Being Homosexual and Its Consequences in Andre Aciman’s *Call Me By Your Name*

**Bertha Yuwanda Rahmandani**  
English Literature Program, English Language and Literature Departement, Faculty of Languages and Arts, State University of Surabaya  
berthayuwanda16020154012@mhs.unesa.ac.id

### Abstract

This study will be focused on the consequences that will be obtained by Elio and Oliver of being a homosexual couple in the novel *Call Me By Your Name* by Andre Aciman. The analysis will be divided into two main problems. The first one is about the discussion what are the consequences of Elio and Oliver’s being homosexual towards their social status in the novel. The second one is how society views Elio and Oliver’s homosexual relationship in the novel. This thesis analyzes the consequences of being a homosexual couple in the novel. Andre Aciman provides a different perspective on homosexual couples in his novel. He also made one family accept their child into a homosexual who most of the parents did not want their son to become homosexual. All the data is taken from the novel *Call Me By Your Name* by Andre Aciman in the form of quotes, phrases, dialogues, and descriptions. The analysis uses the concept of Homosexual, Sociology of Literature, and Queer theory which are suitable to be used in analyzing the novel using two questions above. The Sociology of literature theory is used to analyze society’s point of view towards a homosexual couple and explain what factors does the society judge the homosexual couple in their society. Queer theory is used to analyze someone who has sexual deviation, the factors that make them becoming homosexual, and the characteristics of a homosexual couple.

**Keywords:** society’s point of view, homosexual, queer

### INTRODUCTION

In recent days, there has been an increasing number of Queer issues that lifts on the surface, especially in literary works. The increasingly Queer issue is because it has already become a common thing in society. There are a lot of people who utter up their voice to legalize Queer in society and law. Therefore, it is a common thing in our society nowadays. Even though, some people still cannot admit that Queer is already a part of people’s community. How society reacts something new in their environment, and how
people interpret the phenomenon can reveal what is the phenomenon that happens in the society can affect the person who did the phenomenon. The people who still cannot admit this phenomenon usually do discrimination against the people who did the phenomenon, they can only sit quietly because usually, they ostracized by society (Tak, n.d.). This kind of event leading to the popularity of the sociology of literature as a form of critics towards Queer theory including literary works.

Knowing how society reacts to a phenomenon that happens in their environment can help so much for helping what should the perpetrators of the issue. Sociological of literature itself is introduced by Rene Welbeck and Austin Warren in the 19th century in their book ‘Theory of Literature’. There are literature and society theory in many theories in their book. The theory is talked about how society measures a phenomenon throughout the class of society itself. In a society there are always social rules or norms that people have to obey, if they did not obey or keep the norms they will automatically not become the part of that society (Swingew, n.d.). Therefore society can auto filtering what is wrong and what is right with the norms in their society. Also taking for Diana’s book, society can easily make a new norm if it is didn’t profitable for their life because it is human nature that they want to get profit as much as they can. Taking from Goldmann’s journal, every human being will automatically be making their society to filter what kind of people they want to be part of their society. They will make a group based on the same characteristic, same ideology, hobby, and many more to make themself comfortable and not disturb what they like. If it is there is someone who didn’t match with their thought they will walk away slowly or even show up that they didn’t like being in the same society with a person who didn’t has the same behavior as them (Goldmann, n.d.).

Among the numerous theme of the sociology of literature, one that bombards the writer’s interest to be implemented in this study is the Documentary Aspect of Literature. Taking for the novel Call Me By Your Name, the character Elio and Oliver are a homosexual partner that falls in love unknowingly. Queer is not a taboo issue anymore but still, for some people, it is not appropriate to legalize or admit that Queer is such a common thing and the people should legalize it. Norm is the big key to this thing will hard to happen, Queer itself is already such inappropriate behavior or sexual orientation. That is why many people still didn’t want Queer to become in their society. If the Queer still wants to make themself become part of that society, they will be in the lower class in that society. This novel is talked about a homosexual partner that they are still can fall in love with and even make-a-love with the other gender. That’s for bisexuality can also be analyzed in this paper. Bisexuality is a condition of a man or woman who can fall in love with the same gender and another gender (Callis & Callis, 2009). For instance, what is society’s reaction and what is the consequences that Elio and Oliver did is one of the complicated human thought. Every human being has their mind that it will not directly the same but they will be looking for something that closes enough to their mind (Teori, 2013). In Call Me By Your Name novel, the character of Elio and Oliver is someone who has sexual deviation that is homosexual and bisexual.

Many scholars have conducted a literary study in this particular field throughout the decades. Some of them are J. Drescher (Drescher, 2014), and Edwin Pascoe (Pascoe, 2018). They are talking the same point that is what is society’s perspective about Queer itself. No matter what they ever did, did society still accept them as part of their society. In this case, Elio and Oliver show their sexual behavior to their friends, also they show it up to society. What society reaches will be analyzed in this paper in the next chapter. The way they show up their relationship will make the society react and argue about their relationship.

The other thing that shows up in this novel is the masculinity of Oliver. Oliver who was older than Elio has a masculine vibe around him. Sometimes masculinity of someone can attract other people, and make them wondering with those people. Oliver’s masculinity is not being talked yet but, there is a journal from (Kramp, 2019) is talked about a man can affect other people with his masculinity and can be the social butterfly because of their characteristics. Therefore masculinity can be so attractive to other people.

Based on the background of the study, the researcher formulated the research question as what are the consequences of Elio and Oliver’s being homosexual towards their social status in the novel and how does society view of Elio and Oliver’s homosexual relationship in the novel?

This study is limited mainly focused on the discussion of masculinity and sexual deviations. To
avert broad analysis, some essential theories and concepts about sexuality are used applied, such as the concept of homosexuality, The Sociology of Literature, Queer theory.

METHOD

This paper will be using Queer theory and Sociology of Literature to analyze the questions above. The queer theory is to analyze how characters knowing that they have a sexual deviation and how they cope with it. Taking from Judith’s book, usually, someone who has sexual deviation is a teenager who still looking up their identity (Butler, n.d.). The way they looking their identity can lead them into good or bad personalities (Habarth, 2015). There is also someone who was born gay without he is knowing there is also someone who become gay because of their environment and their society. That is why a lot of teenagers still curious about their identity (Drescher, 2014). Therefore; they do anything to find their identity. In this novel Elio who is a teenager with sexual deviation, and he still looking up for his identity, therefore at the same time he can fall in love with Oliver and Marzia, the way Queer theory work is by analyzing the way Elio behaves, talks, dress-up, and gestures to find Elio’s homosexuality and the consequences towards his social status. There is also Sociology of Literature theory that is about society’s point of view towards Queer people. Society always filters their circle to make a good neighborhood. There are several things that society looks from Queer people such as the way they dress up, talk, behave, and gestures (Swingewood, 1974). For several years society allow the LGBT movements and legalizes them (Knauer, 2015). Norms on society also give an impact on those queer people, it can be the limitation of queer people to behave around society (Kenny & Patel, n.d.). The theory will be applied by analyzing the way Elio behaves, talks, dress up, and body language. All the analysis will be taken from the dialogues, paragraphs, phrases, and descriptions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In Diana’s theory, people will act from what the other people act too. For example like in the environment, there is one man who always smiles at each other, then the other people will act the same as this man does. Also when there is someone have different behavior in their environment the people will automatically do something to make this person act normal like them or behave as the same as the other people do, but it will be different if the behavior didn’t give any negative impact for the society (Swingewood, 1974). When Elio and Oliver finally confess each other feelings, they have different gestures when they meet each other which are showing that they have aspecialrelationship. This is also shown when they have a conversation in front of Elio family it can be seen in the following quote

“I looked at him. I felt like a child who, despite all manner indirect pleas and hints, finds himself unable to remain his parents they’d promised to take him to the toy store. No need beating around the bush”. “It was just that what I hoping we’d go together” (Aciman, 2007: 45 pdf) replies Oliver.

At the beginning of the story, Oliver doesn’t know how to react when Oliver around him, but after they have confessed to each other about their feeling, they start to change their behavior to each other. Elio who pretend like he doesn’t care about Oliver, know he starts to follow everywhere Oliver go and act like Oliver is his

The background of Elio and Oliver doesn’t have any big impact on their homosexual relationship, because Ellos family is an open-minded family and allows Elio to do whatever he wants. His mother supports everything Elio wants to do, that is why Elio has still searched for his school to study music. What his mother did is just the same as his father did. He is also an open-minded person who let his son make friends with anyone he met. For example like when he almost makes love with Marzia. It can be seen in the following quote

“We almost did.” I told both my father and Oliver the next morning as were having breakfast. “And why didn’t you? Asked my father” (Aciman, 2007: 18 pdf).

He tells his father that in that night he almost did it but, he lost his brave to touch her more. His father is not indignant but more like support his son to do more intensively and he should try again tomorrow. Therefore Elio and Oliver don’t have any burden when they choose to have a more intense relationship. The people in that place also are open-minded. They just kind people who will welcome
anyone who comes to their place they will treat their guests as good as they can.

Besides social status, there is also society’s view of Elio and Oliver’s homosexual relationship. In Diana’s theory, people will act from what the other people act too. For example like in the environment, there is one man who always smiles at each other, then the other people will act the same as this man does. Also when there is someone have different behavior in their environment the people will automatically do something to make this person act normal like them or behave as the same as the other people do, but it will be different if the behavior didn’t give any negative impact for the society (Swingewood, 1974). It also happens with Elio and Oliver, because being homosexual is not an easy choice. Everyone will always have a struggle with their self to choose, the most suitable choice for themself. This is also what Elio and Oliver felt. They have to choose what they want to be. This condition will give an impact on Elio and Oliver’s social background. Elio is the son of a professor in a university meanwhile, he is also a pianist who is still searching for his school. Oliver is a student college, he is also a writer who focuses on American literature. When they finally confess each other feelings, they have different gestures which are showing that they have, intense feeling to each other. This is also shown when they have a conversation in front of Elio family it can be seen in the following quote

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When they have decided to confess their feeling to each other, they can finally act whatever they like, they can freely express their feelings through their gestures, how the way they look to each other. Of course, there will be someone who will know what is their relationship. That person is Marzia who is Elio’s friend. Marzia is close to both of Elio and Oliver, so Marzia can know their sign to each other. Even though Marzia know their relationship, she doesn’t change her treatment to them. Also, she has a special relationship with Elio, she always is there when Elio needs her help to reduce his lust. It can be seen from the following quote,

“... she cut me short: “Baciami Ancora, kiss me again.”I kissed her again, but my mind is....” (Aciman 2007: 50 pdf).

This conversation stated that Marzia doesn’t mind whatever he did to her, even though she knows his relationship with Oliver.

There are prejudices about homosexuals among people around the world, but of course, it is referred to as how homosexual couples react to their environment and people around them. This has been analyzed by Allport in his book “concept of traits and personalities”. Usually, people react based on what the other people behave to them, therefore if a man acts feminine than act like a gentleman, they will start judging that this person has a different sexual orientation, but of course not all of the people like that but it is mostly like that
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since we are in 19th centuries, (Hegarty, P., & Massey, 2006)

There is also another moment when they ate in the book store and Elio wants to kiss her it can be seen in the following quote,

“She seemed to shudder but did not move. I kissed her again. Then, catching my self, I whispered, "Did it bother you?” “Of course not,” she whispered back (Aciman 2007: 49 pdf).

This conversation also shows us that Marzia also seems like hide her feeling to try not afraid to it, but she can’t and just get caught by Elio, but she still accept what Elio’s kiss. Marzia is a good person who is always kind to each other, she also gives some clue to Olio that she also hide something, she can play pretend like she doesn’t know everything about it, but actually, she knows it can be seen in the following quote,

“Do you hide who you are?” Said Elio
“Sometimes. Don’t you?”

This is Marzia clue that she knows their relationship that they sometimes hide it.

There is also a moment when Marzia also afraid to Elio, she afraid to be hurt because she is Elio’s friend it can be seen in the following quote,

“Why? Because I think you can hurt me and I don’t want to be hurt.” Then she thought for a moment..” (Aciman 2007: 49 pdf).

From the conversation above, Marzia scares if she will be hurt again because of Elio’s behavior. Marzia knows Elio already has Oliver in his heart and it is impossible for her to replace Oliver from Elio’s heart. Therefore she always beware of Elio’s behavior.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the data analysis the social reaction between Elio and Oliver in the novel *Call Me By Your Name* by Andre Aciman using Diana Laurenson and Judith Butler’s theories. The researchers can conclude that Elio and Oliver’s relationship is quite simple because their environment supports their relationship. For example in Diana’s theory, when someone who acts differently from the other people they will stay away from them. It is not they hate them but because they no match for those people, but it will have different stories if someone who has different behavior didn’t give any bad or negative impact on them. And in this novel, the environment is so welcome with the different culture. Therefore Oliver and Elio feel comfortable when they show their relationship in the public. When Elio and Oliver have a trip together they always show their relationship, even when they want to go out from the hotel, they walk together like a couple while smiling to the staff and the resident. When they arrived in the party the hold their hand and didn’t lose their intense sight to each other, there will be a person who thinks that this behavior is too much, but then Elio even makes new friends because the people there is so friendly and open-minded also they give Elio suggestion to make their relationship long-lasting.

What they act didn’t give any bad impact on each other, therefore many people welcome them peacefully and friendly, and even there is someone who gives Elio suggestions about his love story. She talks a lot about how to make their relationship getting better and longer. She is also a woman who can be a man or a woman depending on whom she talks to because Elio has a good attitude while he was at the party. This shows that what Elio behaves will give an impact on other people. There is also a moment when Elio and Oliver in the party and make the bartender who serves them with a wry smile, seeing the bartender with wry smile Elio and Oliver replies with their charming smile, then the bartender apologizes to them. From this scene, Elio and Oliver always show their good attitude towards other people despite their relationship seem weird but people there welcome them.

In Judith Butler’s theory, there is also the role of family and their environment that can make them more confident. In this case, Elio’s family is a very open-minded family that allows their son to do whatsoever their son wants to do because of this Elio can be homosexual and bisexual. His parents always support their son so do Elio, he also a kind person who always obeys his parents. There is one moment when Elio almost makes love with Razia. He told his father what he did to Marzia instead of angry at Elio he even support his son to do it again and make sure he made it. In another moment when his father finally knows Elio and Oliver’s relationship he told to Elio that his relationship is precious, and he has to keep it up, he also added that if his mother knows he will give the same
reaction as he did. Marzia who also Elio and Oliver’s friends she supports their relationship. Therefore Elio and Oliver getting confidence time by time. Elio’s personality also shaped by the treatment of his family, and the environment.

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