
Abstract

Due to a wide range of political, medical, and cultural discourses, male homosexuals have for a long time been constructed and regarded as embodiments of an impaired and flawed form of masculinity that needs to be disciplined and oppressed. It was only in the wake of post-Stonewall queer politics that intellectuals and activists have successfully instigated discourses that accommodate the possibility of viewing gay masculinity as a serious concept that is furthermore equipped with its own political dimension and agency. This (re-)negotiation of gay masculinities has also found its way into the realm of American literature. Especially the contemporary gay coming-of-age novel offers insights into the cultural construction and discursivation of American gay masculinities and a myriad of interesting ways of conceptualizing and understanding male homosexuality in America.

Appropriating R.W.B. Lewis’s seminal concept of the American Adam in an innovative take by applying it to the gay male protagonists of important fictional texts of the genre, such as Edmund White’s *A Boy’s Own Story* (1982) and Michael Cunningham’s *Flesh and Blood* (1995), I will investigate how the post-Stonewall American novel successfully contributes to the literary and cultural formation of gay masculinities in the United States. Drawing on sources from Masculinity Studies, Gender Studies, Cultural Studies, and Literary Studies, I will explore how the contemporary gay coming-of-age novel establishes models of gay masculinity against the backdrop of discourses on hegemonic manliness and how this results in a meaningful contribution to the ongoing debates around concepts of contemporary American masculinity.