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Sexuality in *Giovanni's Room* and *The Color*

Purple

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Zásady pro vypracování

Závěrečná práce se bude zabývat tématem sexuality v románech *Giovanni's Room* (1956) Jamese Baldwina a *Barva nachu* (*The Color Purple*, 1982) Alice Walker. Cílem práce bude zachytit proměnu, a jakým způsobem jsou témata sexuality zachycena ve výše zmíněných románech, které byly publikovány v podstatně odlišných obdobích. V teoretické části studentka stručně nastíní a porovná historicko-kulturní kontext obou románů s důrazem na proměnu politických a sociálních otázek k homosexualitě (a sexualitě a genderu obecně atd.). Studentka také nadefinuje základní pojmy, se kterými bude v analýze pracovat (např. sexualita, gender, minorita, tajení sexuality atd.). Studentka také nastíní literární kontext (s důrazem na afroamerickou queer literaturu) a oba romány do kontextu zasadí. Také pojedná nad literárním jazykem autorů. Jádrem práce bude analýza proměny kulturního kontextu, a jakým způsobem tento fakt ovlivnil zachycení tématu sexuality ve zmíněných románech. Studentka bude tedy oba romány náležitě porovnávat. Při své analýze využije úryvky z primárních zdrojů a své argumenty bude také opírat o vhodné sekundární zdroje.

Závěrem práce bude vyvození obecnějšího závěru o tom, jakým způsobem je sexualita zachycena v obou románech, a co to o tomto tématu vypovídá.

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Prohlašuji:

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Abstract

This bachelor thesis is concerned with the topic of sexuality in two novels by Afro-American authors – *Giovanni's Room* by James Baldwin and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker. The novels were written during different periods of the 20th century, and the thesis examines the differences concerning sexuality and race. Aspects of the rights of sexual minorities, the development of sexual identity and its correlation to ethnicity are researched in both novels, compared and related to historical periods.

Keywords

sexuality, sexual identity, Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*, James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, blackness and sexuality, oppression, development of society

Název

Sexualita v románech *Giovanni's Room* a *The Color Purple*

Anotace

Cílem této práce je porovnat různé aspekty sexuality v románech *Giovanni's Room* a *The Color Purple*. Oba romány byly napsané v různých dekadách 20. století a přístup k sexualitě, sexuální identitě, rase a jejich popis se v nich liší. Budou porovnány práva sexuální menšin, sexuální identita a její vývoj a také spojení etnicity a sexuality. Výsledkem je porovnání těchto témat v dobovém kontextu.

Klíčová slova

sexualita, sexuální identita, Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*, James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, etnicita, rasa a sexualita, útlak, vývoj společnosti

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Introduction

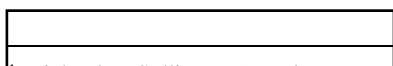
Sexual identity is a crucial part of every person's identity. Any anomaly different from the standard heteronormative ideal was punished during the 20th century, especially the first half. The laws and opinions regarding homosexuals were always changing and were constantly altered during various decades of the 20th century. The changes and development were sometimes abrupt; in general, the rights of sexual minorities improved over time. Sexuality is also the topic of the novels *Giovanni's Room* and *The Color Purple*. The authors of novels James Baldwin and Alice Walker are honoured Afro-American writers who tackled often disregarded and misunderstood topics of sexuality and oppression in their works. They wrote their works in very different periods, even though thirty years might not seem like a massive gap. The period authors lived in influenced their work, how explicit they could be, how their novels were received and their opinions. In the novel *Giovanni's Room*, which was written during the 1950s, the character of David is polarised and hates himself because of his homosexuality. In contrast, in *The Color Purple*, written in the 1980s, the main character, Celie, is only confused when she falls in love with a woman. However, the story of *The Color Purple* is set during the first half of the 20th century, and one may wonder if Celie should not be oppressed more because of her sexuality due to periodical laws. The goal of this thesis is to research whether the period setting of the novel is depicted accurately and whether the historical setting influenced the sexual identity and racial oppression of the main characters, as well as compare these two aspects and these periods. It is also vital to discover whether race is present in the novel because *Giovanni's Room* seems to be colourless at first sight. Firstly, how the period the author lived in and the period in which the book is set influenced the book will be examined and compared. The second aspect that will be researched is the development of sexual identity and sexuality in the main characters and whether it might be connected to period attitudes and laws. Lastly, the importance of race will be mentioned as characters are not oppressed or confused only because of their sexuality but also because of their race. It is crucial to examine the characters of David and Celie and their formation of sexual identity and racial oppression to find out whether there is a connection to particular periods. It will be described how the perception of homosexuality and the formation of sexual identity changed from the first half of the 20th century, through the 1950s to the 1980s, with the addition of the cultural background of the authors and the reception of novels. At the beginning of every chapter, essential theoretical terms will be defined, and relevant cultural facts will be given to describe a particular period accurately. After that, specific excerpts from the book will be used to describe certain phenomena and the meanings of acts or metaphorical

word choices. The outcome will be an analytical comparison of the mentioned decades of the 20th century through the main characters of the novel, David and Celie, and the way their identity was shaped and influenced. Through the comparison of the main characters of the novels *Giovanni's Room* and *The Color Purple*, it is possible to describe the gradual improvement of the situation of homosexuals and racial minorities.

1. Perception and rights of sexual minorities in the first half of the 20th century, the 1950s and 1980s, and connection to *Giovanni's Room* and *The Color Purple* and the authors

This chapter concerns the view of sexual minorities during the different decades of the 20th century, their rights, and the laws that impacted them. For a better understanding of novels, it is necessary to describe the first half of the 20th century in the USA, the period setting of *The Color Purple*, the historical context of the 1950s in Paris and in the USA, which are connected to *Giovanni's Room*, and 1980s in the USA, the decade during which was *The Color Purple* published. A sexual minority is today defined as a group of people whose orientation differs from major heterosexual orientation in our culture, according to Sullivan. Today, this term involves many different sexual identities and orientations; in the past, this word usually indicated homosexuals and bisexuals.¹ In this work, the term sexual minority primarily refers to homosexuals, as this is the sexual orientation of the main characters in novels. The word homosexual is related to a desire for a partner of the same sex, as stated in the Oxford Dictionary.²

The first half of the 20th century in the USA was unwelcoming for sexual minorities, especially homosexuals. There were many laws persecuting homosexuals. For instance, one can mention the New Jersey penal code. Having homosexual sex, in other words, sodomy, was punished by up to twenty years in prison. This law directly stated that sodomy could be committed with a man or an animal; there was no mention of women: "Sodomy, or the infamous crime against nature, committed with man or beast, is a high misdemeanour, and shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$5000, or by imprisonment for not more than 20 years, or both."³ As can be seen from these examples, laws were rigid, and punishments were quite harsh for homosexual men. Many states did not prosecute female homosexuality. During the first half of the 20th century, there was no state in the USA in which homosexuality would



¹ Michael K. Sullivan, *Sexual Minorities: Discrimination, Challenges, and Development in America* (Philadelphia: Haworth Social Work Practice Press, 2003), 1-11.

² "Homosexual (adj.)," Oxford English Dictionary, accessed 15.10. 2023, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/homosexual_adj?tl=true.

³ State v. Morrison, 25 N.J. Super. 534, 96 A.2d 723 (County Ct.).

be legal according to Joppke.⁴ In the media, homosexuals were depicted as perverts. For example, the Vice scandal in 1912, described by Painter, during which the homosexuality of seventy men was disclosed and punished, can be listed. After this, as a reaction, sterilisation of those charged with a crime against nature was unfortunately passed.⁵ Moreover, as stated by Stur, homosexuals were often made redundant with a blue discharge in the US Military, which was created in 1916. This was a discharge without specified reason and was frequently used by higher-ranking members of the army who became suspicious that their subordinates were homosexuals and wanted to make them redundant.⁶ It is apparent that the first half of the 20th century was unwelcoming, with laws persecuting homosexual sex, homosexuals being frowned upon and disadvantaged in their lives, for instance, jobs.

Following World War II, the period of the 1950s can be characterized by the lack of open-mindedness and fear of everything new, including any peculiar sexual deviation from heteronormative standards, as described by Bauer and Cook in their book *Queer 1950s*.⁷ This idea is widely agreed on by most authors, and Kaiser adds that the importance of family values might have deepened unfavourable views of unusual and uncommon sexual orientations. Puritanism in the USA was on the rise, and so were the traditional values such as family, matrimony and having kids.⁸ Because of the instability and chaos in the world, the government wanted people to conform to the norm and maintain a sense of normalcy as mentioned by Kaiser. Sexual conservatism was the only acceptable agenda with the ideal of heterosexual orientation and marriage. Sexual minorities and, foremost, homosexuals were not only regarded as perverts but also as untrustworthy criminals.⁹ The general prejudice was that homosexuals were untrustworthy and prone to blackmailing and thus could not be trusted in government organisations. Charles Kaiser says the State Department made 91 employees redundant because of their sexual orientation between 1947 and 1949. Sometimes homosexuals were often depicted as minor molesters; Fred Freman describes that one of the famous American TV stations broadcasted a

⁴ Christian Joppke. "Multiculturalism by Liberal Law: The Empowerment of Gays and Muslims." *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv Für Soziologie* 58,no.1(2017): 8.

⁵ George Painter, "The Vice Clique Scandal of 1912-1913". *Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest*. Archived from the original on July 4, 2008. <https://web.archive.org/web/20080704123243/http://www.glapn.org/604vice.html>

⁶ Marie Heather Stur, "Red, White, Lavender, and Blue: LGBT Soldiers and Veterans and the Fight for Military Recognition." In *Service Denied: Marginalized Veterans in Modern American History*, (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 2022) 104-107. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2x8v5wj.10>.

⁷ Heike Bauer and Matt Cook, eds., *Queer 1950s: Rethinking Sexuality in the Postwar Years* (New York: Springer, 2012), 1-6.

⁸ Charles Kaiser, *The Gay Metropolis: The Landmark History of Gay Life in America* (New York: Grove Press, 2007), 66-71

⁹ Kaiser, *The Gay Metropolis: The Landmark History of Gay Life in America*, 66-73

document warning young males and especially children before homosexual molesters.¹⁰ Marcus agrees and mentions it was not exceptionally safe to announce one's sexual orientation publicly, if one were not heterosexual, as there were physical attacks on homosexuals.¹¹ Luty says there were many inhumane treatments for homosexuality, such as an ice pick lobotomy invented by Walter Freeman in 1946, which included removing part of a patient's brain due to the fact that Freeman believed that the cause of homosexual orientation was emotionality and feelings, or aversion therapy, which included degrading patients. Homosexuals were often pressured into getting these treatments. In the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders published by the American Psychiatric Association, homosexuality was perceived as a mental disorder. It was only removed after the Stonewall riots nearly two decades later.¹²

Nevertheless, Houlbrook adds that there were two sides to this decade. Many erotic books and sex advice literature were published both in the United Kingdom and the USA.¹³ There were first opposing opinions to the perception of homosexuals as sick perverts. Alfred Kinsey disagreed with the majority of studies published in the 1950s. He believed sexuality is fluid and that any abnormalities should not be treated but instead accepted, which was quite progressive at that time. In his report, he found it hypocritical that homosexual tendencies were also discovered among those who imposed anti-homosexual laws.¹⁴ Eric Marcus states that the 1950s were prolific for gays and lesbians who wanted to make changes and regards this decade as the origin of the gay rights movement with the creation of the Mattachine Society and other gay rights groups.¹⁵

From the 1950s to the 1980s, the situation of homosexuals significantly improved. Kaiser describes that after the euphoric decade of the 1970s, the 1980s were another great decade, even though the progress decelerated. Homosexuals were featured in movies and in

¹⁰ Fred, Fejes. "Murder, Perversion, and Moral Panic: The 1954 Media Campaign against Miami's Homosexuals and the Discourse of Civic Betterment." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9, no. 3 (2000): 305–307. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3704569>.

¹¹ Eric Marcus, *Making Gay History: The Half-Century Fight for Lesbian and Gay Equal Rights* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 51.

¹² Jason Luty, "Controversial Treatments in Psychiatry," *BJPsych Advances* 23, no. 3 (2017): 169-178

¹³ Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918–1957* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). 9-17.

¹⁴ Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell R. Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin, "Sexual Behavior in the Human Male," *American Journal of Public Health* 93, no. 6 (2003): 894-898.

¹⁵ Marcus, *Making Gay History: The Half-Century Fight for Lesbian and Gay Equal Rights*, 34-38.

news and were talked about, and these mentions were not negative anymore. Most states had already decriminalised homosexuality. There was still prejudice; nevertheless, legal discrimination was forbidden. A new issue in the homosexual community arose, and that was AIDS. Because of the negative publicity and with some publishers still because of the homophobia, there were not a lot of reports in the news. Despite this alarming issue and occasional negative comments; homosexuals did not have to fight fundamental to their basic rights during the 1980s.¹⁶ It can be assumed that Alice Walker had greater freedom in her writing during the 1980s compared to James Baldwin during the 1950s.

Giovanni's Room might be set in Paris due to the laxer attitudes towards homosexuality in the 1950s. Florence Tamagne states that in France, the age of consent was higher for homosexual pairs than heterosexual pairs; nevertheless, same-sex relationships were not persecuted if not displayed in public.¹⁷ This might be the reason why Baldwin set his novel in France – there was almost no racial and sexual oppression. One might assume this story could not have happened in the USA, as the laws were stricter. James Baldwin left the USA, particularly due to racist and homophobic laws, and he spent most of the 1950s in France. It can be assumed that he was familiar with Paris and was able to depict the novel's settings accurately. Caryl Phillips mentions that Paris is both the place where *Giovanni's Room* is set and the contemporary place of residence for James Baldwin during the 1950s, so one could wonder if the novel has more autobiographical motives. He also notes that the motive of Americans escaping to Paris is partially comparable to James Baldwin's wish to escape the US because of racially and sexually oppressive tendencies; he was looking for freedom, similarly to David, who was seeking it too. However, David did not seek freedom due to racial tyranny, as David was white, but rather because of problems with his father and perhaps his sexuality. Phillips mentions that James Baldwin was neglected by his stepfather, and this might be another connection between Baldwin and David.¹⁸ David's complex feelings towards father might show when he is talking about his childhood:

...from that time on, with the mysterious, cunning, and dreadful intensity of the very young, I despised my father, and I hated Ellen. It is hard to say why. I don't know why," and another mention: "We were not like father and son, my father

¹⁶ Eric Marcus, *Making Gay History: The Half-Century Fight for Lesbian and Gay Equal Rights* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 272.274, 357-358.

¹⁷ Florence Tamagne "Paris: 'Resting on its Laurels'?" in *Queer Cities, Queer Cultures: Europe since 1945*, ed. Matt Cook and Jennifer V. Evans (London, Bloomsbury Academic: 2015), 242-243.

¹⁸ Caryl Phillips, "Introduction," in *Giovanni's Room*, edited by Caryl Phillips (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2001), 6-9.

sometimes proudly said, we were like buddies. I think my father sometimes actually believed this. I never did. I did not want to be his buddy.¹⁹

The complicated relationship with David's father is present just as in Baldwin's life. One cannot tell whether David hated his father, but they were not particularly close, similarly to Baldwin. Another similar factor might be difficult relationship the USA. To illustrate the connection between David and Baldwin concerning their dislike of USA life and norms, the monologue of David can be used:

I can see you, many years from now, coming through our village in the ugly, fat, American motor car you will surely have by then and looking at me and looking at all of us and tasting our wine and shitting on us with those empty smiles Americans wear everywhere and which you wear all the time.²⁰

Americans are not described in a pleasant light, and the reader might assume that this is similar to Baldwin's feelings. Baldwin did not feel welcomed in the USA, perhaps because of the racial and sexual oppression. Phillips supports this notion by saying that Baldwin had enough of American life, its conformity, prudishness, and strictness.²¹ To sum this up, the novel *Giovanni's Room* has some autobiographical aspects; the author might have taken inspiration from his stay in Paris, his distant relationship with his father and his pessimistic outlook on the USA and its oppressive laws.

While *Giovanni's Room* can be deemed partially autobiographical in certain aspects, *The Colour Purple* by Alice Walker is, according to Elizabeth A. Harris in *The New York Times*, not directly tied to Walker herself but to her grandmother.²² Walker did not write about the period she experienced herself as the *National Book Foundation* informs that *The Color Purple* won the National Book Award in 1983 and was written only a year earlier.²³ *The Color Purple* is set during the first half of the 20th century. Even though the author did not directly experience gruesome instances, she did, however, as Harris mentions, have in her possession her grandmother's written memoirs, which could help with the understanding of

¹⁹ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 105.

²⁰ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 105.

²¹ Phillips, "Introduction," in *Giovanni's Room*, 10.

²² Elizabeth A Harris. "Alice Walker's New Book Offers a Glimpse Into Some of Her Most Private Moments." *The New York Times* published April 23, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/23/books/alice-walker-book.html#:~:text=But%20she%20is%20often%20an,of%20her%20most%20private%20moments,>

²³ "National Book Awards 1983," National Book Foundation, accessed January 22, 2024, <https://www.nationalbook.org/awards-prizes/national-book-awards-1983/>.

the period and its cruelty.²⁴

Whether autobiographical or not, the oppression of characters due to the laws and attitudes of society during the period reflects the oppression and opinion of the authors. *Giovanni's Room* was set and published in the 1950s, the period in which the author James Baldwin lived. Eckman suggests that because of societal norms, the publisher with whom Baldwin lived. Eckman suggests that because of societal norms, the publisher with whom Baldwin published his previous novels rejected the draft of *Giovanni's Room*, and the publisher even suggested that the gender of the main character should be changed or the book should be burned.²⁵ This might have happened because the heterosexual relationship was the norm, and a substandard relationship produced negative publicity for both the publisher and author. Baldwin's publisher might have been afraid because of this reason. Phillips mentions that Baldwin published the work with a different publisher, who allowed him to retain the novel as intended. Critics were not fond of the new homosexual novel, and even though there were exceptions, overall, it received rather unpleasant and harsh critiques with a homophobic tone.²⁶ Armengol agrees with this point of view and adds that readers were shocked because of explicit homosexual content, which was seen as abnormal and unnatural.²⁷ The reception of the work can be compared, and as the attitudes in society changed, in the 1980s, there were not as many taboos as during the 1950s. In addition, public perception of homosexuals improved after the Stonewall riots improved, and queer individuals gained more rights, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, and thus, the work *The Color Purple* was received exceptionally well. *The Color Purple* has, for instance, won the Pulitzer Prize, as stated on the official Pulitzer Prize website.²⁸ Alice Walker did not have any problems with publishing her book. *The Color Purple* was received better than *Giovanni's Room*, receiving critical appraisal. This might reflect the decade of 1980s, as it was normal for instance to feature homosexuals in movies and to openly discuss the topic of homosexuality.

Sex and sexuality are present in almost every book (marriage, relationship). However, every book does not contain detailed sex scenes. According to the Legal Institute of Law, the main feature of sexually explicit material is portraying nudity, reproductive organs in a sexual

²⁴ Harris. "Alice Walker's New Book Offers a Glimpse Into Some of Her Most Private Moments."

²⁵ Fern Marja Eckman, *The Furious Passage of James Baldwin* (New York: M. Evans & Co., 1966), 137.

²⁶ Phillips, "Introduction," in *Giovanni's Room*, 9-12.

²⁷ Armengol, "In the Dark Room: Homosexuality and/as Blackness in James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*," 671.

²⁸ "The Color Purple, by Alice Walker", Pulitzer Prize website, accessed January 25, 2024, <https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/alice-walker>.

way, or sexual activities.²⁹ Both books depict queer relationships; however, in *Giovanni's Room*, there are no explicit scenes and the sexual act is not described in detail, and descriptions of genitals or particular sexual activities are omitted, for instance: "I knew it was too late; soon it was too late to do anything but moan. He pulled me against him, putting himself into my arms as though he were giving me himself to carry, and slowly pulled me down with him to that bed."³⁰ Everything is described without vulgarisms; it is not explicit, there are only soft sexual undertones. While in *Giovanni's Room*, Baldwin did not directly describe body parts or act of fornication in *The Color Purple*, there are suggestive conversations between Shug Avery and Celie, where Shug explains details about the body of Celie to her. They are detailed, describing genitals and sexual actions, using explicit and vulgar language. To illustrate:

Listen, she say, right down there in your pussy is a little button that gits real hot when you do you know what with somebody. It git hotter and hotter and then it melt. That the good part. But other parts good too, she say. -Lot of sucking go on, here and there, she say. Lot of finger and tongue work. Button? Finger and tongue? My face hot enough to melt itself.³¹

It can be concluded that *The Color Purple* describes genitals and sexual activities in a conversation between Celie and Shug Avery, whereas in *Giovanni's Room*, there are no direct descriptions of genitals or fornication, only suggestions and very vague depictions. The book *The Color Purple* was received better, even though it is more explicit, due to different attitudes in society in the 1950s compared to the 1980s. In light of better conditions for LGBTQ people in the 1980s, Alice Walker might have been able to use more explicit content and language, including descriptions of genitals and sexual activities, as seen above. The topic of homosexuality was not criticised. *The Color Purple* received overall criticism in the decade it was published. Meanwhile, *Giovanni's Room* was deemed inappropriate and of low literary quality.

Setting plays significant role in novels *The Color Purple* and *Giovanni's Room*. During the 1950s, homosexuals were oppressed and had to hide their sexuality. In Baldwin's

²⁹ "Sexually Explicit Material," Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law School, accessed January 25, 2024, https://www.law.cornell.edu/definitions/uscode.php?height=800&def_id=10-USC-573408762-128676685&term_occur=1&term_src=title:10:subtitle:A:part:IV:chapter:147:subchapter:III:section:2495b.

³⁰ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 52.

³¹ Walker, *The Color Purple*, 49.

work, one can find examples of the terrible treatment of homosexuals and the consequential secretive tendencies of homosexual individuals. This can be tied to the decade of the 1950s. The urge to hide one's sexuality was common during the 1950s, as mentioned above, because it was socially unacceptable to be homosexual. In *Giovanni's Room*, for instance, it can be noticed when David is talking about his ex-partner: "...one very frightening such drop while I was in the Army which involved a fairy who was later court-martialed out. The panic his punishment caused in me was as close as I ever came to facing in myself the terrors I sometimes saw clouding another man's eyes."³² In this excerpt, internalised homophobia of David can be seen, calling a homosexual man he had an affair with "a fairy," which is, according to the *Etymology Dictionary*, a slang used for effeminate homosexuals. This slang word is also considered to be a slur as the word "effeminate" has a negative connotation.³³ With the connection to Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*, it has to be emphasised that there is mention of punishment of homosexuality since this person was court-martialled out, which is connected with many laws punishing sodomy or homosexuality described above. *The US Naval Institute* states that the article from 1917 made sodomy punishable in the army. Public homosexual acts were persecuted in the U.S. Army until 2011 and often resulted in an individual being removed from service.³⁴ When looking at Baldwin's work, one can mention another example of David's awful treatment of homosexuals, particularly towards Joey, which David himself considers horrible:

When I finally did see him, more or less by accident, near the end of the summer, I made up a long and absolutely untrue story about a girl I was going with and when school began again I picked up with a rougher, older crowd and was very nasty to Joey. And the sadder this made him, the nastier I became.³⁵

This shows David lying and hiding his true homosexual identity, acting heterosexual. One can say he is in the closet. According to Kosofsky Sedwick, a closet is a metaphor for suppressed, hidden homosexuality inside a person, and it might be connected to internalised homophobia.³⁶ The symbol of a closet for homosexuality will be discussed in detail later in. The internalised homophobia and self-disgust make David reprobate another homosexual boy. According to Adams and colleagues, it is quite usual for the most homophobic men to be

³² James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room* (New York: Dial Press, 1956), 20.

³³ "Fairy," Etymology Dictionary Online, accessed February 28, 2024, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/fairy>.

³⁴ "Key Dates in U.S. Military LGBT Policy," U.S. Naval Institute, accessed March 3, 2024, <https://www.usni.org/naval-history-blog-collection/key-dates-u-s-military-lgbt-policy>.

³⁵ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 20.

³⁶ Sedwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of the Closet*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 75,100.

homosexuals themselves and it is suggested that irreconciled homosexuality may turn into homophobia.³⁷ David feels ashamed because of his sexual orientation and tries to adhere to heterosexual norms by making up a story about a female partner, which was common during the 1950s, as mentioned above. The secretive tendencies are also present in David, worrying about what the mother of Joey will think of the two of them when she finds out they stained the sheets in Joey's bedroom, knowing David stayed overnight. David's fear of his sexual identity being discovered and shunned is present: "The very bed, in its sweet disorder, testified to vileness. I wondered what Joey's mother would say when she saw the sheets."³⁸ Despite David being disgusted with himself, he uses words sweet disorder, which is almost an oxymoron. It might be assumed he enjoyed being with Joey, but despite this, he thinks it is wrong. There is mention of a person being made redundant because of homosexuality and David treating a homosexual terribly. Nevertheless, there are no physical violent attacks in *Giovanni's Room*. Fear of someone figuring out David's homosexuality is present, and it is plausible because of the news about the military boy being discharged from the army, his occupation, like many other homosexuals in the 1950s as noted above. There is internalised homophobia, which makes David deem homosexuals as less worthy; he banishes Joey and treats him terribly, even though they have had an affair.

However, in the novel *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker, there is not a mention of Celie or another woman persecuted because of their lesbianism. Celie still suffers under the heteronormative ideas and also hides her identity as David does. Lewis describes that Celie is very disappointed with her partner, Albert, and does not feel any attraction or love.³⁹ To illustrate: "Mr. _____ marry me to take care of his children. I marry him cause my daddy made me. I don't love Mr. _____ and he don't love me."⁴⁰ This excerpt directly illustrates Celie's rejection of Albert as her husband, not feeling any connection or attraction but continuing with marriage because of social heteronormative standards and the will of her father. She perceives even the reason why her husband married her as something practical, not connected with love. This could be common for lesbians at the beginning of the 20th century. Despite anti-homosexual laws usually not targeting women, the ideal was heterosexual marriage and perhaps women did not have many other options for them to not to struggle

³⁷ Henry Adams, Lester Wright Jr, and Bethany Lohr, "Is Homophobia Associated With Homosexual Arousal?" *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 105, no. 3 (August 1996): 440-442, doi:10.1037/0021-843X.105.3.440.

³⁸ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 12.

³⁹ Christopher S. Lewis, "Cultivating Black Lesbian Shamelessness: Alice Walker's 'The Color Purple.'" *Rocky Mountain Review* 66, no. 2 (2012): 162.

⁴⁰ Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2011), 43.

financially. The connection between Celie's attitude toward marriage with someone who is not a woman and David's proposing to somebody who is not a man can be seen. As David says: "I suppose this was why I asked her to marry me: to give myself something to be moored to."⁴¹ David sees marriage as chains that can keep him chained to the majority of society, perhaps even prevent him from having sexual affairs with men, when talking about his proposal to Hella. Women are perhaps supposed to be barriers holding him back from his irresponsible affairs with men, and they are supposed to maintain his image of a white heterosexual man. Both characters suffer because they cannot be their true themselves; nonetheless only, in *Giovanni's Room*, the main character, David, fears discovery and mentions a person who was persecuted because of his homosexuality.

To conclude, the periodical setting influenced authors and their novels to great extent. Alice Walker could write freely about homosexuality, describe explicitly scenes with homosexual content in the 1980s. Moreover the novel was received well. On the other hand, James Baldwin had many problems with publishing his books because of the topic, and the reception was negative in the 1950s. It was found that parts of *Giovanni's Room* – for example, the complicated relationship with their father, leaving the USA because of the oppressive laws, and staying in Paris - could have been inspired by Baldwin's life. Alice Walker wrote her novel during the 1980s and could express herself without any restrictions. Nevertheless, the novel does not have autobiographical features. David seems to struggle more with his sexual identity internally, whereas Celie suffers because of the heteronormative ideal of marriage and her situation. David suffers from internalised homophobia, calls homosexuals slurs and views them negatively. It might be assumed that he is in the closet, and that is why he treats other homosexual men terribly. Whereas there is a mention of persecution of a member of the army because of his sexuality in *Giovanni's Room*, in *The Color Purple*, there is no mention of legal harassment or prosecution, and Celie or Shug are not insulted because of their sexuality. Some might argue that *The Color Purple* is not an accurate depiction of the beginning of the 20th century, due to the fact laws were supposed to be stricter at the beginning of the 20th century compared to 1950s. This theory will be researched further.

⁴¹ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 52.

2. Sexual identity and discovery in novels *Giovanni's Room* by James Baldwin and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker

Due to the many oppressive laws against sexual minorities and other forms of discrimination also mentioned in the previous chapter, many homosexual men and women tried to conceal their sexual identity or could not even explore it. There are many different opinions on what sexual identity is and how it is connected to sexual attraction and gender. According to Morrish and others, sexual identity is a person's perception of their attraction towards other people, shaped by their experience. It is a type of social identity, and it doesn't have to be dependent on a person's gender or solely on the sexual desire of a person.⁴² One of the other definitions is the one of the American Psychological Association, which distinguishes between sexual orientation and gender identity; sexual orientation is a concept connected with attraction towards particular people, while gender identity correlates to feeling and identifying as a male, female, or different.⁴³ In the Oxford Online Dictionary of Media and Communication, one can find one comparable description of sexual identity, stressing the importance of to whom a person is attracted. However, there is also a second meaning of sexual identity related to one's biological sex and gender. Morrish would disagree with this as, according to her, the terms are not conflated, and sexual identity does not equal gender identity; it is not dependent on gender. In the opinion of Shively and Cecco, sexual identity consists of biological sex, gender identity, social sex-role, and sexual orientation.⁴⁴ In this work, sexual identity is going to be regarded as consisting mainly of attraction towards other people, including exploration and self-identification, as described by Morrish.

Exploration and discovery of a person's sexuality was rather tricky because of internalised homophobia, and fear of ostracisation from society, according to Kanbur.⁴⁵ In addition, there were laws oppressing homosexuals, which were also the cause of hiding one's sexuality. These laws were exceptionally strict during the 1950s and 1960s and were

⁴² Liz Morrish, Elizabeth Morrish, and Helen Sauntson, *New Perspectives on Language and Sexual Identity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 3-5.

⁴³ "Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity," American Psychological Association, accessed February 27, 2024, <https://www.apa.org/topics/lgbtq>.

⁴⁴ Michael G. Shively, MA, and John P. De Cecco, PhD, "Components of Sexual Identity," *Journal of Homosexuality* 3, no. 1 (1977): 41-42, accessed February 27, 2024, https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v03n01_04.

⁴⁵ Nuray Kanbur. "Internalized Homophobia in Adolescents: Is it really about Culture or Religion?" *Journal of Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 29, no. 2 (May 2020): 124-125.

described in the previous chapter. The homophobia was particularly extreme during these two decades. As mentioned in Grimes's article, the word homophobia was invented by psychologist George Weinberg, describing severely negative attitudes and loathing of homosexuals.⁴⁶ There was a stigma surrounding homosexuality, which influenced the self-image of homosexual individuals, leading to self-hatred and perception of themselves as sick, which both Weinberg and Kaiser agree with.^{47,48} According to Crew's and Norton's article, negative self-perception of homosexual individuals is caused by the homophobic oppressive tendencies of society.⁴⁹ In Thepsourinthone's and his colleagues' opinion, the negative self-perception can be called internalised homophobia, defined as self-hatred, a state in which a homosexual individual accepts negative opinions of society on homosexuals and adopts them as their own.⁵⁰ The effect of homophobia on particular homosexuals can vary. They often encounter stress because of the rejection from their family or society as a whole, as found by the American Psychological Association,⁵¹ which could lead to high rates of depression and anxiety mentioned by Lee and colleagues.⁵² Kaiser moreover describes physical attacks on homosexuals, especially during the 1950s and 1960s.⁵³

In the research conducted by Ronsenber, she found out that while some participants were completely sure of their sexual identity, some might have found people of the opposite gender attractive up to a certain point in their lives. Then they realised they liked features of the same sex in that person. So, the discovery of homosexual identity often started with men with finding masculine women attractive and women with finding feminine men attractive. Many respondents were worried about the reaction and feared for their future opportunities, like jobs, so they kept their sexuality hidden. Subjects also feared social rejection and repressed their feelings because of it.⁵⁴ Vivienne Cass described discovering one's sexuality

⁴⁶ William Grimes, "George Weinberg Dies at 86; Coined 'Homophobia' After Seeing Fear of Gays," *The New York Times*, March 22, 2017.

⁴⁷ George Weinberg, *Society and the healthy homosexual*. (New York, Garden City Anchor Press, 1973). 81-83.

⁴⁸ Charles Kaiser, *The Gay Metropolis: The Landmark History of Gay Life in America* (New York: Grove Press, 2007), 73

⁴⁹ Louie Crew, and Rictor Norton, "The Homophobic Imagination: An Editorial." *College English* 36, no. 3 (1974): 273-276.

⁵⁰ Jack Thepsourinthone, Tinashe Dune, Pranee Liamputtong, and Amit Arora, "The Relationship between Masculinity and Internalized Homophobia amongst Australian Gay Men," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 17, no. 15 (August 2020): 5475. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17155475>.

⁵¹ "Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity," American Psychological Association, accessed February 27, 2024, <https://www.apa.org/topics/lgbtq>.

⁵² Carrie Lee, , John L. Oliffe, , Mary T. Kelly, and Olivier Ferlatte, "Depression and Suicidality in Gay Men: Implications for Health Care Providers," *American Journal of Men's Health* 11, no. 4 (July 2017): 910-911, doi: 10.1177/1557988316685492.

⁵³ Charles Kaiser, *The Gay Metropolis: The Landmark History of Gay Life in America* (New York: Grove Press, 2007), 274-275.

⁵⁴ Shoshana Rosenberg, "Coming In: Queer Narratives of Sexual Self-Discovery," *Journal of Homosexuality* 65, no. 2 (2018): 201, 1788-1791.

as a rather complex process of accepting a person's sexuality as part of their identity and announcing it to their friends and family. She separated this process into six stages. In the first stage, a person is deliberately confused because they somehow differ from the heterosexual norm, and sometimes they deny it. Suppression and indifference are usual at this stage, and excuses are often made up for homosexual behaviour. Cass also noted that male and female reactions can differ, and many lesbian women may interpret their attraction to other women only as deep friendship, whereas men might think that they will only have sex with men and tend to reject the idea of falling in love with a person of the same sex. In the second stage, a person might deal with depression and inner chaos because of possible outcomes of disclosing their sexuality, like the danger of physical attacks or social rejection. Nevertheless, they do not hide it in front of themselves. In the third and fourth stages, a subject might calm down and realise they are not alone, and their healing might start. The last two stages are concerned with living as their authentic selves; a person might be proud and finally disclose sexuality to their family. In addition, they also develop their personality in other aspects and don't focus on sexuality as the solitary defining characteristic of their personality.⁵⁵ Discovering and developing of sexual identity plays significant role in both novels. Particular stages and the development of the identity of the main characters in the novels will be described. In both novels, we can see the first stage of confusion, the second stage of sadness and the third and fourth stage of relative acceptance of their sexuality within themselves. However, only in the novel *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker, the final stages of complete acceptance (fifth and sixth) and focusing on different parts of one's personality can be found.

In the novel *Giovanni's Room* by James Baldwin, we can see various stages of David's acceptance of his sexual identity and development. An example of the first stage of Cass's model regarding David can be an experience with Joey in a shower when he feels attracted for the first time to another person's body: "And I think it began in the shower. I know that I felt something—as we were horsing around in that small, steamy room, stinging each other with wet towels—which I had not felt before"...⁵⁶ At this moment, David starts to notice he feels something when looking at Joey. He also experiences his first kiss: "Joey raised his head as I lowered mine and we kissed, as it were, by accident. Then, for the first time in my life, I was

⁵⁵ Vivienne C. Cass, "Homosexual Identity Formation: A Theoretical Model," *Journal of Homosexuality* 4, no. 3 (Spring 1979): 219-224, doi:10.1300/J082v04n0301.

⁵⁶ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 10

really aware of another person's body, of another person's smell.’’⁵⁷ David might feel both fear and thrill at the same time and he feels attraction and love towards another person for the first time. The emphasis on the body is apparent, and one cannot be sure whether there is a deeper connection or if David is only attracted to the male body and still considers Joey solely a friend. In the novel, their friendship is depicted as close; however, prior to this scene, there is no sexual tension and only friendly conversations, which might suggest David is primarily attracted to the body of Joey. As described by Cass, this might be an example of a homosexual man who thinks he will only have sex with men and won't consider them for a relationship. Intriguing is also David's description of the shower – he is trapped in a small, steamy, dark room with Joey and also with his sexuality and secret. This motive might be a metaphor for a closet and is also present more times in the novel and will be mentioned later.

That same day, David and Joey have sex. However, David wakes up in the morning and leaves Joey's house abruptly and with excuses because he feels ashamed, as he tries to fight his urges and attraction towards Joey: “...my own body suddenly seemed gross and crushing, and the desire which was rising in me appeared monstrous. But, above all, I was suddenly afraid. It was borne in on me: But Joey is a boy.’’⁵⁸ The realisation he had sex with another male is difficult to process and induces more fear in David. He starts to think of the opinions of his mother, father and others, fearing the gossip and rejection. David wants to escape this room and his sexuality. He is also disgusted with himself, which might be a sign of internalised homophobia. David's opinion of homosexuals is influenced by the opinions of society, and he does not want to be one of them; he calls them slurs, as mentioned in the previous chapter. One may see this as David altogether rejecting himself, remaining in the first stage of Cass's model of homosexual identity formation, denying everything. David does not want to be different. He has mixed feelings, due to the fact he still feels the attraction. He suppresses his feelings, and this might be considered a flight reaction; he wants to escape, and he finally does, however, only after Joey moves. This might be the continuation of the metaphor of the closet in the novel. David wants to escape his lust and wants to escape Joey's house because he cannot accept his sexuality. However, his attempt might be deemed unsuccessful because the situation solved itself by Joey moving, not by David truly stopping or escaping his feelings. His feelings remain suppressed however later David will find himself in the same position as Giovanni and his room. According to Cass, David could be

⁵⁷ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 11

⁵⁸ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 12

categorised as being in the first stage, as he realised he is different. However, he tried to avoid acceptance of it. The initial homosexual realisation of the main character, David, in *Giovanni's Room* occurs during young adulthood and is suppressed, meant to be forgotten; in the novel *The Color Purple*, the sexuality of the main character, Celie, is shaped differently. Despite the fact that David does not particularly have any trauma caused by women in his childhood, he does not like them. He thinks he is supposed to like women. Nevertheless, he did not as a child; for instance, he feared his aunt: "When I was a little boy, and I watched her in the company, she frightened me."⁵⁹ David did not have any positive relationships in his childhood with women; his mother died. Nonetheless, it needs to be mentioned that there was no abuse or trauma. With Celie, this aspect might differ as she suffered from sexual abuse as a child from her father. This might have shaped her identity and repulsion towards men: "I don't even look at men. That's the truth. I look at women, tho, cause I'm not scared of them."⁶⁰ Celie describes the physical and sexual abuse her father caused due to the fact he thought he looked at a boy. She is definitely not attracted to boys; she is scared of them and favours women, as seen in the excerpt. It is even briefly suggested that she was abused not only by her father but also by other male members of her family⁶¹, which resulted in crippling fear and distorted perception of men as the same homogenous group: "Most times mens look pretty much alike to me."⁶² From this sentence, one can sense indifference and lack of attraction, even though this is a conversation about Mr. _____, who is deemed handsome, by Shug Avery and also other women: "The womens smile in his direction every chance they git."⁶³ Celie does not say explicitly that the thoughts of men disgust her. However, it can be assumed that they do due to the trauma. She perhaps cannot imagine herself being attracted to men, including her husband. She still has to suffer in heterosexual marriage, it was only way to escape her abusive father. However, this situation might not seem like the first stage of Cass's model for Celie, as Celie is not trying to suppress her feelings, she knows she is not interested in men.

Celie does not think about her sexuality often because of the trauma. Perhaps, because of the permanent reality of living in the patriarchy, which is unescapable, or it at least seems inescapable to her at the beginning of the novel. She only escapes from one abuser to another.

⁵⁹ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 14

⁶⁰ Walker, *The Color Purple*, 29.

⁶¹ Walker, *The Color Purple*, 31.

⁶² Walker, *The Color Purple*, 17.

⁶³ Walker, *The Color Purple*, 33.

She does not resist when her husband wants to have sex with her, as she is used to obeying men due to the trauma. The antagonistic depiction of men is also one of the few aspects which were criticised in *The Colour Purple*. Even though there were not many negative reviews, for instance, in the opinion of Bobo, the work bashed the black men and portrayed them as abusers. Due to patriarchy, she does think that being married to a man is normal. However, the indifference and repulsion she feels towards men is vastly distinct from the warmth and safety she feels when around women in general. The first step in discovering her homosexuality is the fact she regards women, and Shug Avery in particular very charming and appealing: “Shug Avery was a woman. The most beautiful woman I ever saw. She more pretty than my mama.”⁶⁴ The connection between Shug Avery and Celie’s mother can be drawn, as Shug Avery is more experienced and guides and advises Celie. Celie sometimes misses her deceased mother, Shug Avery acts as a motherly figure. Perhaps this could be a sign of Celie's fixation on her mother. Celie does not think about the fascination with Shug Avery a lot at first and does not think of herself as different because she has never been taught about sex or sexuality; the story is set in rural Georgia at the beginning of the 20th century. This setting means a lack of sexual education. As noted by The Board of Education, sexual education was taught for the first time during the 1940s.⁶⁵ As described by Cass at the first stage, lesbian women often misinterpret their attraction to women and regard it only as a beloved friendship. This might be the case for Celie as she might confuse her sexual attraction with either someone replacing her lost mother figure or a friend diminishing her loneliness. Celie’s initial confusion can be connected to the period she lived in.

Celie does not feel any apparent disgust with herself as David in *Giovanni's Room* does. It can be concluded that the first stages of discovering the sexual identities of characters might differ. On the one hand, is David rejecting his sexuality, trying to hide it and wanting to comply with heteronormative rules; on the other hand, there is Celie, who perhaps does not realise she is different in the first stage of exploring sexuality because she is either too traumatised or inexperienced. She might have confused the attraction with friendliness or just seeing the beauty of a beautiful woman, who was kind and behaviourally resembled her mother. However, both characters are later met with reality and must realise the nature of their sexuality.

⁶⁴ Walker, *The Color Purple*, 13.

⁶⁵ Board of Education, *Sex Education in Schools and Youth Organisations*, Educational Pamphlet No. 119 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1943)

Later, in Giovanni's Room, David is an adult. However, he still hides his sexuality. When thinking about gay men, for instance, a soldier he met in the army, he regards them with derogatory terms and frowns upon them, as mentioned before. David tried to cover his sexuality by associating himself with women: "I made up a long and untrue story about a girl I was going with..."⁶⁶ Later in his life, David meets Hella and proposes to her and again associates himself with women in order to hide. It also seems that David only uses women in order to forget about men. When David is reminiscing about the past, however, he has contradicting thoughts. On one side, he mentions he likes Hella and describes her as charming; on the other side, he mentions he thought he had loved her only before meeting Giovanni and starting the affair: "I was thinking, when I told Hella that I had loved her, of those days before anything awful, irrevocable, had happened to me, when an affair was nothing more than an affair."⁶⁷ This might be the case of David thinking he feels only attracted to a male body; then meeting Giovanni, and realising he had developed deep feelings for him. One can assume it feels like the end of the world, doom, as he uses the word irrevocable. One can conclude that David liked Hella; nevertheless, he never loved her, and this is also supported by his statement: "I thought she would be fun to have fun with. That was how it began, that was all it meant to me; I am not sure now, in spite of everything, that it ever really meant more than that to me."⁶⁸ It might seem as if David was only using Hella as a cover for his sexuality. This can be described with the term beard, which is, according to Green, depicted as a woman who is either used only as a façade for homosexual men to appear as heterosexual without consent or is willingly helping their field.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, David's confusion is apparent, and he even mentions wanting to have a wife and kids and returning to the stage of denial and blindness before meeting Giovanni: "I wanted to be inside again, with the light and safety, with my manhood unquestioned watching my woman put my children to bed."⁷⁰ Due to inner chaos, one can conclude that David is not developing and remains in the first stage of the confusion described by Cass and denies himself. He still struggles and does not want to be attracted to men, and regrets finding out he is. One might assume David's intention was never to hurt Hella, and he was not using her. He was, in fact, confused and thought he would love her and marry her. It can be believed that he was not

⁶⁶ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 14

⁶⁷ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 9

⁶⁸ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 12

⁶⁹ Jonathon Green, *Green's Dictionary of Slang* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), s.v. "beard."

⁷⁰ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 79

using Hella as a beard. Light in the excerpt above might also symbolise heterosexuality; as for David, homosexuality is connected to darkness inside the closet and inside the rooms in which he has affairs. The rooms are very dirty and usually dark and claustrophobic, and David wishes to be in light. The metaphor of the closet, which was mentioned by Armengol, is present throughout the whole novel and might be represented by those rooms. The first small, dark and secluded space might be the shower, the second one Joey's room and the third one Giovanni's room. This metaphor might symbolise the first stage and the second stage of Cass's model, describing self-rejection, denial, turmoil, anger and sadness. When a person is in the closet, they either deny or hide their sexuality, which is the case of David. Coming out of the closet would be admitting and accepting one's sexuality, sometimes disclosing it. David is hiding his sexuality in those particular rooms: "It is trapped in the room with me, always has been, and always will be, and it is yet more foreign to me than those foreign hills outside."⁷¹ In this excerpt, David talks about it, which perhaps means his sexuality. It is also said that this homosexuality is trapped inside the room with him, meaning his homosexuality is trapped inside him, and he cannot let it out. David also realises that homosexuality is part of himself and always has been.

In *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker, the main character, Celie, discovers her sexuality slowly because of sexual trauma, nevertheless, she is not in the closet. Celie realises that she does not feel anything when having sex with her husband Albert: "Mr. _____ clam on top of me, do his business, in ten minutes us both sleep. The only time I feel something stirring down there is when I think bout Shug. And that like running to the end of the road and it turn back on itself."⁷² In the first excerpt, Celie mentions that her attraction towards Shug Avery is pointless. Celie might still be in the first stage of Cass's system when she realises, she feels like men assumingly feel when looking at women. She feels different and is confused about the situation, and thinks heteronormative attraction is the only regular attraction: "He love looking at Shug. I love looking at Shug. But Shug don't love looking at but one of us. Him. But that the way it spose to be. I know that. But if that so, why my heart hurt me so..."⁷³ Celie realises she is different from the norm, and she feels sorrowful because Shug does seem to reciprocate only Albert's feelings at first. It is questionable whether Celie

⁷¹ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 13

⁷² Walker, *The Color Purple*, 44.

⁷³ Walker, *The Color Purple*, 47.

is in the second stage, according to Cass, because she does not think about how society will or will not accept her. She does not feel depressed because of oppressive societal norms. Her sadness stems from a personal reason - Shug liking Albert. It might be concluded that heteronormative rules are ingrained deeply. She also thinks that heterosexual marriage is normal. This might be caused not only by patriarchy but by deeply rooted religious beliefs. *The Color Purple* is an epistolary novel; in most of the letters, Celie addresses her letters to God, and she makes confessions. One may wonder if she feels comfortable enough to admit the nature of her sexuality. The religion might regard homosexuality as a sin. Maybe Celie gives her confession to God, so she does not feel the need to tell somebody else and perhaps she is aware she might have endanger herself or Shug. The suppression of homosexuality in religion is quite common. Nonetheless, it might be the agenda of institutions and churches, and Celie might feel content with telling God and only God her truth. The conversations between her and God remains private and she might deem this the safest option. However, the sole focus of the novel is not sexual identity, and perhaps due to the fact Celie is also a poor black woman, it is just another factor that plays a role in her oppression.

Regarding the suppression of Davids's feelings and his homosexuality, there are many instances when Davids tries to maintain his masculinity and wants to act heterosexual. For instance, when he is having a conversation with Jacques, and Jacques suggests he should invite Giovanni for a drink, David's answer is: "Why don't I? Well, you may find this hard to believe, but, actually, I'm sort of queer for girls myself., If that was his sister looking so good, I'd invite her to have a drink with us. I don't spend money on men."⁷⁴ Once again, he acts as heterosexual and puts on a façade. Jacques also pinpoints the question of David's masculinity and thinks David is too proud to offer a drink to a man, even though he wants to. After meeting Giovanni his homosexuality is metaphorically awakened again, after years of sleep, nevertheless, when he comes home with Giovanni he still tries to resist: "...he slowly pulled me down with him to that bed. With everything in me screaming No! yet the sum of me sighed Yes."⁷⁵ David feels turmoil, which can be described as a sign of stage two of Cass's model. David is still confused and because of his internalized homophobia. However now he cannot deny it. Due to the alienation mental health of queer people suffers, but because of ostracization from society these people are not likely to seek psychological help as mentioned

⁷⁴ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 28

⁷⁵ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 52

by James Lock.⁷⁶ Needless to mention even though homosexuality was not persecuted in Paris, if David sought help to resolve his homosexual turmoil, he would be probably recommended for conversion therapy.

Nevertheless, David falls in love with Giovanni, and he has to realise he is truly attracted to men both sexually and romantically: “And I realized that such childishness was fantastic at my age and the happiness out of which it sprang yet more so; for that moment I really loved Giovanni, who had never seemed more beautiful than he was that afternoon.”⁷⁷ This seems to be a step towards acceptance which could point to the third or fourth stage in Cass's model. David admitted he loves Giovanni, even though only during his inner monologue. After the affair with Giovanni, David accepts he lived in denial: “I was the one you said you wanted to marry! 'I mean,' I said, I was lying to myself.”⁷⁸ After the talk with Hella, he eventually accepts he is homosexual and even though it is not stated explicitly in the book, there is a dialogue between Hella and David in which both of them accept David's sexual orientation: “ ‘It's not the only thing I got wrong’, she said. ... ‘Well ’, I said to Hella, now you know.’ ”⁷⁹ This might be seen as acceptance, and according to the stages of Vivienne Cass, this might be perceived as the third or fourth subject when a homosexual accepts his identity. David is not in denial any more. He still cannot say out loud he is homosexual, however he implies it and makes sure Hella knows it. Despite Giovanni's execution and the gloomy situation, he senses a slight amount of hope and prays to God for improvement: “I must believe, I must believe, that the heavy grace of God, which has brought me to this place, is all that can carry me out of it.”⁸⁰ One might assume David wants to leave Paris and maybe even Europe. What happens with David after that is not stated. However, it is noticeable that he has accepted his sexuality; he does not try to hide it, at least in front of himself. He also made the right decision by not marrying Hella, which might have hurt her even more. David is then at least free within his mind and does not hurt women because of his denial further. It can be concluded that David is not out of closet completely, as he will probably return to the USA and will not disclose his sexual identity publicly, however, he might be able to tell at least his father, and his remaining family, and he will not suffer by looking for a beard, or a woman with whom he would be in a lavender marriage with. Despite the gloomy atmosphere

⁷⁶ James Lock, "Treatment of Homophobia in a Gay Male Adolescent," *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 52, no. 2 (1998): 202-206. doi:10.1176/appi.psychotherapy.1998.52.2.202.

⁷⁷ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 65.

⁷⁸ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 123.

⁷⁹ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 122.

⁸⁰ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 127.

and execution, David's life might improve because he accepted himself, and we can see that he still has faith in God as stated, but perhaps even in himself as at the end of the novel, is David described as optimistic, leaving for the new beginnings, with awakening sky upon him. The word choice is interesting, as it might also symbolise David's awakening, his realisation and acceptance of his sexuality. At the beginning of the novel, David says he wanted to find himself by moving to Paris, and one might say he did.

In the case of Celie, the acceptance of all of her parts of the identity is even greater. According to stages by Cass, Celie might be in the fifth or sixth stage, when she focuses also on other parts of her personality not only her sexuality. And one may also see she is proud of her identity. The assumption was that Celie would suffer more because of her sexuality, as homosexuals were persecuted more at the beginning of the 20th century compared to the 1950s. However, this hypothesis was disproven, as Celie seems to cope better with her identity. This might be because the author Alice Walker lived in the 1980s when homosexuals had all the legal rights they were denied before. Perhaps Alice Walker did not feel the urge to write about homosexual oppression as the situation improved. Or perhaps the setting of rural Georgia might have contributed to Celie not thinking about her sexuality a lot, as there was no sexual education. Celie's suffering might also be eased by her confession to god and keeping her sexuality private. Other factors might be different types of oppression, like race, which overshadowed sexual oppression. This will be further researched in the next chapter.

3. Race in novels *Giovanni's Room* by James Baldwin and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker

Members of the LGBTQ community suffered throughout history not only from discrimination for their sexuality but sometimes also their race, especially Afro-American people. After the abolition of slavery and its end, new forms of discrimination and oppression appeared. Racism continued throughout the 20th century. As a sign of racial oppression, Jim Crow laws can be listed, which started the segregation era, according to Fremon. These laws, described by Fremon, separated public places such as bars, parks, and public transport seating, creating white-only and black areas.⁸¹ Schill and Wachter define racial segregation as the legal and formal separation of Afro-American people from the white majority, emphasizing its importance in housing, which consequently created undesirable neighbourhoods like ghettos.⁸² Legal Information Institute in the USA defines segregation as the separation of ethnic groups based on their ethnicity, manifesting mainly in ordinary life like housing or schooling.⁸³ Racially segregating laws started during the 1880s and remained in effect until the 1960s, with the end of segregating laws in 1964, as stated by the United States National Archives. The laws were stricter at the beginning of the 20th century and were gradually loosened. The Civil Rights Movement for liberation was established in 1954, and with it, the rights of black people started to improve. The prejudice remained especially in southern states, which were satisfied neither with the abolition of slavery nor with the end of segregation.⁸⁴ However, during the 1980s when *The Color Purple* was written, there was little oppression in Pettigrew's opinion.⁸⁵ For this thesis, the definition of racial segregation will stem from both mentioned definitions, emphasising separation in housing. Race is also crucial for understanding the multiple oppression in novels, which can be described by the term multiple jeopardy. Multiple jeopardy is, according to King, a state of being oppressed due to

⁸¹ David Fremon, *The Jim Crow Laws and Racism in American History* (Berkeley Heights: Enslow, 2000), 27-28.

⁸² Michael Schill; Susan, Wachter, "Principles to Guide Housing Policy at the Beginning of the Millennium". *Cityscape* (2001): 23-24.

⁸³ "Segregation," Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law, accessed February 3, 2024, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/segregation>.

⁸⁴ "Congress and the Civil Rights Act of 1964," U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, accessed February 3, 2024,

https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/treasures_of_congress/text/page24_text.html#:~:text=Signed%20into%20law%2C%20on%20July,%2C%20libraries%2C%20and%20public%20schools.

⁸⁵ Thomas F. Pettigrew, "Race and Class in the 1980s: An Interactive View," *Daedalus* 110, no. 2 (1981): 233-238, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20024731>.

multiple reasons – gender, race, sexuality and others.⁸⁶

Surprisingly, in the novel *Giovanni's Room*, the skin colour of the characters does not play any role in the oppression at first sight. Giovanni's nationality is Italian, as he talks about his home country, Italy, so he is of tanned skin.⁸⁷ There is no oppression based on skin colour, and the novel is, as Phillips says, considered colourless by critics. This was a bold choice for an author like James Baldwin due to the fact he was Afro-American and was expected to describe racial oppression and struggles via his books. These expectations will be discussed later in detail. As mentioned in previous chapters, Baldwin wanted to escape the USA's oppressive laws, which is why he immigrated to France. Race politics of France was benevolent, and according to Dorigny, slavery in France was abolished in 1848, and the abolition was attempted even before that. After the end of enslavement, there was no legal racial segregation or discrimination.⁸⁸ It can be concluded that Afro-American individuals were legally less oppressed in Paris, which was a melting pot of Europe than in the US. This might be the reason why Baldwin set the story of *Giovanni's Room* in Paris, the centre of progress, with the liberating absence of laws to oppress sexual or racial minorities. Phillips highlights that there are no Afro-American people in the novel, and the issue of race is not explicitly regarded or talked about, which was entirely unexpected for an author like Baldwin, as revealed above. Afro-American writers were expected to write about themes like slavery or racial oppression, as Phillips notes, so-called Negro topics in the 1950s and help the fight for equality.⁸⁹ However, it might be assumed that a novel by an Afro-American author about black homosexual men would connect homosexuality, which was seen as perversion, to the black community. Afro-American community would probably be offended, as due to racial oppression, black people tried to comply with norms set by white heterosexual society. As mentioned in the previous chapter and also by Phillips, Baldwin thought that the lack of sexual and racial freedom is interconnected and should be fought for simultaneously, which would lead to liberation in both aspects. Baldwin was pressured (even by his publisher) to write a typical novel connected with Afro-American topics of oppression.⁹⁰ According to Armengol, critics were dissatisfied with the absence of racial problems and thought of

⁸⁶ King, Deborah K. "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology." *Signs* 14, no. 1 (1988): 42–44. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3174661>.

⁸⁷ James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1956), 32.

⁸⁸ Marcel Dorigny, *The Abolitions of Slavery: From L'eger F'elcit'e Sonthonax to Victor Schoelcher, 1793, 1794, 1848* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003), vii.

⁸⁹ Caryl Phillips, "Introduction," 5-8.

⁹⁰ Phillips, "Introduction," 9.

Baldwin as whitewashed. The novel with the controversial topic of homosexuality published by an Afro-American author in the 1950s contributed to negative critiques.⁹¹

Armengol introduces an intriguing idea – sexuality in *Giovanni's Room* is a metaphor for race, and it can be considered one concept in Baldwin's work. This is supported by Baldwin himself in an interview when he said that he sees the topics as one, as noted by Armengol.⁹² The metaphor for the room of Giovanni as a closet described in the previous chapter, can also be seen as a metaphor for the Afro-American race. In the period of racism and homophobia, one could perceive a different sexual orientation or different race as a deviation or stain on one's reputation or image. Homosexuality and different skin colour were distinctive features which ostracized a person from society, especially during the 1950s. These negatively perceived characteristics were supposed to be separated, and invisible so they would not disrupt and contaminate majorly white, heterosexual society. They should be kept in the metaphorical closet, not seen and not talked about. The connection can be drawn as black people were segregated for instance in flats, houses and neighbourhoods. David has his affairs with men in rooms, always hidden and contained inside. Separation and segregation can be connected with both race and sexuality in the novel, as this might be one concept.

David is in a metaphorical closet represented by rooms which was described in the previous chapter. What is quite interesting is the state of the rooms. Rooms are always dirty, infected and dark, claustrophobic. In the decade of 1950s, homosexuality (blackness) might have been perceived almost as contamination of the room, or a contained disease which should not be spread. Although the connection of homosexuality with AIDS was the main topic of the 1980s, even before that were homosexuals connected with diseases according to Hammack.⁹³ David is ashamed of this dirtiness and fears somebody will discover it: "The very bed, in its sweet disorder, testified to vileness. I wondered what Joey's mother would say when she saw the sheets."⁹⁴ There are stained sheets in the excerpt which might be evidence in David's mind for his own dirtiness because of his self-internalized homophobia. Dirtiness can relate to prejudices against black people and also segregation. There have been many prejudices and stereotypes regarding black people throughout the first half of the 20th century.

⁹¹ Josep M. Armengol, "In the Dark Room: Homosexuality and/as Blackness in James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room*," *Signs* 37, no. 3 (2012): 671–72. <https://doi.org/10.1086/662699>.

⁹² Armengol, "In the Dark Room," 674.

⁹³ Phillip L. Hammack et al., "Gay Men's Health and Identity: Social Change and the Life Course," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 47, no. 1 (2018): 59–62, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-017-0990-9>.

⁹⁴ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 12.

One of the most prominent stereotypes, as Williams claims, is the dirtiness and smell connected with them. She also mentions that segregation was seen as a hygienic solution to prevent the dispersion of illnesses that came from dirtiness. It is not socially acceptable to have a dirty room, it is something to be ashamed of; the same stigma comes with a person being homosexual or Afro-American during the 1950s. Just like sexual minorities, Afro-Americans were seen as outcasts whose dirtiness needed to be contained and closed either in facilities or neighbourhoods, sometimes ghettos.⁹⁵ According to Bonam and her colleagues, this is a common stereotype for black communities when the flats or even whole neighbourhoods, which are predominantly Afro-American, are perceived to be dirty or even dangerous.⁹⁶ Filthiness here can be a symbol of the stereotypical living place of a black (homosexual) pair: “This bedroom, of course, is quite untidy, the light burning, my bathrobe, books, dirty socks, and a couple of dirty glasses, and a coffee cup half full of stale coffee—lying around, all over the place; and the sheets on the bed a tangled mess.”⁹⁷ Inside the room, there is dirtiness, representing both homosexuality and blackness trapped and secluded, just like homosexuals in closets and black people in segregated houses were.

Giovanni's Room is a novel that is at first sight colourless, all white, and not concerned with race issues at all. And although it is coded in between the lines, we cannot speak officially of racism, as characters are not oppressed based on their race. On the other hand, in *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker, race is an issue regarded explicitly. This novel was published in the 1980s, after the end of racial segregation and racially oppressive laws. Alice Walker could explicitly write about the suffering of Afro-American people in past in the first half of the 20th century. In the decade of 1980s, the author was not pressured into writing about the topic, it was her free choice. The description of homosexual acts and racial oppression are portrayed explicitly due to the absence of persecution of limiting laws and censorship, described in the first chapter. Compared to *Giovanni's Room*, where there is no explicit description of homosexual acts or race, which is encoded via metaphors because it was written during the rigid decade of the 1950s.

Whereas in *Giovanni's Room* homosexuality, representing also blackness, (both

⁹⁵ Monnica T. Williams, “African Americans and Pathological Stereotypes: Assumptions about race can lead to wrong conclusions and prejudice,” *Psychology Today*, December 27, 2011, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/culturally-speaking/201112/african-americans-and-pathological-stereotypes>.

⁹⁶ C. M. Bonam, H. B. Bergsieker, and J. L. Eberhardt, “Polluting Black space,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 145, no. 11 (2016): 1561-1565. doi: 10.1037/xge0000226.

⁹⁷ Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, 56.

metaphorically represented by dirtiness) has a predominantly negative connotation; they are dirty and need to be contained, in *The Color Purple*, black skin colour has both positive and negative connotations. For instance, we can find Celie looking at Shug Avery, deeming her very beautiful and black: “She was pretty, man. Black as anything, and skin just as smooth.”⁹⁸ Moreover, in a letter from Nettie, the black people of Senegal are described as stunning: “Celie, there is something magical about it. Because the black is so black the eye is simply dazzled, and then there is the shining that seems to come, really, from moonlight, it is so luminous, but their skin glows even in the sun.”⁹⁹ Nettie describes black people almost as angelic creatures, very poetically. There is a certain pride that can be sensed in Nettie's description of black skin. It might be concluded that Nettie and Celie are not ashamed of black skin, consider it beautiful and are proud of their heritage. One might assume that Celie does not want to be white even though she might be disadvantaged in society. She accepts her blackness, despite the unwelcoming situation at the beginning of the 20th century. This might relate to dealing with her sexual identity. As described in the previous chapter, Celie feels content with her sexuality and also with her black skin. She tries to focus on things she can change in her life and her situation is difficult enough. It might be assumed that she tries to fight the oppression from society by being her true self and not feeling any self-hatred because of skin colour or internalised homophobia. After her husband's comment on her so perceived flaws – not having money or being a black woman, she accepts them, which might be a sign of resistance to her husband but also society: “ I'm pore, I'm black, I may be ugly and can't cook, a voice say to everything listening. But I'm here.”¹⁰⁰ Celie explains she is not going anywhere despite the negative opinion of the world.

There are many strictly negative connotations connected with being black, for instance when the black colour is compared to the colour of tar: “She black as tar, she nappy-headed.”¹⁰¹ Comparison to tar is rather unflattering and is used negatively to describe Shug Avery's unappealing look by Mr_____ and Old Mr._____. Tar can be toxic and should be contained carefully. The colour of tar is usually black and one might wonder if there is symbolism behind the comparison. Tar is connected with dirt and smell and this could be connected with negative stereotypes about Afro-American people as mentioned above. This might be a great symbol for negative stereotypes – as tar needs to be contained separately, it

⁹⁸ Walker, *The Color Purple*, 69.

⁹⁹ Walker, *The Color Purple*, 77.

¹⁰⁰ Walker, *The Color Purple*, 125.

¹⁰¹ Walker, *The Color Purple*, 39.

smells and is black. In *Giovanni's Room* by James Baldwin, homosexuality (the metaphor for blackness) needed to be contained, similarly to the tar in *The Color Purple*, which symbolizes blackness too. People usually walk on tar or drive their cars on tar roads, which might symbolize people with black skin being walked over and that is why black skin is compared to tar. In *The Color Purple*, Celie is not ashamed of her colour, nevertheless, there are many unfavourable remarks about black skin colour. Being black is here connected with another derogatory term for Afro-Americans, and that is nappy-headed. According to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, it means "kinky and fuzzy," and it was used as a deprecating slang for the hair of Afro-American people.¹⁰² This is also agreed on by Jenkins and Cole, who add that the term is inseparably connected with racism.¹⁰³ Another example of a negative connotation to list is the description of Shug Avery by Carrie, as Carrie deems being too black unattractive: "Not so pretty. ... She too black."¹⁰⁴

In *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker, race and skin colour are mentioned explicitly, in *Giovanni's Room*, the reader can only guess if Baldwin had hidden symbolism behind certain expressions like dirtiness. The race is included via metaphors. It can be concluded that Baldwin was pressured to write about racial issues, and perhaps that is why he did not include race overtly. Another reason might be he would have angered Afro-Americans by relating them to a homosexual story. If David or Giovanni were black, it could spark an outrage due to the fact it could create an image of Afro-Americans being connected to homosexuals, who were, during the 1950s, regarded as perverts. Nevertheless, race is included indirectly via a metaphor for homosexuality. Both homosexuals and black people were different from white heterosexual society. Baldwin himself suggested that the concept of sexuality and race can be seen as one. The metaphor describing dirtiness inside affair rooms can stand for both homosexuality and black skin colour. Dirtiness is seen as something negative, related to diseases, something which needs to be contained just as homosexuality or blackness in the 1950s. This can be connected with racial segregation, for instance in housing. Whereas there are only metaphors for race in *Giovanni's Room*, in *The Color Purple*, blackness is explicit and has both negative and positive connotations. Alice Walker published her novel throughout the 1980s, and there were no negative comments regarding race and colour in *The Color*

¹⁰² "Nappy," Etymology Online, accessed February 6, 2024, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/nappy>.

¹⁰³ James H. Cole, and Cheryl D. Jenkins. "Nappy-Headed Hos: Media Framing, Blame Shifting and the Controversy Over Don Imus' Pejorative Language." In *Race and News: Critical Perspectives*, edited by Christopher P. Campbell, Kim M. LeDuff, Cheryl D. Jenkins, and Rockell A. Brown, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 177.

¹⁰⁴ Walker, *The Color Purple*, 20.

Purple. As described in the beginning of this chapter, ethnic and racial minorities gained more rights after 1964, and oppression decreased. There was no problem with *The Color Purple* highlighting racial oppression and problems Afro-American people faced during the first half of the 20th century, and such a daring, honest story based on real life was rewarded with many prizes and critical appraisals. Alice Walker was not pressured into writing about racial issues; it was simply her choice. The main character Celie hears negative remarks concerning black skin colour; however, she does not care, she accepts her blackness. Moreover, by accepting her, blackness she shows resistance and pride to the world. Character shows that despite struggles, Afro-American people should not be ashamed of their skin colour. It has to be noted that David is a white man, and does not suffer from multiple jeopardy, while Celie does. Despite multiple oppressions, Celie deals with her situation better, perhaps because she does not struggle internally with her identity, she does not hate herself. It can be concluded that both novels show racial issues, and struggles of black people, even though *Giovannis Room* only figuratively. Noteworthy is also the background of authors and the reception of the novels, as Alice Walker could freely and explicitly write about homosexuality and race while James Baldwin could not and was criticised.

Conclusion

In conclusion, sexuality and race plays a fundamental role in both novels. *Giovanni's Room* was both written and set during the 1950s, had some autobiographical aspects and showed the oppression and struggles of homosexuals during the 1950s, which was quite an unwelcoming decade. The author was told to burn his book, and critiques were quite harsh because of the homosexual topic and not including race. *The Color Purple* was written during the 1980s and was overall received well, despite a few critiques pointing out very antagonistic depictions of men. This is an essential point as Alice Walker was able to write explicitly and in detail about homosexuality. She was also able to write about black lesbian women without any shame and without receiving hateful remarks due to the topic of homosexuality or race. This was not the case for Baldwin, as his novel was not critically appraised, and he was called a traitor for both writing about something perceived as a perversion and not including black characters. He was expected to write about the struggles of black people and support the Afro-American community. It can be concluded that race is not included explicitly in *Giovanni's Room*, it is included via metaphors for homosexuality. One might also mention that Baldwin did not feel oppressed only because of his race but also because of his homosexuality, so this might be the reason for writing *Giovanni's Room*. One might also suppose that had he written about black homosexual men, the critiques would have been even harsher. The Afro-American community might have been offended because of the depiction of black people as perverts. During the 1950s, there was still racial discrimination, and black people tried to adhere to standard heterosexual orientation as much as possible. The topic of homosexuality was still taboo in this decade, and the novel was received negatively. The decade of the 1980s was the decade of improvement for sexual minorities, and writing about homosexuality was no longer taboo; homosexuality was decriminalised and normalised, and Walker was not shunned for choosing this topic.

The acceptance of sexual identity and sexuality is also crucial for the characters in the novels. It was found that David lived in a society that viewed homosexuality as a perversion during the 1950s, and in his home country, it was punished as a crime. David struggles with his identity and focuses on this part of him almost all the time, as he cannot accept it. At first, he suppresses it and keeps it hidden. The mentioned metaphor for closet and hiding sexual identity is represented by rooms in which David has affairs with men. Self-internalized

homophobia is quite apparent as he hates himself for having affairs and looks down on homosexuals, uses slurs, remains in the closet and fears his homosexuality will be discovered. This relates to the decade of the 1950s, as disclosing homosexuality came with many disadvantages described in the first chapter of the thesis. In *The Color Purple*, the main character, Celie, is not explicitly punished for being lesbian and does not suffer from self-hatred, she accepts her sexuality. It was found this might have more causes. The first reason might be Alice Walker felt content with the situation of homosexuals in the 1980s and did not feel the need to make homosexuality the main topic of the novel and the main problem of Celie. The second cause might be the setting of the story, as nobody in the rural south during the first half of the 20th century discussed sexuality, and lesbians were persecuted less overall compared to gay men as mentioned in the first chapter. Another reason for Celie not being focused solely on her sexuality might be multiple jeopardy. Celie is disadvantaged in society due to the fact she is an Afro-American lesbian woman whom others do not consider attractive or exciting. In the third chapter, it was discovered that Celie suffered because of her skin colour. However, Celie accepts all parts of her identity, and she reaches the fifth or sixth stage of Cass's model. She is content with her sexuality and focuses on the other parts of her identity. In the case of David, the internal struggle is much bigger. His confusion is profound, and he thinks he is attracted to women and tries to adhere to the norm. However, he later realises he had fallen in love with Giovanni and did not love Hella. At the end of the story, David stops suppressing his true sexual identity and confesses in front of Hella, and also internally, in front of himself. Nevertheless, it cannot be stated that David reaches the fifth or sixth stage of Cass's model, as one might assume he still focuses on his sexuality and does not focus on other parts of his identity. Celie does not struggle with her identity and is not hesitant or confused when choosing women. On the other hand, David is so unsure he might have thought he is attracted to women because of his internalised homophobia and lack of opportunities to discover his sexuality safely, due to the decade he lived in. He only accepts his sexuality at the end, whereas Celie seems content with it throughout the novel and seems to shift her focus on things she can change. This is what two perspectives of two authors from different decades look like. David, from the 1950s, struggles and is challenged because of his sexuality, and it might be his biggest problem. Celie's biggest problem was not being lesbian during the first half of the 20th century, which might be surprising.

The story of Celie is set during the first half of the 20th century, and one might wonder if Alice Walker depicted this period accurately. Some might say that in the first half of the

century being homosexual would cause more issues than in the 1950s and deem *The Color Purple* inaccurate. However, Alice Walker had previously mentioned letters from her grandmother, which inspired the novel. Focusing on other more pressing issues, multiple jeopardy, rural settings with inaccessible sexual education, and little persecution of lesbians are more probable reasons for Celie dealing with her homosexuality more easily than David. The thesis statement can be deemed correct as through the character of Celie and David can be seen exploration of sexuality in particular decades, however the linear and gradual progress and improvement of rights of homosexuals is not shown in novels, and other aspects play a role in each story. The situations of main characters are different. It was also proven that race is included in both novels, even though in *Giovanni's Room* only metaphorically.

Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá tématem sexuality v románech *The Color Purple* od Alice Walker a *Giovannis Room* od Jamese Baldwina. Cílem je popsat sexuální menšiny, zákony postihující je, opresi ale i vývoj sexuální identity napříč dekadami dvacátého století v těchto románech. Premisou je postupný stabilní vývoj a zlepšování práv homosexuálů během dvacátého století. Je nutno zjistit, zda romány vyobrazují realisticky postoj k homosexuálům v dané době. Hrdinka románu *The Color Purple* Celie, žije na začátku dvacátého století v neurbanizované Georgii. Naproti tomu David, hrdina románu *Giovanni's Room*, pobývá v Paříži během padesátých let. Podle premisy postupné liberace homosexuálů, Celie by měla být utlačována více. V kapitolách jsou definovány stěžejní pojmy, v první kapitole je kladen důraz na historické reálie. Dále jsou analyzovány úryvky z obou románů, které definují specifické fenomény. Poté jsou oba romány porovnány.

V první kapitole je nastíněn kulturně historický kontext dvacátých a padesátých let dvacátého století, protože romány jsou zasazeny do tohoto období. Jsou zde ale také popsány osmdesátá léta dvacátého století, vzhledem k tomu, že autorka Alice Walker napsala *The Color Purple* právě během osmdesátých let dvacátého století, což mělo vliv i na její dílo. V první kapitole jsou vysvětleny pojmy jako homosexualita, homosexuál či sexuální minorita. Pro kontext obou románů a vývoj sexuální identity u jednotlivých postav je doba a místo, kde se konkrétní román odehrává velmi důležitá. Pro jednotlivé dekady je zde popsáno veřejné mínění i zákony dotýkající se sexuálních menšin, které například zapříčinily strach postav z odhalení jejich sexuality, anebo smíření se svou sexualitou. Celie, která žije během první poloviny dvacátého století na neurbanizovaném jihu, si svou odlišnost ani nejdříve neuvědomuje, což může být zapříčiněno dobou i místem, protože v první polovině dvacátého století se v oblasti amerického jihu o homosexuálech nemluvilo, a celkově žádná osvěta týkající se sexuality neprobíhala. Zajímavý je kontrast s autorkou, protože Alice Walker napsala tento román v osmdesátých letech dvacátého století, kdy atmosféra a názor veřejnosti na homosexuály byly pozitivnější. Fakt, že Alice Walker tento román mohla napsat, je znakem toho, že téma týkající homosexuality již nebylo tabu. Jiný byl ale případ Jamesa Baldwina. V první kapitole jsou popsány zákony perzekující homosexuály ve Spojených státech v padesátých letech dvacátého století. Baldwin byl homosexuál, a kvůli těmto zákonům a rasové segregaci odjel do Paříže obdobně jako hlavní hrdina jeho románu David. Pro ilustraci těchto zákonů jsou zmíněny úryvky z románu, kdy je jeden voják zbaven své funkce právě kvůli homosexualitě. Po příjezdu do Paříže David zmiňuje,

že i když ve Francii je homosexualita většinou netrestaná, v jeho rodné zemi je to jinak. Místo, kde se román odehrává, je nesmírně důležité, protože stejný příběh by se pravděpodobně nemohl odehrát ve Spojených státech kvůli zmíněným zákonům. Jednotlivé dekády a nálady vůči homosexuálům během nich jsou popsány pomocí odborných knih a zmíněny jsou výpovědi homosexuálů. Zdrojem pro zákony jsou různé trestní zákoníky z daných období.

Druhá kapitola se věnuje vývoji sexuality a sexuální identity teoreticky a následně analyzuje tento vývoj u hlavních postav románů. Hlavním teoretickým modelem pro popis je model podle Vivienne Cass. V této kapitole jsou popsány jednotlivé fáze zmíněného modelu, a poté jsou ilustrovány pomocí situací a myšlenkových pochodů hlavních postav románů Celie a Davida. V obou románech jsou přítomny fáze jedna a čtyři, v románu *The Color Purple* jsou přítomny i fáze pět a šest. Diskutován je i vztah k opačnému pohlaví a jeho vliv na vývoj sexuality. Například David si v jistých chvílích přeje být šťastný se svojí snoubenkou Hellou a myslí si, že ji miluje, je velice zmatený. Na druhou stranu Celie si nikdy nenamlouvá, že by svého manžela milovala a mužů se bojí. Vývoj sexuality je zkoumán v této kapitole a možné vlivy, které mohly definovat osobnost postavy, jsou objasňovány. Během popisu fází jsou popsány i další fenomény spojené s objevováním sexuality a s homosexualitou, jako například internalizovaná homofobie u Davida. Jev je definován, a jsou nastíněny jeho důsledky. V románu *Giovannis Room* je přítomna metafora skříně – populární metafora pro sexuální menšiny, které udržují svou sexualitu v tajnosti. V románu *The Color Purple* je přítomen jiný fenomén, a to vliv náboženství a kultury na sexuality. Jak je zmíněno výše, Celie není edukována o své sexualitě a čtenář se může jen domnívat proč. *The Color Purple* je román v dopisech, a Celie většinu těchto dopisů adresuje právě Bohu. Právě možná kvůli náboženskému vlivu a prostředí rurálního jihu, Celie neadresuje svou homosexualitu. Možná ale také díky tomu, je s ní smířena lépe než David. Celie je znevýhodněna kvůli svému pohlaví, rase a nedostatku finančních prostředků, proto se možná nezaměřuje na svou sexualitu. Přijmutí a vnitřní zmatek obou postav jsou popsány v této kapitole, i s možnými příčinami. Velkou roli hraje i možnost autorů psát o sexualitě. Jak zmíněno výše, Baldwin nemohl být explicitní a téma homosexuality nebylo během šedesátých let dvacátého století, kdy román vyšel, populární. Baldwin ale pravděpodobně cítil potřebu adresovat homosexualitu a útlak, který homosexuálové zažívali, právě kvůli situaci v šedesátých letech. Alice Walker nebyla kritizována za téma homosexuality, i když někteří kritikové zmínili, že vulgární jazyk nebyl vhodně použit. Možná díky tomu, že práva homosexuálů se během dvaceti let rapidně zlepšila, necítila Alice Walker potřebu napsat román, kde by byla sexualita hlavní téma. Podle kritiků se snažila spíše autenticky popsat život a strasti mladé, chudé, homosexuální Afro-Američanky během první poloviny dvacátého století na neurbanizovaném jihu.

Rasa a etnicita je také prolínána v těchto románech se sexualitou, což je popsáno ve třetí kapitole. Rasový útlak je spjat s útlakem sexuálních menšin, tak jak to popisoval i James Baldwin. V kapitole je popsán termín multiple jeopardy, který se týká multi-levelové oprese. Tento termín je spojený s oběma romány, i když se může zdát, že není. Rasa na první pohled nehraje žádnou roli v románu *Giovanni's Room*, ale opak je pravdou. Na Afro-Amerického spisovatele Jamese Baldwina byl vyvíjen tlak, aby se věnoval tématům, které byly označeny jako negro topics. Tyto témata se týkaly rasismu a strastí Afro-Američanů, a psaní o nich pomáhalo s osvětou. Proto bylo velice šokující a pobuřující, že román *Giovanni's Room* obsahuje pouze postavy bílé pleti. I když je Giovanni Ital a je tudíž snědé pleti, je to Evropan a David je Američan. V románu *Giovanni's Room* je ale rasa popsána mezi řádky a může být přímo zaměněna se sexualitou. V románu je například mnoho metafor, které by mohly symbolizovat černou kůži a spojovat ji s negativními stereotypy, které jsou popsány v této kapitole. Sexualita, která je pomyslně zavřena uvnitř skříně, skryta před zraky společnosti, by mohla být spojována s Afro-Americkou etnicitou, která byla v tuto dobu v Americe segregována – např. oddělené bydlení či školy. Afro-Američani byli tak separováni od většinově bílé společnosti. To stejné se dělo i homosexuálům. Pokud byla odhalena odlišná sexuální orientace u člověka, a tento člověk nebyl zadržen, je stejně pravděpodobné, že společnost by se tohoto člověka stranila, a byl by separován např. od rodiny nebo by dostal výpověď v zaměstnání – byl by separován od většinově heterosexuální společnosti. V románu *The Color Purple* je barva kůže Celie dalším aspektem, proč je znevýhodňována, ale během románu lze spatřit i to, že Celie je hrdá na své africké kořeny a kulturu. Ve třetí kapitole jsou popsány pozitivní a negativní konotace spojené s rasou. Vysvětlen je zde pojem kolorismus a uvedeny jsou i příklady. Rasa či barva kůže zde nejsou popsány mezi řádky tak jako v *Giovanni's Room*. Na autorku Alice Walker nebyl vyvíjen ale žádný tlak, aby se těmto tématům věnovala.

V závěru bakalářské práce jsou zkoumány výsledky. Vysvětleny jsou spojitosti mezi dobou a místem, kde se romány odehrávají a situací autora, včetně reakce na knihy s obsahem homosexuálních motivů. Diskutovány jsou i opresivní zákony, názor společnosti i vývoj sexuální identity u obou hlavních postav a to, jak tento proces autoři popsali. Vylíčena je i role rasy a multi-levelové oprese. Závěrem je popsán celkový výsledek, týkající se změn ve společnosti v různých dekádách dvacátého století, co se týče pohledu na homosexuály, objevování sexuální identity ale i svobody slova autorů během různých dekád. Bylo zjištěno že román *Giovanni's Room* je v jistých aspektech, jako například homosexualita Davida, útlak či jeho útěk do Evropy, z části autobiografický. Román byl napsán v padesátých letech a byl i zasazen v té samé době. Teze bakalářské práce předpokládala že David bude méně utlačován a bude více vyrovnaný se svou sexualitou, protože příběh je zasazen do pozdější doby. Román *The Color Purple* je zasazen

v první polovině dvacátých let v rurálním prostředí. Autorka ho napsala v osmdesátých letech. Bylo shledáno, že Celie méně svou identitu potlačuje a je v tomto ohledu více vyrovnaná i když žije na začátku dvacátého století. Romány neukazují postupné zlepšení v právech homosexuálů. Teze tak byla vyvrácena. Možných důvodů je pro tuto skutečnost více. Autorka možná necítila potřebu napsat román zaměřující se na opresi kvůli sexualitě, kvůli uvolněné náladě v osmdesátých letech. Roli může hrát i multi-levelová oprese, kdy Celie je více utlačována kvůli rase, či genderu. Dalším vysvětlením může být rurální prostředí první poloviny dvacátých, kde nebyla žádná sexuální výchova, a lesby byly postihovány méně než homosexuální muži.

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