text from public and school libraries, pressure from parent-groups upon book-sellers to remove the text from their shelves and conservative librarians requiring parental permission for a controversial text to be loaned to a young adult reader as tactics available to those who are opposed to a text for any reason. Parent groups can also pressure school principals to discourage teachers from using a controversial text in the classroom while religious groups can encourage their members to forbid their children from reading it (1996, p. 498). Censorship can, therefore, influence social attitudes to controversial topics.

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Homosexuality attracts continued controversy because of the assumption that

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'any discussion of homosexuality will automatically focus on the bedroom' (Ford, 1994, p. 3-4). Hence homosexuality, at least in its fullness, is still heavily censored (despite its treatment in young adult literature over the past thirty years). All gay adolescents are raised in a heterosexist society that offers few positive images of homosexuality. Nearly ten percent of adolescents are gay but,

the suicide rate among gay teens is  
three times that of their straight  
counterparts, with 30% of gay teens  
attempting to take their own lives  
(Ford, 1994, p. 4).

The solution to this censorship of young adult texts with gay content is for those involved in the production of these texts to shift their attentions from restricting the portrayal of the gay and, instead, focus upon eliminating homophobia. It appears clear that, before any advances can be made in the positive portrayal of the gay adolescent in young adult texts, the issue of homophobia and the link between violence and a gay identity must first be addressed.

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## Conclusion

At the beginning of this essay I claimed that I was going to investigate how the topic of homosexuality is constructed and represented in seven young adult novels. The purpose of my investigation was to look at what it is in these constructions of homosexuality that can contribute to an understanding of the "gay experience", regardless of the reader's own sexual identity. In order to do this I gave a brief history of the behaviors which define the modern white-gay male, beginning in Ancient Greece. From there I moved towards 1857 and the publication of Thomas Hughes' Tom Brown's Schooldays, highlighting some of the major shifts in the attitudes of western society concerning how homosexuality was understood and contained.

I identified the prevalence of bisexuality among the men of Ancient Greece which came to be associated with the idea of the passive male by the mid-fourteenth century. By the seventeenth century, the gay male had come to be considered as a threat to the survival of the human race. By the nineteenth century, homosexuality had changed from being perceived as a sin against God, to a criminal offence. In the early twentieth century it became a medical condition to be cured. It is only within the last decade that society has begun to accept the idea of homosexuality as genetic in origin, a 'nonpathological variant of human sexuality' (Isay, 1989, p. 12), and likely to be determined at conception.

With Tom Brown's Schooldays, I argued that the construction of homosexuality in this classic young adult title presents a gay identity in such a way as to imply that if a boy "submits" to the sexual advances of older boys, then he will be the victim of violent assaults. This marks one of the first instances in a young adult novel of a heterosexual youth using violence upon a gay adolescent in order to re-establish his sense of masculinity when it is challenged. In Catcher in the Rye, attitudes to homosexuality had changed very little in the century since

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the Hughes text, with the accusation of being gay portrayed as being almost as damaging as actually being gay. This was a reflection of the almost irrational paranoia that was wide-spread in countries such as America in the 1950's.

Kinsey's 1948 study of male sexuality reminded the wider community of how common-place same-sex attraction is among men. It also enabled gay men to "come out", or openly live a gay lifestyle, knowing that at least ten percent of the population also acknowledges a same-sex attraction. The culmination of this was the Stonewall Riots of 1969. Led by men in drag, gays retaliated against the injustices of the legal system and the modern gay rights movement was born. 1969 was also the year that a young adult novel first openly examined gay adolescence. John Donovan's I'll Get There. It Better Be Worth The Trip, while exploring gay adolescence, does not portray it in a positive and fulfilling light. Sexual expression is placed off-stage and referred to as "it", with the death of a beloved pet serving as punishment for Davy's exploration of the unorthodox. Ultimately, the first open exploration of gay adolescence presents it as a phase to grown out of - hardly a reassuring message to those readers who are themselves gay.

The first Australian text in my essay also draws on the idea of homosexuality as a phase of adolescent development that is natural, yet not permanent - at least for Australian boys. According to A Candle for Saint Antony, a gay identity is only a viable option for those who do not live in Australia. It is not until 1982 and the publication of Aidan Chambers' Dance on my Grave that the gay adolescent comes close to receiving a positive representation in a young adult novel. For the first time a gay protagonist is the teller of his own story, expressing no guilt over his sexual identity. This was, of course, before the outbreak of HIV, which saw society return the gay male to a position of fear and loathing. Once again he was perceived as a threat to the survival of humanity.

Two Weeks with the Queen illustrates how attitudes to homosexuality had

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changed within society, reflected in the fact that the gay characters of this novel have reverted to being secondary characters in a heterosexual's narrative. The characters of Ted and Griff enable Colin to realise the importance of family being together in a time of crisis. Two Weeks with the Queen also constructs homosexuality and a gay identity as being only viable for foreigners or "non-Australians".

The Drowning of Stephan Jones by Bette Greene was the last novel in my essay. In it, Greene constructs homosexuality and a gay identity as being something that is irreconcilable with orthodox religion and perceived by heterosexuals as a sin worthy of death. The outcome of a campaign of hate, manifest in the heterosexual Andy Harris, is for Stephan Jones to be tortured and murdered just because he was gay. Therefore, the treatment Stephan receives at the hands of his tormentors is little more than torture and murder committed by the child-like hands of extremists. The recourse permitted to Frank over the loss of his lover, Stephan, is to accuse the homophobic Andy of being gay in front of media and his family. This, within the society of the novel, establishes and reinforces homosexuality and a gay identity as an identity to be reviled. This would provide small comfort, if any, to a gay adolescent reader.

In the final part of my essay I highlighted the various groups involved in the production and distribution of young adult literature and how they all have a way of ensuring that "inappropriate" novels are kept from the hands of their intended audience. It comes as no surprise then that there are very few positive representations of gay adolescence in young adult literature. There is an abundance of realistic representations of how the gay adolescent can expect to be treated by society. However, the real key to achieving positive and reaffirming representations of the gay male is for those involved in the production of these texts to shift their focus to making homophobia as socially unacceptable as racism and the oppression of other minority groups.



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