



TRABAJO FINAL DE MÁSTER

**“There is more than one way to burn a book.
And the world is full of people running about with lit matches”:
Censoring Books with Queer characters under Trump’s Administration**

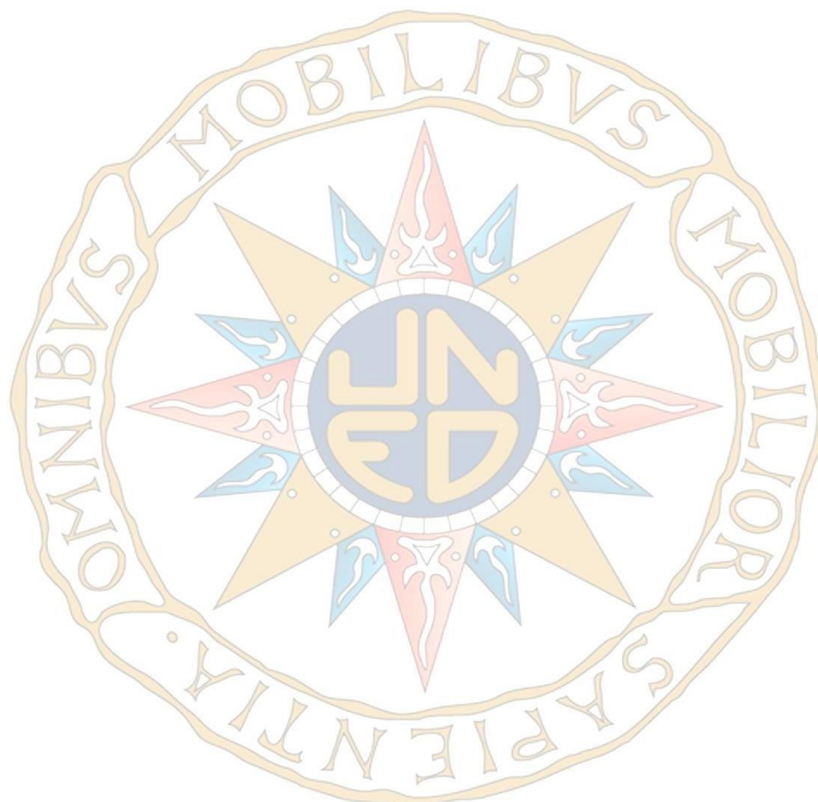
Máster en Estudios Literarios y Culturales Ingleses y su Proyección Social

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Abstract

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Since 1990 the American Library Association (ALA) has been publishing a list of ‘challenged or censored’ books in libraries and schools in the US. In the last years, the topic that has increased the most as the main reason to censor a book has been that the books contain Queer characters and plots, reason that has risen to disturbing levels until being the main one in eight of the ten books of the ALA’s list in 2019. This research analyses the most representative books of that list to find out the possible reasons these books are being censored; along with who is behind this censorship, if the censorship of Queer materials extends to other fields, the social and psychological consequences caused by it, and some possible ways out of that situation. The research suggests that the fact that they contain Queer characters and plots is the only reason those books are being challenged, although they do not even defy the binary system of the Heterosexual Matrix. This censorship seems to have been promoted by conservatives, especially under Trump’s Administration and their ideological and socio-cultural milieu in the last years. It is socially disruptive, psychologically problematic for young people, and encourages bullying in schools. It also seems at least partly responsible for the increase in suicides among the Queer young population. The data also suggest that censorship of Queer material extends to other fields, such as education (especially in History), legislation (especially in education issues), animated films, and the Internet.

Keywords: Censorship, Queer Theory, LGBTQ, ALA, Donald Trump

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"As it is an ancient truth that freedom cannot be legislated into existence, so it is no less obvious that freedom cannot be censored into existence. And any who act as if freedom's defences are to be found in suppression and suspicion and fear confess a doctrine that is alien to America."

President Dwight D. Eisenhower, letter on intellectual freedom to Dr Robert B. Downs, president of the American Library Association, June 24, 1953 (Billington 126).

"The 'nature of the evidence' is not so much that the sources are limited, but that the signs of suppression are plainly visible ... the queer historian should not despair when confronted by the charge that we really do not have the 'genital evidence' to prove incontrovertibly that someone was queer, for we often have *abundant* evidence of suppression *which in itself is sufficient confirmation of the likelihood of a queer interpretation.*"

Rictor Norton, extract from the conclusions of the article "The Myth of the Modern Homosexual" within the book: *Myth of the Modern Homosexual: Queer History and the Search for Cultural Unity*, 2016 (Norton Myth 178).

**“There is more than one way to burn a book.
And the world is full of people running about with lit matches”¹:
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1. Introduction

In the light of some recent surveys carried out in the US, it must be concluded that, unfortunately, there are still Americans who have paid little attention to the words said by President Eisenhower in 1953, quoted above. Censorship of Queer material has “occurred throughout the twentieth century and continues to face censorship today” (Steele 13). Nowadays, rather than decreasing, accompanied by advances in rights for the Queer community, it seems that it has risen. Since 1990, the American Library Association (ALA) has been publishing a list of challenged or censored books in public and schools’ libraries in the United States, and since 2001, it has been publishing a Top Ten of the most challenged books of the year. The data provided by this association shows that there are many reasons those books are challenged or censored, such as containing something related to sexuality, inappropriate language, drug use, Queer characters, violence, religion, or that the books are unsuited to age. The particularity that almost all challenges shared is that the books are aimed at young audiences and that the challenges used to occur in school and public libraries. Moreover, as earlier noted and the data of ALA demonstrates, the topic that has increased the most in recent years for censoring books has been their Queerness. This topic has risen to disturbing levels until being the main one in eight of the ten books on the ALA’s list in 2019.ⁱ

Between 1990 and 1999, Books with Queer characters challenged occupied five of the first twenty spots (a 25%) of the 100 most frequently challenged books’ list of the ALA (ALA 1990-1999), with two books constantly challenged because of their Queerness, and three only sometimes.² Between 2000 and 2009, there was a slight increase with eight books (the 40%), of

¹ Bradbury, Ray (2003). *Fahrenheit 451* (50th anniversary ed.). New York, NY: Ballantine Books. pp. 175.

² Sometimes the books are challenged for some other reasons, as they are considered sexually explicit, but the ‘Queer motive’ only appears in a few years, which seems it is not the central reason those books have been challenged.

which three books constantly challenged for their Queerness, and five only sometimes (ALA 2000-2009). Finally, between 2010 and 2019, there were ten books (50%), seven for their Queerness, and three only sometimes (ALA 2010-2019). Thus, it seems that data shows a progression and books with Queer characters or plots rise in the last thirty years.ⁱⁱ The Top Ten list of Banned Books seems to indicate the same pattern; Books with Queer characters were not specially challenged at the beginning of the twenty-first century. They only occupied an average of 1,87 books out of ten in the Top Ten list of Banned Books until 2015. However, they reached the all-time historic peak in 2016, arriving at four out of ten places and exceeding it in 2018, occupying 50% of spots. In 2019, there was even a considerable rise and Books with Queer characters ended by occupying eight out of ten places in the Top Ten list. This year there was an “increase of 17% in the number of books targeted for removal” (Flood LGBTQ) and an increasing of the books’ Queerness as the reason to target them. In the last few years, there has been an unequivocal rise of the books’ Queerness as the reason for targeting books, monopolising, as it has been established, the 80% of the ALA’s Top Ten list of Banned Books, which is more alarming knowing that “for each challenge reported, there are four or five that go unreported” (Rauch 217), so the magnitude may be even greater.

As evidenced by the ALA, the censorship of children’s books has risen in the last century. Censorship of materials for adults is not tolerated, but children’s is a different matter, especially on a topic such as their sexuality. It is considered that children, before adolescence, are asexual beings that must be protected from “the dangerous knowledge of homosexuality” (Steele 14), so Books with Queer characters are challenged and censored in schools, and heterosexuality becomes mandatory, the only way children can fit in society and create their beings. At that age, the need for Queer positive role models is more necessary than ever; children need a positive image that wants to be erased, challenging the books that provide it. Researching could contribute to finding some of the reasons behind this Censorship on Queer, which, in turn, can contribute to understand the problem and fight it back.

This paper first tries to find out who is behind this censorship, why the books with Queer characters are challenged or censored, if the censorship of Queer materials extends to other fields, the social and psychological consequences caused by it, and some possible ways out that situation. In order to find the reasons books with Queer characters are challenged and censored,

it is previously necessary to find the most representative books of the ALA's Top Ten List of the Most Challenged Books. After that, it will contextualise, giving a historical outline of censorship and Queer people in the United States, as the actual context in which those books are being censored. Then, the paper will go into depth with the books' analysis, briefly introducing the theoretical field of the Queer Theory and explaining how the queer narrative analysis is to be carried out. Then, after the introduction and the necessary contextualisation, the data obtained in the analysis of the books will be cross-checked to determine why those books have been challenged and censored. Lastly, this paper will also try to determine if the censorship of books with Queer characters extends to other areas and the consequences of all this censorship over young people. With all this research, it is expected to find pieces of evidence that this censorship has ideological and political motives, that it extends to other fields in education and far beyond, that is socially disruptive, psychologically problematic for young people, encourages bullying at schools, and helps to rise suicidal rates among young Queer population.

1.1 The ALA's Challenged Books List

The ALA was founded in 1876 in Philadelphia, and it aimed to make it easier and less expensive for librarians to conduct their work (ALA History). The ALA's key statement is the Library Bill of Rightsⁱⁱⁱ, adopted in 1939, in which they express the rights of library users (ALA Bill). The Freedom to Read Statement^{iv} is the best-known document of the ALA, statement "originally issued in May of 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the ALA and the American Book Publishers Council" (ALA Freedom). The ALA also founded the Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) (ALA Office) in 1967, an office that provides tools to librarians to fight censorship attempts (Ibid.); its principal aim is to raise awareness among librarians and the broader public about the nature and value of intellectual freedom in libraries (Ibid.). With the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read Statement, the ALA wants to provide librarians and the general population information that satisfies their needs and, as in the case referred in this research, that also included the Queer community (Steele 14).

The ALA also founded the Freedom to Read Foundation (FRF) in 1969, an organisation that has served as ALA's legal arm and provides legal assistance to the librarians that face any threat that jeopardise their jobs or integrity due to their defence of intellectual freedom (Asato 287). The ALA is also the leading association that organises, from 1982, the Banned Books Weeks, an event that celebrates the freedom to read and serves as an anticensorship program. Every year, they also publish, from 2001, the Top Ten Most Challenged Books list and provide statistics about censorship in public libraries. It seems then necessary to give an overview of how public libraries are organised and who decides which books are available to the public to provide the necessary context in which the access to those books is restricted to its users.

Public libraries are organised particularly, and they can be administered by the municipal government, the county, the district, a Native American Tribe government, a non-profit association, a cooperative, a school, a university, or they can be multi-jurisdictional (Owens and Kindel 1-40); what all those libraries have in common is that they are democratic institutions that serve communities, and they are (at least in part) funded by public money (ALA and Ilovelibraries). Libraries must bring free access to all their users, and every citizen has the right to obtain information in public libraries. School Libraries are even more important because they must "provide equal learning opportunities for all students" (Ibid.), people who are in the process of formation of their beings.

People in charge of libraries, librarians, are the cornerstone of the library system. Jennifer Downey, a reference librarian in Cucamonga, California, argues that its profession is a "noble calling" (Downey et al. 104) and that they are the front lines of democracy, providing people with information on a wide range of topics and from various perspectives (Ibid.). As Wiegand says, "the library profession's position aims to ensure individuals' intellectual freedom for the benefit of society as a whole (Wiegand). Nevertheless, librarians "attitude toward intellectual freedom has been subject to undulating change ever since the late 1800s" (Fitzsimmons 4). Until 1922, they understood their profession as protecting and regulating, particularly in the young and other purportedly unformed minds (Kidd 200). In the 1930s, their attitude changed from being the standard-bearers of censorship to the standard-bearers of freedom (Ibid.).

However, it seems this attitude has been changing backwards in the last years in the name of avoiding controversy. Nowadays, people do not need to censor ideas (an unpopular strategy

in a modern democracy) but create controversy over them. Controversy is the strategy, and everyone seems to avoid it, which provokes a ‘modern’ kind of censorship, the self-censorship, which is almost invisible because of the fear triggered by the fabricated controversy, and librarians are no exception. Librarians are submitted to “extreme pressures” (Chance 26); users, parents and administrations put pressure on librarians to censor books they dislike for one reason or another. In addition, the state funding is contingent on school districts and bookstores repeating the ‘recommendations’ of their states’ governments; the 48% “of a school’s budget comes from state resource” (Chen), and another 44% “is contributed locally, primarily through the property taxes of homeowners in the area” (Ibid.). Every controversy, as buying Books with Queer characters in some areas, may result in an extreme reduction of the library budget or an extreme pressure exerted over the library, the school, the association, or the different administration that administers libraries. That strategy to force librarians to censor specific kinds of books had happened before, for instance, under the Nixon administration in which federal funds for library services were cut just in the middle of a political tsunami (Asato 291, 301) and in a time in which librarians were partnering and creating associations as the Office for Intellectual Freedom or the Freedom to Read Foundation to defend intellectual freedom. Furthermore, librarians’ defence of intellectual freedom can make their daily lives more complicated than economic issues because they fear judgment or backlash from their communities and can lose their jobs. In a 2009 survey, “70% of the library professionals ... claimed that concern over possible parent reactions gave them pause when considering controversial titles” (Garry 3); therefore, it seems that it is unnecessary to censor ideas directly, only to create ‘controversy’ on them, and, as everyone seems to avoid controversy, librarians will self-censor those ideas for not bothering anyone.

Librarians must face those pressures; they must decide which books the library acquires and which books must ‘disappear’, and the community's influence on the library program had a significant impact (Garry 52). In the case we are concerned about this research, purchasing Queer material is perhaps the trickiest pitfall for librarians to avoid, and it is also the most difficult to fix (Downey et al. 105). Pressure makes librarians, as established before, tend to “self-censor by not collecting so-called ‘controversial books’” (Chance Cook 26). According to research, the great majority of libraries lack comprehensive collections of top-shelf Books with Queer characters (Downey et al. 104). Moreover, that provokes that society has no right to

access material as Books with Queer characters, which is a problem that affects not only the Queer community but also the entire society and democracy.

The Office for Intellectual Freedom and the American Library Association gather data about who tries to censor books in public and school libraries. According to the data they provided, in 2020, parents were who put more stress on censor books with Queer characters leading the list of promoters of censorship and representing 50% of the total; patrons represented 20%, board/administration the 11%, political/religious groups the 9%, librarians/teachers the 5%, elected officials the 4% and students the 1% (ALA 2020). However, in 2019, library patrons led the list with 45%, and parents followed them with 18%, the rest of the percentages varied little (ALA Numbers 2019). In 2018, parents and patrons were almost tied at the top, with 33% to patrons and 32% to parents. In 2017, patrons still headed the list with 42%, and parents followed them 32%. In 2016, they changed positions again; parents led the list again with 42%, and patrons pursued them with 31% (ALA Infographic). Thus, it seems that parents and library patrons take turns in promoting censorship of Books with Queer characters, and together they almost monopolise the list representing 63% in 2019 and 74% in 2017.³ Besides these data, it should be added that, as Kate Lechtenberg says, “parents or other adults feeling compelled to act on their belief that representations of LGBTQ children and families are a threat to children’s morals, their understanding of family, or their religious perspectives” (Garnar et al. 36). It seems reasonable to think that different ideologies move these people who want to censor Books with Queer characters. Therefore, it is necessary to make an outline of the history of censorship and the rights of the Queer community in the United States to contextualise Censorship on Queer historically, as well as to look at the last years’ social and political context to situate the Censorship on Queer in its proper framework. Indeed, this paper does not want to analyse those themes in depth, mainly because it is not its primary aim, but it is also true that a historical outline is needed to contextualise the analysis of the books.

³ It must be emphasised that parents and library patrons could be the same person most times, since parents are labelled ‘parents’ when they try to censor a book in school libraries, and ‘library patrons’ if they try to do the same in a public library. The change in the name could be only a matter of where they try to censor the books.

2. “You have to know the past to understand the present.”⁴”

First, this paper finds it necessary to introduce briefly what this paper means by ‘Queer’ and ‘censorship’ to be more precise and understandable. On the one hand, it should be stated that there is no term or acronym to refer to the entire community of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transexual and queer people, which everyone agrees on, and the variety of acronyms existing has presented some difficulties during the research. In the various searches and articles found doing the research, several acronyms are used to refer to the entire community, such as GLBT, LGBT, LGBTQI, LGBTQIA+, LGBTQ, LGTBQ, GLBTQ, or even LGBTQQIP2SAA, among others (Metzger). This variety of acronyms makes research on that issue difficult because, in some places, not using the proper acronym makes some search results become hidden, or one does not know if the writer is referring to the entire community or only to a part of it. More profound research is needed to decide the most appropriate acronym or term to refer to the entire community in this paper. Therefore, it is mandatory to overview the history of the acronyms and terms used over time.

The way to name people that pertains to the community of non-heterosexual or non-cisgender people has changed over the years. Before the nineteenth century, there was no acronym or term or concept of an individual with a distinct sexual orientation. Some words describe those individuals, some that imply a moral assessment (mainly based on religion), are terms as ‘sodomites’ or ‘sexual inverters’. In the nineteenth century, sexologists and scholars began to use a variety of terminology to describe and label people who felt attracted by people of their own gender or people “whose sense of gender did not align with their sexual anatomy” (Iovannone). However, those terms were clinic ones, which can lead you to think on a condition, or some kind of flaw, terms as ‘homosexual’, coined precisely by a doctor named Karoly Maria Benkert in 1869 (Ibid.). Later in that century, in 1867, a German activist that was “the first self-proclaimed homosexual to publicly speak out for homosexual rights in Western society” (Ibid.) called Karl Heinrich Ulrichs referred to people who felt attracted to people of their same gender,

⁴ Quote by Carl Sagan, in the episode 2 of the television series *Cosmos: A Personal Voyage* in 1980. Quote extracted from an article by Shannon Lynn Burton.

like himself or people who felt gender dysphoria, as ‘Urnings’. He thought urnings were people who possessed a third gender between men and women (Ibid.).

Later, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the underground term ‘gay’ emerged to define all the people who did not fit into the binary heterosexual reality of the world. That term became very popular in the late sixties when the ‘gay’ identity fully emerged and was entirely popularised after the Stonewall riots, in which the ‘gay’ community gained visibility and created a movement that asked for their rights more conspicuously. After that, in the 1980s, it was established a more inclusive way to refer to the community, the acronym ‘LGB’, that left the term ‘gay’ for the men who were attracted to other men and added the L and B that stood for lesbian and bisexual individuals (Metzger). In the 1990s, another letter was added to the acronym that exceeded the scope of the sexual orientation; it was the T that stood for ‘transgender’ people. Moreover, another letter was added later, the letter Q that stood for ‘queer’, which was intended to be used as an “umbrella term to represent anyone who is non-cisgender and non-heterosexual” (Ibid.). After that, different versions of the acronym were created as more complex approaches to comprehending and defining people's gender and sexuality experiences (Ibid.). Some examples of the letters added were another Q for people who are ‘questioning’, which means they are exploring their sexuality or gender expression; the I that stood for the ‘intersex’, people who are “born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male” (Ibid.); the letter A that stood for ‘asexual’ people, whose do not feel attracted to any gender; the sign ‘+’, that pretended to represent almost the same category that the first Q, standing for any person whose identity does not fit any other letter of the acronym.

Moreover, after all that, some more letters and numbers have been used over the last years, as the P for ‘pansexual’, 2 for ‘two spirit’, and another A for ‘ally’ people. All those additions have expanded the acronym, including more sensibilities and giving visibility to an “ever-growing number of groups” (Szklański) because those groups need recognition and “have a sense that they need to be recognized, (that) they need to be named ... need to be identified” (Ibid.). However, at the same time, it made the acronym a soup of letters and even a source of mockery. It seems that the most used way to refer to people who are not heterosexual or cisgender in the last years is the acronym ‘LGBTQ’; this acronym includes the more familiar

identities and the letter Q, which stands as an umbrella term that embraces anyone who defies gender and sexuality standards in some way (Iovannone). Nevertheless, some people inside the field of Queer Theory stands that: “The theoretical view is that sexuality and gender is fluid and we should not be boxing ourselves into one label or another” (Szklański) because the letters of the acronym help other people, cisgender and heterosexual ones, put non-cisgender and non-heterosexual people in a (definitive) box with a letter of their choosing to be there forever.

Taking all of this into consideration, this paper will use the term ‘Queer’ (with capital letters to avoid ambiguity) to refer to the entire community, understanding a ‘Queer’ person under the umbrella of a non-heterosexual-nor-cisgender person, at least using a quote or referring only to a specific part of the community. This paper understands that all people who consider themselves sexual dissidents can be united (Dean 123) under this term; also, the term also breaks the tendency of labelling the community members in more and more small boxes, which seems to separate people inside the community. Using this term reinforces the sense of community among all its members, shows we are all under the same umbrella, and it seems that it does not discriminate any sensibility. A term that can unite sexual dissidents (Dean 123). Notwithstanding, as the volunteer curator at the GLBT History Museum in San Francisco stands, “The power of the term queer is that it really underscores the fact that sexual identities are not just about sex acts or who we have sex with” (Boren). Moreover, is the letter Q, which stands for the term Queer, is generally used as an umbrella term that embraces “everyone who in some way defies gender and sexuality norms” (Iovannone), and “is intended to be spacious by embracing the non-normative in general” (Robinson 8). It is true that some people still consider the term “offensive or derogatory” (Iovannone), but it also “fortifies and dismantles the notion of a stable or knowable self, in relation to gender and sexuality especially but not exclusively” (Robinson 8). Moreover, the term is a reappropriation of a former offensive term which gives the term more power because the community has taken it away from people who hate the members of that community. This paper will also use the term queerphobia and its derivatives to talk about the hate and phobia to the entire community members, at least using a quote or referring only to hate and phobia towards only a part of the community.

The struggle for naming the Queer community has also occurred in academic theory, not to name the field, but to describe the meaning of the name with which something is classified

involves. The academic study of Queerness in literature was first called Gay and Lesbian Studies. Afterwards, Queer Theory was born as a countercultural proposal that emerged as a post-gay and post-lesbian movement criticising the tightness of categories of sexual identities like gay or lesbian, which some scholars thought contributed to homogenise Queer individuals inside heterosexual culture (Duque 86-87) and ended swallow by it. It was Teresa de Lauretis who “coined the term ‘queer theory’ in 1991 to displace the gender division codified in ‘lesbian and gay studies’, establishing a category to provide common ground for these (and other) increasingly divergent fields” (Bell). Queer Theory emerged in the 1990s, influenced by poststructuralist theory, Michael Foucault and Teresa de Lauretis. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Judith Butler have been the most prominent figures that give this new theory its underpinnings.

Queer Theory deconstructs sexuality, which “can be broken down into identity (Who am I?), desire (Who do I love?) and gender” (Bacha 1), and identity becomes a construct that is reproduced and performed in society. This theory criticises gender, which is seen as a performance assumed as the only ‘natural’, and people who do not play that binary role, seen as the only possible, is expelled from society and is exposed to mockery and violence (Bernini 140). Modern liberal societies tend to homogenise Queer people into heterosexual culture, forcing them to become like traditional families, asking for marriage and children. It does not allow dissent and tries to swallow Queer people and assimilates them within its heterosexual frame of thought. That heteronormativity limits thinking about gender and sexuality to perpetual binaries; gender is expressed simply as male or female, while sexual orientation is generally reduced to heterosexual (the normal) or ‘homosexual’ (the deviant ‘other’) (Garry 8).

For instance, to one cornerstones of Queer Theory, Judith Butler, sexual orientation, sexual identity, and gender expression are performative acts, a social, historical and cultural fabrication; therefore, there are no natural/biological sexual or gender roles, but they are infused by the hegemonic heteropatriarchy (Duque 87). She, on that issue, introduces the ‘Gender Performativity Theory’ which central concept, the ‘Heterosexual Matrix’, refers to a series of productions that society forces us to repeat since we are born. Those productions are divided into two cultural genders, masculine and feminine, and all are categorised in one of them according, exclusively, to the genitalia. Those productions include colours we can like, games we can play and behaviour we can perform. This matrix pressures every member of society to

perform repeatedly their assigned gender, which helps to perpetuate the hegemonic heterosexual culture (Duque 88). Precisely, it was Butler who introduced the critical term in Queer Theory of ‘performativity’, “seeking to destabilize binary oppositions such as gay/straight” (Oxford Reference) and to describe how gender and sex are repeated performed acts modulated by the authoritarian discourse (Duque 87), the ‘Heterosexual Matrix’. To this theory, Queer people should not ask for normalisation or tolerance, but for being fully respected, to ask for the right of being different; “all types of normalization and categorization, including heteronormativity and its logical binary (the normalization of ‘homosexuality’), are resisted in queer theory” (Garry 10) because there is only one nature, and it is culture. Therefore, the Queer community must fight to deconstruct the symbolic order, the ‘naturalness’ of binary categories, and heterocentrism. Fight for the rights heterosexual people already have implies that Queer people become assimilated by them; all fixed identities must be undermined to allow the rise of multiple, no binary, changing and mobile differences (Duque 92).

Notwithstanding, the theory is framed in History in which it supports and gives the theory its meaning and sense, which is crucial. The historical outline of Queer people in North America began before several countries colonised the territory. In this territory, there were tribes in which there were people who were “not limited to ‘man’ and ‘woman, and [whose] sexuality [was] not constrained to relationships between ‘opposite’ genders defined by anatomical sex” (Roscoe 3), called nowadays ‘Two-Spirit People’⁵; they were later documented to be in at least 155 tribes (5). When colonisers arrived, they saw ‘Two-Spirit People’ as sinners; their religion did not allow them to understand a society that does not fit their patriarchal concept of the binary gender. First, however, it is necessary to see what their religion says. “The Old Testament condemns homosexual acts [and] demand the death sentence for [that] (Wenham 359) in Leviticus. In Leviticus 18:22, The Bible says, “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is abomination” (362), which is one of the strongest condemnations in The Old Testament; it even goes further in Leviticus 20:13, that says “If a man lies with another male as with woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them”

⁵ This people had many names, as many as tribes in which they lived. In 1990 Native American and First Nations gather and decided to call ‘Two-Spirit’ people to those who do not fit within the standard of the heterosexual binary. It was decided to give a new name to the community because ‘berdache’ was the “standard anthropological term for alternative gender roles among Native Americans” (Roscoe 09-5) and it was considered it pejorative.

(Ibid.). It seems that this death sentence to male ‘homosexuality’ is based on God’s creation doctrine. Humanity is divided into two sexes by God in order for them to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth, allowing Queer acts to be legal would defeat God’s plan and undermine the perfection of God’s gift of two sexes to support and complement one another (Wenham 363). Summing up, it is supposed that to be Queer is contravening the God of The Old Testament, and one must die for it. Following The Old Testament, colonisers began to call ‘Two-Spirit’ people ‘hermaphrodites’ (the British), ‘sodomites’ (the Spanish), and ‘berdache’ (the French), all very despicable words that mirrored the displeasure and disgust colonisers felt because of their religions. Sometimes, such was the repugnance that those encounters ended badly; for instance, in Panama in 1513, Vasco Núñez de Balboa, a Spanish coloniser, thrown forty-two of Two-Spirit people to his dogs (Roscoe 3). He probably thought to be doing a service to his god. In the tribes of North America, Two-Spirit people were “traditionally revered as gifted and spiritual people” (Sheppard and Mayo 262); they had some of the essential jobs, such as “conducting burial rites, caring for the ill...serving as intermediaries” (Roscoe 07-08), or being medicine people, healers, fighters, shamans and ceremonial leaders (07-23), or even leaders of their tribes, as Qánqon-kámek-klaúlha, a member of the Kutenai (18).

Apart from the despicable acts committed by colonisers, they also began to apply laws related to Queer people in the territory of what would become the United States. Only thirteen years after founding the first permanent English settlement in America, ‘Puritan norms’ in colonial Plymouth were established, a kind of law that determined some gender norms of what was a ‘normal’ family (Our Family Coalition and ONE Archives Foundation). Only four years later, Richard Cornish was the first settler to be hanged for ‘sodomy’. There was not even a country of their own, and they were already hanging people for being Queer. After that, several laws were implemented that banned sodomy and punished people “by whipping, banishment or execution” (Ibid.).

Before 1962, several laws that punished ‘sodomy’ were still in force in all US states; It was in that year in which Illinois decriminalised “‘homosexual’ acts between two consenting adults in private” (Our Family Coalition and ONE Archives Foundation), being the first state in doing it. However, it was not until 2003 that the US Supreme Court ruled *Lawrence v. Texas*’ legal case saying “that a Texas state law criminalizing certain intimate sexual conduct between two

consenting adults of the same sex was unconstitutional” (Urofsky), provoking that the remaining sodomy laws were overruled. Nevertheless, in the sentence’s year, there were still in effect in thirteen states, and four of them, Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma and Missouri, banned oral and anal sex between same-sex couples and the other nine, Alabama, Florida, Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Utah and Virginia, banned consensual ‘sodomy’, regardless who practise it (The Associated Press). Furthermore, regarding transgender people, it was not until 2012 that transgender discrimination was considered “a type of sex discrimination and therefore illegal” (Ibid.).

However, before that, in June of 1969, the Stonewall Riots took place, acts of protests made by the Queer community in response to police brutality against the community. The Gay Liberation Front and the Gay Activists Alliance were two Queer organisations formed in New York at the heat of the Stonewall riots advocating for sexual liberation (Our Family Coalition and ONE Archives Foundation). In 1987, ‘homosexuality’ was wholly removed from the American Psychiatric Association list of mental disorders, and in 2013, gender dysphoria was no longer considered a disorder; the World Health Organization just did it in 2019 (BBC Transgender). In 2015, the *Obergefell v. Hodges* case overruled all marriage bans in the entire country, and another sentence in 2016 allowed Queer people to adopt in the 50 states legally.

Besides all the social advances that approach Queer people to equity, nowadays, some states have found ways to forbid giving a positive image of Queer people, as the ‘anti-LGBTQ’ curriculum laws (also called ‘No promo homo laws’), that ban or limit to mention ‘homosexuality’ or transgender in public schools, except for giving a negative image related to sexual diseases. These ‘anti-LGBTQ’ curriculum laws prohibit or limit mentioning anything related to ‘homosexuality’ and transgender identity in public schools. Five states still have ‘no promo homo laws’ in force, but there were nine just a few years ago, and their effects are still noticeable. Furthermore, it is remarkable to remember that in 2020, “16 states in the US...still [had] sodomy laws against ‘perverted sexual practice’” (Wakefield), even though the *Lawrence v. Texas*’ legal case invalidated them. It seems an explicit statement of intent and, maybe, a warning for the future.

Concerning literature with Queer characters, the spreading and publication of books with (what we know understand as Queer characters and plots) suffered multiple setbacks over the

centuries. The books with Queer characters have thousands of years of antiquity, like Plato's *Symposium* or Homer's *Iliad*, which clearly describe same-sex partnerships (Hachette) that can be read as same-sex relationships. However, that was not the norm, same-sex relationships were not very common in literature, although there are very prominent examples, like some of Shakespeare's works and sonnets in the Renaissance, Katherine Philips' poetry in the eighteenth century, or several authors in the nineteenth century like Walt Whitman, Oscar Wilde, Emily Dickinson and Virginia Woolf. There were many more in the twentieth century, like James Baldwin, Truman Capote or Adrienne Rich. Notwithstanding, the rise of Books with Queer characters followed the rise of Queer activism, especially more clearly with young adult Queer literature. The first book that is considered the first young adult novel is *Seventeenth Summer* by Maureen Daly, and was published in 1942 (Waters). This lack of representation of Queer characters in literature is understandable because "Up until the mid-twentieth century, it was illegal in many nations to express homosexuality ... LGBTQ literature portraying same-sex love was often banned or censored" (Hachette). For instance, it was what happened to the works of Sappho that were destroyed almost completely, or with the works of Walt Whitman, that no publisher wanted to print because of their Queerness (Hachette). Displaying any trace of Queerness in public was criminalised, and "writing about it was considered incriminating, so a lot of people didn't" (Abraham), like Walt Whitman, who lost his job, or Oscar Wilde, who was prosecuted. It has to be considered that until the 1960s in the United States, homosexuality was "considered a mental disorder by the American Psychiatric Association, [Queer citizens] were barred from government positions and...in every state but Illinois, homosexuality remained criminal" (Waters). Therefore, writing Books with Queer characters under that situation was extremely challenging and complex, which can be seen in that "only about thirty gay-authored titles were published by 'mainstream' publishers between 1886 and 1969" (Burke 248). Despite censorship, Books with Queer characters have been more present over the years, "the amount of young adult books featuring queer characters has grown from roughly one per year in the 1970s to seven per year in the 1990s, to upwards of 50 per year more recently [around 2016]" (Waters). Once publishers realised there was an audience for books with Queer characters, they began to publish more and more books (Waters).

Despite the pressure writers who chose to write about Queer characters have suffered over the centuries, governments or the institutions in power could not criminalise a feeling, so they

“created all kinds of specific ways to outlaw queerness over the centuries” (Prager), as the obvious and more known, the overt censorship. However, before going into censorship, it is necessary to point out what that paper wants to mean by ‘censorship’ because there are so many meanings for that word. Judith Butler, for instance, argues that using the word ‘censorship’ for all the range of censorship confuses the message; she preferred using the Heideggerian term ‘foreclosure’ (Bunn 40), leaving ‘censorship’ only for the violent and overt one. However, using different names to talk about the suppression of ideas (or suppression attempts) can dilute the seriousness of the censorship attempts among the general public. That is also true when censorship is called challenging (in the ALA lists), coercion, selection, or other kinds of names of covert or censorship attempts. Thus, all that naming ends up looking like those kinds of censorship are not as significant as the violent and overt one. Although, as Pierre Bourdieu argues, self-censorship is “more powerful and significant than overt, formal repression” (27), so, it seems it is worse than ‘official’ censorship. Moreover, the ALA widens the scope of censorship’s meanings; they define censorship as “the suppression of ideas and information that certain persons—individuals, groups or governments officials—find objectionable or dangerous” (Knox, E. 741). However, as hinted above, censorship can disguise its appearance through other means apart from the obvious one: censorship is also selection, not acquiring some books ideologically motivated; relocation, putting the books in other, more restricted, places in the library; labelling, highlighting some characteristics of the books to marginalise them; or, for instance, asking the students to have signed permission to be allowed to obtain a book, which, in the case of Queer students, can preclude access to some books with Queer characters if they are not out of the closet.⁶ So, it seems censorship can be disguised behind many strategies and names and that every attempt to censor a book or an idea could be called censorship. Taking all of this into consideration, this paper will understand ‘censorship’ in a broad sense, and it will always talk about ‘censorship’ when it refers, generally, to any practice that restricts, or attempts to restrict, the access to any material (specifically Queer material in here) because all attempts to restrict access to ideas, successful or not, are equally dangerous. The same name must call all to give them the same importance.

⁶ It is worth mentioning a contradiction of that matter. The fact of labelling the books as Queer can help to Queer young people to find books in which they can find reference points so that they feel identified, but, at the same time, labelling the books as ‘Queer’ can provoke discrimination in queerphobic environments. Also, this label can act as an othering factor for Queer people who are building their identity.

Censorship in the United States began with “the Postal Service and public libraries, gaining traction throughout the nineteenth century” (Steele 8), with ‘obscenity’ as the main reason for censoring, which was considered that depraved and corrupted the minds of the population (7). Race and ethnic backgrounds, religion, politics and sexuality have also been the most common arguments to censor books. In the case of race and ethnic backgrounds, in the last nineteenth century, libraries were segregated (8), so the free access to information was not equal between citizens, and also racially charged materials were also targets of censorship. Religion has also been one of the most prevalent excuses for trying to censor ideas and books, as early as the beginning of the printed word; “in 1559 the first index of forbidden books was published by Pope Paul IV” (9), and religious groups have also been challenging books that do not fit with their religious standards since then. Religion used to censor books because they defied their ‘moral standards’; they intended to dictate what was censorable and allowed for the entire population. One example of this kind of censorship was Tarzan of the Apes’ book censored in some parts of the United States in 1929 because “Tarzan allegedly lives in sin with Jane” (Kidd 200). There has also been political censorship, and the most notable of the history of the United States was the censorship of communist materials that happened in the 1950s under Joseph McCarthy’s iron fist. Here, many librarians withdrew ‘Communist books’ because they were considered “controversial materials” (Steele 11); the paranoid atmosphere of that time forced librarians to succumb to the pressure. One last common argument used to censor books has been that they contain some kind of sexual content, in all the forms that ‘sexuality’ can be seen. That means sex, talking about sexuality, implicitly or explicitly, or showing any kind of sexual behaviour that deviates from the heteronormativity and its logical binary, and that is when books with Queer characters begin to be censored. Those books were considered that defy the community's moral standards and defy the binary heteronormativity, which was considered sexual and obscene, going back to the main reason the United States censored different materials.

However, Queer material or its censorship was not a significant problem in the eighteenth, nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century because it was carried in secret; it was not a public issue. Nevertheless, the gay rights movement made an extraordinary breakthrough after the Stonewall riots in 1969 and began to gain visibility. Despite that, all the gains on Queer rights and visibility in the 1970s were set back by a range of issues as the emergence of AIDS

in the eighties, the religious right's ascension, and the election of a social conservative as president, Ronald Reagan, in 1980, that started a conservative social climate intensifying the censorship attempts in the United States (Burke 248). Moreover, in recent years, conservatives have developed 'modern' strategies to censor books they dislike, as limiting "state library funding for libraries that fail to adhere to restrictions on controversial materials" (Burke 249).

Despite the climate created and the sets back, citizens of the United States seem to distinguish between their morality and civil liberties. In the case of 'homosexuality', the General Social Survey's poll about removing books 'in favour of 'homosexuality'' from the public library was made twenty-one times from 1973 to 2006. The poll shows that the vast majority of citizens of the United States thinks 'homosexuality' is wrong, from 88,6% in 1973 to 67,7% in 2006, and most of these people defends not to remove books 'in favour of 'homosexuality''. The results show a general decrease in support for removal, from 44,5% in 1973 to 24,1% in 2006 (Burke 252). Some variables show some people are more likely to remove the books: to be old, a parent, Protestant, having a strong affiliation to any religion or a low education level, living in the South and living in a sparsely populated area (254-260), but, more importantly, the poll shows that most of citizens of the US do not tolerate overt censorship. In general terms, overt censorship is not considered 'American' and is not allowed by the general public; they do not see censorship as acceptable in a modern and democratic society. However, in recent years, there have been subtler strategies to censor books have been used, as pass legislatures to "limit state library funding for libraries that fail to adhere to restrictions on controversial materials" (249), or for instance, selection, relocation, or putting obstacles to the books' access, as asking students for their parents' permission before they could take books considered 'polemic', most of them containing Queer characters. The most common counterargument to combat those attempts of censorship is the First Amendment⁷ of the United States⁷ and the right to free speech; however, this argument "is not as strong when the censorship pertains to young children (as in the case of the books under scrutiny in this research) as many laws are in place for the purpose of protecting" them (Steele 8).

⁷ "The First Amendment provides that Congress makes no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting its free exercise. It protects freedom of speech, the press, assembly, and the right to petition the Government for a redress of grievances" (The White House Constitution)

2.1 Recent advancements and setbacks on rights for Queer people. Obama's vs Trump's Administration

Under Barack Obama's administration, several developments extended Queer people's rights: such as banning federal contractors from discriminating against Queer people (Signorile), adopting the law of same-sex marriage (Britannica Same-Sex), providing medical protections for Queer people (Baume), issuing memos to protect trans students from discrimination (Burns) or letting trans students use the bathrooms in which they feel more comfortable (Ducharme).

However, in 2016 there were the main parties' primaries and Donald Trump, a Republican candidate, entered the scene. Once appointed, presidential candidate Donald Trump said he would consider "appointing justices to the Supreme Court who would be committed to overturning the decision that legalised same-sex marriage" (Coleburn). He also ended nominating a "virulent homophobe" to the vice-presidency, Mike Pence (Ducharme). It was a clear statement of intent in response to Obama's extension of rights for the Queer community. However, he did more than just electoral declarations of intent. In 2017, just two hours after he took office, "all mentions of LGBTQ issues were removed from the official White House webpage" (The Human Rights Campaign). Later that year, he withdrew Obama's "directive on treatment of transgender students" (Signorile) and made fun of Pence wants to hang Queer people (The Human Rights Campaign). In 2018, the president decided that "trans [prisoners] should be housed according to their assigned sex at birth" (Burns) which is most probably to be subjected to heinous sexual violence, which ends by being a death sentence for trans women (Ducharme). He also ordered to suspend all the investigations into complaints made by trans students who were denied access to education (Baume). After putting a target on transgender people's back, he added fuel to the fire in 2019, saying that "employers should be able to fire LGBTQ people because of sexual orientation or gender identity" (The Human Rights Campaign). That year, he also defended that gay couples could be turned away from state-funded agencies because of religious grounds (Signorile) and "banned the display of rainbow flags outside embassies" (Ibid.), which was only a simple act of support made once a year.

Nevertheless, Trump did not begin this climate of queerphobia; republican states had already started it. The states in the US have great independence to pass laws that can also

influence Censorship on Queer or increase the harassment of Queer people. There are 28 states without enumerated anti-bullying and harassment legislation and 30 states that do not have laws that prohibit discrimination against Queer students (GLSEN Policy). Notwithstanding, five states still have ‘no promo homo laws’ in force, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Texas (Ibid.). Those laws ban teachers from discussing Queer issues positively (Allen) and affect millions of public-school students. ‘No promo homo’ laws are, as Advocates for Youth argues, “state-institutionalized homophobia” (Brammer) and allows citizens to discriminate against Queer people because they feel the state legitimize their hate. These states create an exclusionary and hostile environment towards Queer students and provoke those teachers that “interceding and stopping anti-gay bullying might be construed as promoting homosexuality as an acceptable alternative ... [they feel] pressured to weigh their own job security against students’ safety” (Barrett and Bound 279). Those laws forbid discussing “alternate sexual lifestyles ... except in the context of instruction concerning sexually transmitted diseases” (Brammer), which stigmatized Queer people linking them directly with sexually transmitted diseases. States with those queerphobic laws also pressure librarians to ban books with Queer characters by reducing the state funding for libraries that refuse to agree to limitations on certain controversial Queer materials (Steele 13); unfortunately, they are not the only ones doing that. It must be added that Arizona, North Carolina and Utah were the last states to repeal those laws in recent years (GLSEN No Promo), and in South Carolina was declared overturned in 2020 by its District Court (Knox, L.), but the negative effects of the ‘no homo promo’ laws on Queer people are still noticeable in schools and society.

In addition to all this, religion seems to stand as the main reason (or excuse) to censor Books with Queer characters. The parents claim to uphold traditional family values, and they want to raise their children according to their own view of The Bible's moral code and claim to defend their children's right to what they think is a healthy community (Barrett and Bound 277). “The original justification for antigay policies rested on religious natural law traditions: Sodomy is sinful and sodomites, abominations” (Ibid.), as The Bible says in ‘Leviticus’.

Donald Trump’s speeches and decisions and some of the republican states’ legislations seem to share one thing, all of them displayed queerphobia that have gone along with the rising of Books with Queer characters being targeted as censorable.

3. Narrative analysis exerted over the books

To analyse why the books with Queer characters are being censored, it is mandatory to find a method to decide which ones are the most representative. First, it must be said that this paper wants to provide a corpus of the most representative books that have been censored because they have Queer characters since the ALA's Challenged Books List has been published. After analysing the data available by the ALA, it seems that the most impartial approach is to choose the books that had been in the Top Ten list more than the 50% of the years from their release date because of their Queerness.⁸ Putting the line on the 50% is not an arbitrary decision; exceeding that percentage supposes the books have been censored most of the years from their release. The ALA's list depicts the most persecuted books of the year, regardless of their content; therefore, it seems that if some books with Queer characters appear continuously, they must represent why some people and associations want to censor that kind of books. The books that fitted that criterion were: *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier (censored the 55,55% of the years from their release in 2012), *And Tango Makes Three* by Peter Parnell et al. (the 56,25% from 2005), *I am Jazz* by Jazz Jennings et al. (the 57,14% from 2014), *A Day in the Life of Marlon Bundo* by Jill Twiss and EG Keller (the 66,67% from 2018), and *George* by Alex Gino (the 83,33% from 2015).^{vi} It seems, at first sight, that five books are too much material to analyse but, on one side, the analysis of the books will be precise and only the relevant criteria based on their Queerness will be considered; on the other side, the books chosen are small in size, three of them are addressed to very young audiences and are short, so the corpus is perfectly manageable.

The primary aim of this paper is not to analyse why the books with Queer characters are being censored, but to take a wider angle, providing the necessary context and looking at the consequences provoked by this censorship. However, the books are the core of the paper, so it is mandatory to perform a concise and to the point narrative analysis based on a queer reading

⁸ It is noted that this method could be biased because books that have been released in the last years have more possibilities to be chosen. However, knowing that, I have done this choice because the centre of the analysis of this paper is the rise of challenge and censorship on books with Queer characters in the last years, precisely the years those books have been challenged or censored.

of those texts, mainly to look at the shared characteristics and to analyse if the books can be considered as ground-breaking, books that can transform the cultural landscape in some way. In order to extract the shared characteristics of the Books with Queer characters selected that must represent the whole censored books because of their Queerness, the analysis would be sought the following: The Queer characters and their behaviour and how they perform masculinity and femininity inside the binary Heterosexual Matrix; likewise, if they end by being homogenised by heterosexual culture, following the “traditional linear plot with normative heterosexuality” (Bell), that used to end with marriage (or an equivalent), which equates to the maximum level of happiness within the plot. Furthermore, the paper will look at the possible repression exerted by the possible queerphobic context and analyse if the characters are tolerated or respected because they are as they are. The analysis must also look at how characters escape (if they do) to established and dominant heteronormative binary roles. Finally, it must look at how Queer characters challenge heteronormative binaries escaping from the “traditional principles of plot coherence and closure” (Ibid.).

3.1 Drama by Raina Telgemeier

In *Drama*, the main character is Callie, a cisgender heterosexual girl, and queerness is embodied in two secondary characters, the brothers Justin and Jesse, who perform heterosexuality with almost everyone and become known as gays only for the main character and the readers. Justin is performing heterosexuality to almost everyone at the beginning. He is performing the Heterosexual Matrix for everyone except his brother and, in the end, to Callie, for whom he comes out of the closet very naturally: “Like I like boys? Yeah” (Telgemeier 65 panel 1). He even has a gender expression that seems to defy masculine stereotypes about gender. He overtly wants to become a musicals’ star (which is a stereotype of gay people) and is depicted as an expressive boy, making gestures that can be read as feminine. However, he says he is not ready to go to the dance with another guy (131 panel 2), after coming out to his brother and friend, and express his desire to go to the dance with a girl, so he ends performing the heterosexual in front of everyone.

On the other hand, Jesse is a character presented as heterosexual for everyone, even his brother, and he does not defy the masculine cisgender heterosexual stereotypes. He is shown as a talented person for musicals, but he does not want to perform on the stage because he seems to be afraid of performing on the stage, which seems to reflect his fear of coming out of the closet, as the reader can assume later. His presumed heterosexuality is confirmed to Callie by his brother Justin (Telgemeier 66 panels 2-3). Jesse is presented as a heterosexual until he disrupts the play, literally performing a woman, which seems to escape dominant heteronormative binary roles. However, he is also performing on that case; he only comes out of the closet implicitly to his brother (which readers do not see), and to Callie, saying: “Callie...” (211 panel 1), and she answers him: “I know... I know” (211 panel 2).

There are only three overt sexual desire performances in the book, all of them innocent kisses. The first two are heterosexual kisses between a girl and a boy, Callie and Greg, and West and Bonnie. The third one is a Queer expression of love, Jesse, portraying Miss Maybelle, kisses West, but it is a performed kiss, part of the script. There are no public Queer externalisations of love; Justin says another boy is cute (Telgemeier 115 panel 4) and Jesse that West likes him (222 panel 4), but both tell it privately to Callie, their secret ‘confessor’. Both are performing heterosexuality to everyone except Callie and each other.

Concerning social acceptance, both characters receive it but not for being gay because the general public does not know it. Instead, Justin receives it because he is performing a heterosexual guy, and Jesse because he is supposed to be a brave man who has defied the gender roles performing a woman in a play. Despite this, both do receive the acceptance of Callie, their confessor.

Regarding queerphobia, only one depiction can be considered as such, like the one exerted by Matt, who mocks Jesse for challenging heteronormative binaries by dressing as a woman (Telgemeier 195 panel 3). Generally, both characters can be seen as respected by society but because they are performing heterosexuality binary roles in the entire plot.

3.2 *And Tango Makes Three* by Peter Parnell et al.

In this book, which is based on a real story, the main characters are Queer; they are two male penguins called Roy and Silo, described as “a little bit different” (Richardson et al. 9). They are depicted exactly like the other penguins, and they do not make different gestures that differentiate them from the others.

Regarding Queer expression of love, there are two, when they “wound their necks around each other” (Richardson et al. 11) and when they do the same with their son (Ibid.), the first can be considered as a Queer expression of love and the second a parent-child one.

Concerning social acceptance, the only human in the story, the keeper Mr Gramzay shows social acceptance; he sees the male penguins’ affection as ‘normal’ (Richardson et al. 11) and thinks “they must be in love” (Ibid.). He does that because they imitate the other penguins, and the human accepts them because they are caught up in the dominant heteronormative roles. When he sees they are building a nest (mirroring the heterosexual families surrounding them), he provides them with an egg for having “their own baby” (Richardson et al. 25), so they can become parents and perform the entire binary Heterosexual Matrix.

As regards queerphobia, they end the story by doing things “like the other penguins [families] in the penguin house, and all the other animals in the zoo, and all the families in the big city around them” (Richardson et al. 30); they follow the traditional linear plot with a final heterosexual consummation, the traditional family with a child, that promises patriarchal succession. However, they remain isolated in the entire story, which can be seen as a rejection of the other penguins' families and a sign of the repression exerted by the penguin community.

In the end, it seems they are disrupting heteronormativity when they have Tango; they are “the very first penguin in the zoo to have two daddies” (Richardson et al. 26). However, they have no other role models to follow in their community, so they become a role model on their own.

3.3 I am Jazz by Jazz Jennings et al.

This book relates a real-life story of Jazz Jennings, a famous transgender woman. The main character is Jazz, a transgender girl who feels she is a girl and wants to be seen as such by everyone. She follows the stereotypes about her gender in the story and seems to follow the traditional normative heterosexuality. The book establishes that pink is Jazz's favourite colour, which is supposed to be for girls; she also dresses in princesses' dresses and disguises herself as a mermaid. Even the book is stereotyped; it is full of pink, a characteristic that overflows the story; even the back covers are pink. She wants to be seen as a girl and performs the image of femininity within the heteronormative binary roles. She also established some of the transgender's central claims in the plot, such as the reaffirmation of her felt gender as something normal that people should understand: "I have a girl brain but a boy body. This is called transgender. I was born this way!" (Herthel et al. 8). She also expresses the desire to be 'accepted' by the gender she feels; likewise, she talks about some battles that many transgender young people must face, as the theme of using the bathroom according to her felt gender or not being allowed to be in the sports team of their gender expression (20).

Regarding Queer expressions or externalisations of love, there is none. Concerning social acceptance, she begins by performing in front of everyone else outside her house, forced by her parents, to fit in with society (Herthel et al. 13); she does no longer do that after seeing the doctor, and her parents understand she was a transgender girl. Her parents needed information to understand she was a girl and accept her, mirroring society's necessity of the books like this one. Finally, she stops performing as a boy but starts acting like a girl that fulfils all the characteristics of the normative heterosexuality through which she is finally accepted, by almost everyone, and happy.

Regarding queerphobia, she talks with despair about the school, forcing her to use the boys' bathroom and playing in the boys' team, which does not help her feel 'normal' (Herthel et al. 20). This is the institutionalised queerphobia. As regard society, Jazz suffers some repression because she is not tolerated nor respected by some kids who tease her, call her by a boy's name, or ignore her (22).

3.4 A Day in the Life of Marlon Bundo by Jill Twiss and EG Keller

It seems necessary to make an introduction to this book to situate the analysis into context. Marlon Bundo is Mike Pence's family's rabbit, the well-known queerphobic former vice-president under Trump's administration. His wife and daughter, Charlotte Pence and Karen Pence, announced they would release a children's book called *Marlon Bundo's. A Day in the Life of the Vice President*, and, because of who they are, the book became very well known before it went on sale. Not long after they made the announcement, a very well-known late show, the *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*, announced they would release a parody version of Pence's book (Klein). Therefore, Twiss and Keller's book was created in response to another book, so it is mandatory to summarise this other book briefly.

In Charlotte Pence and Karen Pence's *A Day in the Life of The Vice-President*, the rabbit Marlon Bundo relates a day of his life accompanying the vice-president on a workday. He is an ordinary realistic rabbit that seems to bore accompanying the vice-president, and who is always depicted isolated, except for two times, when Mike Pence is holding it, as it is looking at a painting (Pence and Pence 12), and when he is holding it and reading The Bible (36-37). This book seems to serve for promoting the image of Mike Pence and his religious values.

On the other hand, Olivier's Marlon Bundo is a cartoon-like rabbit with a colourful bowtie. He is depicted as a bored rabbit in the hands of Mike Pence and always happy and smiling when he is in the wild. Marlon meets Wesley, a brown rabbit with whom he falls in love (Twiss and Keller 5).

Regarding Queer expressions and externalisations of love, they are plenty in this book; they are seen holding hands (Twiss and Keller 14, 15, 19, 28), Marlon carries Wesley over the threshold (29), they are holding each other (14, 15, 19, 28), and they sleep together (14, 15, 19, 28). Almost all these expressions of love are performed in private; they only hold hands in public. They also express their desire to be married (14), which is nothing but a performance of the binary Heterosexual Matrix.

Regarding social acceptance, all the animals declare themselves different, like Marlon and Wesley, showing respect for them and coming together to expel the repressive entity. Regarding

queerphobia, there is an clear queerphobic character in the story, the Stink Bug (a representation of Mike Pence), who acts as the state's repressive apparatus by forbidding them to marry (Twiss and Keller 14, 15, 19, 28): “Boy Bunnies Have to Marry Girl Bunnies” (14, 15, 19, 28) and praising traditional (conservative) values: “This Is the Way It Has Always Been. You. Are. Different. And Different Is Bad” (14, 15, 19, 28).

The plot moves following heterosexual rhythms. They got married, performing a heteronormative-like wedding, and even the heterosexual rite of carrying the ‘bride’ over the threshold, with Marlon performing ‘the man’ and Wesley ‘the woman’. They even end by dreaming of a baby, imitating the portrayal of the heterosexual family, fulfilling the perfect performance of the binary Heterosexual Matrix with marriage, family, (future) children, and a happy ending. Finally, it must be said that the publishing of Pence’s book called the parody book “something controversial and partisan” (Klein), and it was what it meant to be. Twiss and Keller’s book is a political parody book that should be read as a political statement (from the Democrats’ supporters) in response to another political statement (from the Republicans in power).

3.5 George by Alex Gino

The main character is George, a fourth-grade transgender girl who is discovering and accepting herself through the narration. She performs masculinity in front of everyone; however, she seems to be transgressing the boundaries of her performed gender “when no one is watching” (Gino 4), calling herself Melissa and using lipstick (Ibid.). She has some secret role models, fashion magazine models, who are her feminine reference; she wants to be like them. George also wants to use Charlotte’s Web’s play to express her gender publicly because if people could see her as Charlotte, “maybe they would see that she is a girl offstage too” (98).

Regarding Queer expressions or externalisations of love, she does not show anyone. Concerning social acceptance, she receives it, first by her friend Kelly, who, after a period of hesitation and silence, accepts her and even offers George to be Charlotte in the second performance for her to be able to express her own gender through the play. Then, there is a

rainbow flag in the principal's office and a sign saying “SUPPORT SAFE SPACES FOR GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER YOUTH” (138). Principal Maldonado also supports George, saying that her performance was magnificent and whispering: “My door is always open” (178). Her family also understands and supports her at the end; her mother said: “I’m really proud of you for being yourself” (Ibid.). Finally, the audience also seems to support her: “The auditorium was filled with hands clapping louder than ever” (174), but this is the same case as in *Drama*, they support her for her performance, not for being as she is.

Regarding queerphobia, George faces repression when she suffers some jokes about not fitting in the boys’ category (Gino 13) or when the teacher does not allow him to cast Charlotte because people will be confused (78). She also faces it when her mother finds the fashion magazines and takes them away because she thinks George is gay, or when a classmate, Emma, says George cannot be Charlotte because she is “disrupting to the others actors” (170). She even suffers queerphobic repression even if the person who is exerting it does not know she is doing it; when George says her mother, she is a girl, her mother laughs and assures George she is “one hundred per cent boy. Besides, you’re only ten years old. You don’t know how you’ll feel in a few years” (142). Finally, George even suffers physical violence, but it is not because of being a transgender girl but as a response to George painting the words “SOME JERK” on Jeff’s shirt (131).

Finally, just before the Bronx Zoo trip, George accepts herself and becomes Melissa with the help and complicity of her best friend Kelly, who let her some girls’ clothes. However, she ends by being assimilated by the binary Heterosexual Matrix; she wears a top with the exposed shoulders and a skirt (Gino 200); she says “she felt like a model” (Ibid.), mirroring the fashion magazine models with clothes that fit normative heterosexuality. Melissa even wears make-up, fulfilling all the physical stereotypes of her gender. She finally “surprised herself when she noticed her reflection in the glass in front of a display of exotic, glowing jellyfish. She was looking at a girl” (211), displaying that she needed to mirror normative heterosexuality and femininity to really looking at herself as she is and feels (Ibid.).

3.6 Conclusion of the analysis

Some characteristics are shared by all, or almost all, Queer characters of all the books under analysis. One shared characteristic is that all of them are aimed at the young population, three to young children (*And Tango Makes Three*, *I am Jazz*, and *A Day in the Life of Marlon Bundo*), and two to young adults (*Drama* and *George*). The books do not reflect the extent of the Queer community; three books show gay relationships and two transexual characters. There is no representation of lesbian, bisexual or other Queer characters. All the characters seem to follow the performativity that Judith Butler argues in her interpretation of Queer Theory, fulfilling the stereotypes of their gender inside the binary roles of the heterosexual society, before and after they exteriorise their gender expression or sexual orientation. They also mirror the heterosexual families and cisgender binary people around them and seem to iterate corporal gestures and performances that can only be read like a copy of that heterosexual binary. They seem to be forced to fit inside one of the two cultural genders; there is no place for spaces in-between, because society needs clear definitions, boxes, labels in its logic of domination and standardisation.

They all end up receiving social acceptance, most of them for being who they are and expressing their identity in public. In all the cases, there is previously expected heterosexuality or cisgender expression. Regarding same-sex public love affections, the Queer characters express only a few in all the books analysed. In *A Day in the Life of Marlon Bundo*, the rabbits hold their hands to each other (Twiss and Keller 14, 15, 19, 28). In *And Tango Makes Three*, the penguins “wound their necks around each other” (Richardson, Parnell, and Cole 9), and between them and their child (Richardson et al. 29); and in *Drama*, two male characters hold hands and kiss each other, but it is a performance in a play (Telgemeier 188 1-2).

The books under analysis cannot be considered as ground-breaking; these books do not transform the cultural landscape in any way. There are Queer characters, but they do not almost show any attitudes outside the heteronormative binary gender; all characters identify as men used to act as a stereotyped version of men almost all the time, and women as women, regardless of their sexual orientation. In the two books with transgender characters, *Jazz* and *George* feel they are performing their assigned sexes and, as a way of liberating and becoming who they are,

they end by becoming the perfect stereotyped definition of the gender they feel. In the other three books, there are only gay characters who rarely transgress the stereotypes of their gender, and when they did, as the penguins on *And Tango Makes Three* want to be parents, they become isolated. It is true that some characters, as Jesse on *George*, seems to transgress gender-stereotyped by dressing as a woman, but Jesse is performing in a play, he does not do it in real life, and George feels she is a girl (and she is), so she is not performing (literally), nor transgressing. Regarding queerphobia, there are only a few examples of it in all the books and only one depiction of violence in *George*, but the violence is not directly related to her being transgender, and she ends by becoming the most accepted character for herself in all the books analysed.

Summing up, it seems that the only reason for censoring those books is that they are starring Queer characters who end up being accepted by society. Those books seem to be censored based only on the main characters' identities and the happy resolutions of their stories. Neither of those books transgresses the binary roles of the heterosexual society, neither do they have a significant and sudden paradigm shift that could explain the attempts as a sudden social clash. They also do not seem to talk about other categories by which books used to be censored; there are only a few public displays of love between same-sex people; there is no bad language, drugs, sex, and religion seem not to be an issue in any of the books.

Censorship on things related to sexuality and Queer people is older than the United States itself; everything related to them is considered sexual by conservatives and some religious people. Unfortunately, this queerphobia has been translated into censorship and repressive laws in the history of that country. In the last years, there has been a period of advance on rights for the Queer community and Donald Trump, and Republicans in general, have created a conservative social climate that has increased censorship attempts on books with Queer characters. They seem to mirror Nixon's and Ronald Reagan's strategies of pushing back the Queer movement and its rights. It also seems that this queerphobia showed by republicans has its roots in The Old Testament's book of 'Leviticus', one of the oldest books of The Bible and considered as one of the most important; it is thought that it was written "round 1410 B.C. or 1255 B.C" (Holcomb); therefore, the censorship of Books with Queer characters seems to be based, fundamentally, on a queerphobic text written 3.400 years ago. Censorship, in that case,

functions as a method of silencing Queer young people and denies them from having role models in which they can be identified in creating their identities. It also seems possible that those specific books were targeted because they were the most sold books with Queer characters in the years they have been censored.

4. Consequences of censorship on Queer

Censorship of Queer material is not confined to only one field; it has been present in movies, comics, the recording industry, cartoons, animated movies, education, and the Internet. This censorship spreads everywhere and, precisely because of that, makes it more harmful for society.

Censorship in the movies is almost as old as the movies themselves. In 1922, Hollywood established the Hays Office to promulgate “a moral code for films” (Britannica Hays), pressured by various religious organisations and the Catholic Church (Kirby 453). In the 1930s, the Motion Picture Production Code (later known by the name ‘Hays Code’) was born, a code that served as a moral guideline to filmmakers and was applied to “most motion pictures released by major studios” (Steele 12). This code established a way to censor cultural products before their release, and in 1933, the Production Code Administration was created to enforce the Production Code (Kirby 456). There were several religious groups behind that censorship: the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the Federation of Churches, the National Council of Churches of Christ in America and the Catholic Legion of Decency (Ibid.), all religious extremists who wanted to control (and did for decades) what citizens could or could not see on films; their main goal was not to censor movies because they were evil people, but because they wanted to “reduce immorality and promote change for a healthier society...they strongly believe that were acting in a parental role by protecting audiences from immoral and indecent films” (Ibid.). The problem here is that those groups were trying to impose their own beliefs and morality on all society, especially those who do not think like them. Finally, in 1952, the Supreme Court gave movies the First Amendment protection and film censorship was severely restricted. However, the code was still in place until 1968. Nowadays, there is another kind of

ensorship in cinema, the erasure of the Queerness present in books in film adaptations. In Hollywood, movies straightwashing Queer characters in books adaptations were the norm, like in *The Colour Purple*, *Fried Green Tomatoes* (Hachette) or *Troy*.

Censorship in comics, like the movies, also dates back to the 1930s. Already in those years, educators thought comics were a “bad influence on students” (Steele 12), and Church and civic objects censor them for having immoral content. In the 1950s, the Comics Code Authority (CCA) was born to seal books that fulfilled their ‘moral standards’; it was the time when some cities organised “public burnings and bans on comic books” (Ibid.) However, little by little, every publisher was abandoning the CCA, and in 2011 Archie Comics, which was the last remaining publisher still taking part in it, announced that it left the CCA, which ended the CCA and its Code extinct (Ibid.).

Censorship in the Recording Industry came a little later. It was 1984 when Tipper Gore (the wife of Al Gore) and her advocacy group, the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC), created a rating code, the Parental Advisory labels, that classified albums according to their content and served to parents could censor ‘inappropriate’ albums because of its content. However, this censorship lost efficacy with the rise of digital music and the easy access to music’s era (Steele 12). Nowadays, there is specific censorship on songs with what is considered ‘bad language’ on radios and television channels, and artists, if they want their songs to be on those platforms, must make another version of the same song taking the ‘bad language’ away. However, the access to the Internet makes that censorship almost useless; people can find the song’s original version on so many other sites without the intermediation of those platforms.

There is censorship still in effect in noticeable ways in other places; one of the primary fields that censor Queer issues is cartoons and animated movies, but this censorship is not something new; it has a long tradition. It was unthinkable to find any Queer character in the first cartoons and animated films. However, there are many examples of cartoons that have been read as queer, such as *Yogi and Boo Boo* in the 50s (who live together and share a bed) or *The Smurfs* in the 60s (an all-male village) (Dennis 134). However, once the characters were read as queer, there was a countermove of containment. In *Yogi and Boo Boo*, Cindy Bear is introduced as Yogi’s girlfriend in the second season, and in *The Smurfs*, Smurfette, a character that was not present in the comics, was introduced in the TV series. Those introductions were used as

‘objects’ of gay desire and to “defuse conjectures that they might be ‘really’ gay” (Ibid.). To avoid further misinterpretations, the cartoons in the ’80s became “aggressively heterosexual”, such as *He-Man and the Master of the Universe* or *G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero*. In the 90s, animated cartoons began to “make sly [or direct] references to the presence of same-sex desire” (Ibid.), such as *Pinky and the Brain*, *SpongeBob SquarePants*, *The Simpsons*, *Family Guy* or *South Park* (Ibid.).

Concerning animated movies, Disney is (and has been) the leading producer of animated films from the birth of this art and has dominated the whole animated films industry for children and teenagers (Fan 119). Disney’s films seem to have suffered a progression through time on Queer issues. They began by showing misogyny and queerphobia, “early animated films...portray females as dependent, fearful and physically inferior to males” (Ibid.), and Queer characters were not present at all. Then, this company began to represent characters that could be read as queer, but all of them were villains. For instance, Jafar, Ursula, Cruella de Vil, Hades, Yzma, and Scar were subverted and rejected “traditional trappings of gender, sexuality, and social norms” (Watanabe 68-69). However, placing queer characters only as villains reinforced a negative image towards the Queer community, complicating our perceptions of power and morality (Ibid.). Queering villains could exacerbate the process of valuing multiple sexualities by producing unfavourable images of non-heterosexual people, which could create a link to the role of a villain (Fan 124). Disney seemed to reinforced “negative visions towards social minorities” (Kolinski et al. 377), with negative representations of “male characters with behaviour traditionally read as feminine” (Ibid.), such as in *Peter Pan*, *Robin Hood*, *Aladdin*, *The Lion King*, *Pocahontas*, or *Toy Story 3*. At that time, there were also affections between male characters seen as disgusting or ridiculous, as in *Beauty and the Beast*, *Mulan* and *The Emperor’s New Groove*” (377-378).

In later Disney material, the company began to shift its perspectives introducing Queer characters in the live-action television material, such as a bisexual Mulan in *Once Upon a Time* in 2013, an openly gay character in the television series *Andi Mack*, or a gay LeFou in the *Beauty and the Beast*’s remake of 2017 (Fan 128). Its pay television channel, Disney +, even released in 2020 the Pixar’s short film *Out*, whose protagonist is a gay character who wants to come out of the closet to his parents (Aviles Out) and *Luca* in 2021, a film that has been read as Queer

since its release. Disney animated films are slowly evolving, and character depictions have shifted in response to shifting and more evolved societal discourses (Fan 121-122). Disney has been “a hegemonic perpetrator of essentialist gender discourses in some films and a socially progressive agent in other films” (128). The company began by censoring Queer characters, showing them as an example of evilness or ridiculousness, to finally showing overt Queer characters in their productions for television. It looks pretty likeable that Censorship on Queer will finish in Disney and that there will be main Queer characters in Disney animated films soon.

There is also overt censorship on education, as the main one depicted in this paper with the censorship of books with Queer characters in public and school libraries. However, that is not the only censorship in schools; there is also censorship on the access to the Internet. On that issue, most schools’ computers are equipped with CIPA-mandated filters, a filter that block or filter Internet access to things considered “(a) obscene; (b) child pornography; or (c) harmful to minors (for computers that are accessed by minors)” (FCC); however, it is needed to establish what can be considered fitting under those three categories. For instance, it has become demonstrated that this filter has been misused, blocking sites as the ‘Human Rights Campaign’ or the ‘Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network’, while it does not extend to reparative therapy sites as ‘People Can Change’ (Storts-Brinks 24-25). The same thing is told by Altobelli, who explains that in his school district, some webs as ‘Rainbow Wedding Network’ (a sexual wedding planning website for Queer people) is censored, and others as ‘The Knot’ (a heterosexual wedding planning website) is not, which could make Queer students who are thinking about their future wedding feel that their love is filthy, horrible, and illegal (Altobelli 14).

There is also censorship on Queer in education, specifically in history teaching, in which non-normative sexualities’ topics are almost entirely absent from educational textbooks and library materials (Garry 8). For instance, “a history teacher ... might not be able to mention Stonewall or sponsor a Gay-Straight Alliance” (Allen) in the states with the ‘No Promo Homo’ laws. It seems that this censorship goes far beyond, and the complete Queer history and culture, not merely Queer sex, is systematically erased (Norton Suppression). However, teaching Queer history involves some difficulty, since much of the history of Queer people have been destroyed

or hidden, as Ellen Nussey's love letters to Charlotte Brontë, Eleanor Roosevelt's to Lorena Hickok, Federico García Lorca's intimate letters, or Tchaikovsky's, all of them because of their families wanted to 'protect' these people's reputation (Ibid.). Scholars are also intentionally hiding Queer history in historical documents by disguising it as something else, such as trivialising close same-sex feelings and highlighting the heterosexual ones (Ibid.).

Some clear examples depicting the erasing of Queer people from history are the pirates and the Two-Spirit people. As for the first, "Britain's Royal Navy punished 'sodomy' or 'buggery' with lashes and even hanging" (Reid-Smith), but in piracy, "homosexual couples may have been the norm, not the exception" (Ibid.). They have health insurance sponsored by the captain of their ships and could form same-sex civil unions called *matelotage*, a ceremony in which pirates "exchange gold rings and pledge their eternal union to each other" (Wagner). They also acquired marriage rights that gave them protection as an inheritance. Another example of this erasing of Queer history is the history of the 'Two-Spirit' people, who did not fit in the binary gender and many narrow-minded scholars. Moreover, knowing that "seven states do not directly mention slavery in their [social studies] state standards...eight states do not mention the civil rights movement...[and] only two states mention white supremacy" (Duncan et al.). It seems evident that there would be few states (if any) that teach the rights movements of the Queer community or those examples of Queer characters in American history.

There is also another kind of censorship worth mentioning, mainly because it is currently the most prominent and most dangerous censorship on the Internet. At the beginning of the Internet, two attempts to regulate pornography and delicate material to minors on the internet were the Communications Decency Act in 1996 and the Child Online Protection Act in 1998, but both were declared unconstitutional. Finally, in 2000, Congress passed the Children's Internet Protection Act that finally regulated access to delicate material for minors. This law regulated, among other things, the filters schools and libraries must have in their computers in order to receive federal funding (Steele 15). However, this preventive censorship, which seemed necessary, ended by extending to other areas rather than pornography and gore, as Queer websites. Nowadays, apart from the censorship on schools' computers, censorship is on the Internet in websites and in social media. Among all the existing, one of the leading Internet censors is YouTube, one of the main channels of communication that controls "an estimated 95

percent of the public video communications that occur[red] in the world in 2019” (Bensinger and Albergotti). YouTube censors videos that they⁹ consider ‘sensitive’ and puts them on restricted mode, making those videos invisible to viewers at many schools and libraries (Ibid.), and at houses that turn on the filter for children. YouTube’s restricted mode was “a feature intended to let schools, parents and libraries filter out content not appropriate for children, [however,] also removes a vast amount of LGBT content [as] videos from pop duo Tegan and Sara, who are gay, were hidden from view” (Hern). YouTube seems to apply previous censorship based only on the creators' identity, not on the content. There were several reports and lawsuits in 2017 on that issue, like others in 2019, because YouTube had demonetised channels of Queer creators, which was provoked because the videos were placed “in restricted mode without warning, and hiding them from search results” (Dickson). Nowadays, Internet companies such as YouTube and Google and social media like Facebook or Instagram act as censor agents that decide what is ‘decent’ and what is not, what is censorable and not. They are private-owned companies that can censor as they like because, as private companies, they are “under no obligation to allow all forms of speech on its platform” (Ibid.); they can censor, demonetise, or restrict information at their will. Their only limit is their public image, and controlling the vast majority of the social media gives them the power to shape their public image and manipulate public opinion.

All these kinds of censure have some things in common: they all position straight sexuality as common sense, as the only possible. They reinforce heteronormativity, which “is significant because it disguises itself as a social norm, which repeatedly reinforces its status as ‘natural’ and ‘universal’ [also] continues to alienate other sexualities by promoting heterosexuality as the one and only ‘natural’ sexual orientation” (Fan 124). Censoring Queer texts and enforce heteronormativity as the only possibility creates ignorance of such magnitude that heterosexuality becomes corruptive (Robinson 6). Another thing these kinds of censure have in common is that all of them try to hide censorship under new names that seem to lighten the mood and downplay censorship when their consequences could be much worse than overt censorship. Unfortunately, this new kind of censorship is becoming more sophisticated, hiding

⁹ ‘Them’ sometimes is no one because the censorship is carried out by artificial intelligence. However, this AI is programmed by people who use specific algorithms that are the ones that carry the queerphobia observed in the censorship.

behind other strategies (such as pressuring librarians or demonetising videos), forcing users to self-censor, provoking censorship to become invisible.

Censorship of books with Queer characters is a warning sign and the tip of the iceberg; this censorship is a symptom of the disease called queerphobia. This queerphobia that provokes the exclusion, removal, or restriction of Queer-themed products has the potential to influence a large number of people in a given community (Rauch 217), generally negatively. Studies conducted by Alexander and Miselis showed that “the library was the most important information source for GLBTQ people and that this group was seeking information about understanding their gay identities, coming out, learning gay social ‘rules’, and where to connect with others like them” (Ibid.). When Queer teens are exploring their identity and are just getting started on their quest to figure out their sexual orientation or gender expression (Downey et al. 105), they need to know who they really are and need referents that can be found in the books. Books also provide “self-affirmation all teens need” (Rauch 216). In addition, blocking access to information about Queer issues and, at the same time, allowing access to queerphobic information is “unlawful and potentially dangerous” (Storts-Brinks 27). One of the consequences of this censorship is that Queer students “receive negative messages about themselves, leaving them feeling stigmatised and alienated (GLSEN Research 1). Moreover, their classmates will not have the opportunity to gain factual knowledge about Queer individuals, history, or events, which could help to reduce bias incidents at school by reducing prejudices, increasing acceptance, and decreasing bias incidents at school.

‘No promo homo’ laws worsen this situation by causing Queer students to have more complicated to find peers that accept them, hear more homophobic remarks and have to face harassment and assault more frequently (Ibid.). In addition, those laws cause Queer students to have fewer positive representations of Queer people, history or events, making it harder to find Queer material at the school library and in the school computers (Ibid.). Queer students in those states are also “less likely to feel supported by the educators in their schools” (Ibid.), have less access to support student clubs and to relevant health resources in school (Ibid.).

Notwithstanding, 90% of Queer teenagers suffer bullying at school (Rauch 216), and bullying “increases absenteeism ... discipline problems ... lower levels of school engagement and academic achievement ... health risk behaviours, substance abuse and attempted suicide...

[it also provokes] harmful psychological effects” (Kosciw and Greytak 976). Young people need the positive Queer role models that the censored books with Queer characters provide them. Censoring those books provokes a high risk of suffering depression or committing suicide among Queer teenagers, which is linked to the lack of information they suffer (Rauch 216). There is a direct relation between censoring those books and the rise of depression and suicide among Queer students. Suicide rates among those students are extremely high, partly because of the bullying at school, as Pytash stands: “victims of bullying are more likely to have suicidal thoughts and actions. For Americans between the ages of 10 and 24, suicide is the third leading cause of death” (470), and, as Stibich says, the second between people from 20 to 24 (Stibich); furthermore, when compared to heterosexual youth, Queer youth are nearly five times more likely to attempt suicide (The Trevor Project), and that seems to be raising and achieving rates of a pandemic, with the “40 per cent of LGBTQ youth [between 13 and 24] 'seriously considered' suicide” in 2020 (Fitzsimons).

In addition to all of this, it must be said that the consequences of the censorship of Queer materials do not begin in puberty; children interiorise gender roles and identities from a young age. For example, “when students read through non-fiction books about animals during science class, they quickly assigned heteronormative family roles to the animals pictured, and crafted accompanying, highly normatively gendered stories together” (Ryan 82). Children understand heterosexuality as common sense from a very young age, the norm, and everything that deviates from that is seen as weird, and therefore is silenced, hidden. However, children’s understanding of sexuality is constructed in school, but mainly in fragments of information that comes from their houses, cartoons, films and books. Almost everywhere they look to take information about sexuality, they found only the hegemonic heterosexuality that ends by becoming “the ‘norm’ through which everything else is defined” (Renold 493), which ends by perpetuating the idea that Queer people and practices are not ‘typical’, so are wrong (Ryan 86-87). Moreover, “if you hear no stories about something that is a part of you ... that part of you can’t possibly develop and mature” (Abraham). Sexuality at a young age is “implicitly and explicitly taught, and that any mention of sexual diversity was viewed in terms of corruption and danger” (Ryan 79). However, “children learn from an early age that ‘the sexual’ is prescriptively heterosexual, and male homophobic” (Ibid.). Having those books, as the analysed in this paper, available to the general population would help to Queer young people to encounter role models, feel less isolated

and self-accepted. Those books could give their cisgender and heterosexual classmates a sense that queerness is an everyday thing, which has been proved that could help establish a climate of tolerance and acceptance in schools by reducing taunting and bullying (Garry 1). That will also reduce bullying at school and decrease depression and suicide rates among the young Queer population.

All the libraries must promote a solid literature collection with Queer characters, and schools can also help reverse the situation caused by Censorship on Queer by, for instance, reading books with Queer characters and teaching the history of Queer people. Texts can be used as a means of talking about tough stuff about young people's lives; texts can afford "conversants some distance from the topic, which can be filtered through a character's reaction or opinion" (Ibid.). Students can recognise themselves in the stories and experiences of the characters, which can reinforce their sense of self-worth and help them "overcome the experience of and feelings associated with social margination" (Flood). Another essential tool schools could use to combat queerphobia is to promote positive representations of Queer people in history. For instance, it can be taught the history of Queer civil rights, the Stonewall riots, biographies of Queer people erased from history, teaching the history of pirates, or the Two-Spirit people. All this could show students how the binary system created by the patriarchal societies is artificial, that "gender is socially and culturally constructed" (Sheppard and Mayo 260), and, at the same time, provide students positive role models of Queer people. Thus, education must fight to deconstruct the symbolic order, the binary categories, and the heterocentrism. All of this can give students positive representations of Queer people and can provide Queer students positive role models. Another strategy to fight back intolerance and to try to reverse the harmful effects is by queering canonical texts at school, that can show students that "the act of reading is inherently political, and texts convey ideologies and social norms, no matter how innocent some texts may appear" (Fan 130); texts without Queer characters or plots also can be used for that matter. Teachers can do queer readings in the classroom of some stories, as the ones described in the previous chapter that reads Timon and Pumbaa as a gay couple who adopt Simba. These Queer readings are a way of resisting heteronormativity and providing Queer students with a sense of inclusion (129).

Schools also need to create supportive environments by promoting talking about conflicts between students, and teach them not to be passive bystanders, because by doing so, they become an audience for the bully, who becomes reinforced; that passivity, or even encouragement, ends by perpetuating the situation (Hughes and Laffier 16). Schools can also promote Queer clubs because students who attended schools with resources for Queer students, such as the Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), thought their schools were safer than students who did not attend schools with such groups (Garry 2). Finally, schools' librarians must also stand up against filters that censor information web pages on Queer issues, "especially in conservative environments...[where] are the students who most desperately need support" (Altobelli 14). All of those strategies can help students with do no Queer leanings to build empathy towards their classmates. Schools must also promote the resolution of conflicts and positive representation of Queer people through books or history lessons and stand up against filters that censor Queer information webpages. These strategies can also help fight bullying based on queerphobia, educate students on tolerance and empathy, and help to decrease depression and suicide rates among Queer students.

One last thing to consider about this matter is that all those measures must be included before junior high because young children are used to be educated inside the Heterosexual Matrix at that age, which seems to encourage bullying towards Queer people in junior high. It is often said that young children at that age are too young "to be exposed to any discussion of sexuality" (Garry 2); however, they are overwhelmed by fairy tale stories that all used to end up "with the protagonists living 'happily ever after' in a heterosexual marriage" (Ibid.) since they are babies. They are taught to live in the Heterosexual Matrix, and heterosexuality "becomes the 'norm' through which everything else is defined" (Renold 493), and they finally see everything outside heterosexuality as weird and rejectable, as used to happen with Queer people. That seems to be why harassment and bullying are more common among junior high/middle school students than high school students (Kosciw and Greytak 977). It seems logical that if bullying begins at a younger age, the measures to prevent it must be applied earlier to teach young children tolerance and empathy.

Politics have their role in fixing the consequences caused by Censorship on Queer, and the first thing they must do is not to be queerphobic because they act as the authoritative discourse.

As Garry argues, “in schools where staff members made anti-gay remarks, considerably more students made those types of comments as well” (Garry 2) because students feel they are allowed to do it by the authority, the teaching staff. Teachers, in that case, act as the authoritative discourse, just as Trump’s, Pence’s or every other politician who has the temerity of being queerphobic in public. Politics must also repeal the remaining ‘no promo homo’ laws and preventing reinstating new ones. They must also support legislation that creates safe environments for all students creating anti-bullying laws because “students in states with comprehensive anti-bullying laws face less hostile educational environments, and these laws help to ensure the safety of students most at-risk of peer victimisation, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth” (GLSEN Research 1). They also must support librarians and give them the necessary tools to be more prepared, which could encourage “welcoming library collections and environments” (Garry 53); providing them with job security could also be a valuable tool to help them fight social pressure in some conservative environments. In small, rural, conservative districts, having well-trained and supported (by the Administration) certified librarians is sometimes the only visible difference between a well-balanced, broad library collection and one that is limited (Ibid.), and bans every ‘controversial’ material.

Censoring books with Queer characters to make politics ends by becoming a way of making politics about any matter. In 2020, there was a rise in the Black Lives Matter movement because of the brutal murder of George Floyd at the hands of the police. Politics centred their agenda on that issue, and so did the media; it was the central issue in the United States after the pandemic. This murder provoked massive demonstrations all over the country, and this electric atmosphere resulted in a rise in parents seeking to ban anti-racist books and books related to police brutality (Flood). From occupying eight out of the ten spots of the Books with Queer characters of the Top Ten of the most challenged books of the year in 2019, Books with Queer characters came to occupy only one spot, being the list flooded by censored books that dealt with racism and police brutality issues, occupying those books six out of ten spots (ALA Top Ten 2020). That sudden change in the last year demonstrates that social context, politics and the media greatly influence the attempts to censor books based on the topic chosen by politics and media.

5. Conclusions

The books analysed show that the books with Queer characters are censored just because they contain Queer characters and plots, and they seem to be censored for ideological and political reasons. The context analysed suggests a direct link between the books' challenges because they have Queer characters and the queerphobic laws of some states (as the 'no promo homo' laws), religion, and Trump's queerphobic agenda. It also seems that all Censorship on Queer has its roots in a religious text written 3.400 years ago, the 'Leviticus'. History also shows that censorship on Queer materials is older than the United States itself and that this censorship is less and less tolerated over time. It also shows that Queer rights have advanced through time in the United States and that these advances agitate movements of resistance, mainly by conservatives, that provoke a regression on those advances, as in Nixon, Ronald Reagan and Donald Trump's era.

Furthermore, this paper shows that censorship based on queerphobia also extends to other areas apart from books nowadays, as in animated movies, education, and the Internet, and that only social pressure can fight it. It also has given examples of how Queer history has been hidden and erased from history, as the history of pirates and the Two-Spirit people. This paper also demonstrates how censoring Queer materials, parents, educators, and politics spread queerphobia, a hate speech targeting Queer young people, leading to devastating effects. All this censorship is socially disruptive because it spreads hate based on people's identity or gender and "increases absenteeism ... discipline problems ... lower levels of school engagement and academic achievement ... health risk behaviours, [and] substance abuse" (Kosciw and Greytak 976). It is also psychologically problematic for young people because it encourages bullying at schools, provokes "harmful psychological effects" (Ibid.), as depression, and increases suicide among Queer young people. The suicide rates have achieved rates of a pandemic, with the "40 per cent of LGBTQ youth [between 13 and 24] 'seriously considered' suicide" in 2020 (Fitzsimons NBC), rising that coincides with the rise of queerphobia and the rise on Books with Queer characters' censorship.

This paper has also pointed some ways out of the situation provoked by this censorship, giving access to Books with Queer characters in all the libraries because books with Queer

characters who come out of the closet or are transitioning are essential to the Queer young people. However, maybe it is necessary to have also Queer characters that do something more than that, that live their lives outside that crucial (but not all-embracing) moment of their lives. Having this kind of literature available to students at schools also creates a supportive environment that “discourage bullying and encourage students (who are not Queer) to become allies...that LGBTQ-themed literature can be a lifesaver to young LGBTQ students” (Garry 53); reading books with Queer characters and plots fosters empathy by featuring characters and circumstances that adolescent readers can easily relate to (Miller 31).

As said before, libraries have to promote a solid literature collection with Queer characters, which has been demonstrated to increase tolerance and acceptance in schools and reduce taunting and bullying. Schools’ librarians must also stand up against filters that censor information web pages on Queer issues, especially in conservative areas in which the Queer population needs it the most.

Schools also have to promote positive representations of Queer people in history to show students that the binary system created by the patriarchal societies is artificial and how gender is constructed in our society and culture. Education must fight to deconstruct heterocentrism, the heterosexual binary, and the hegemonic discourse that tries to label people under binary categories. Queering canonical texts at school can also help in that matter; it can show students that “the act of reading is inherently political, and texts convey ideologies and social norms, no matter how innocent some texts may appear” (Fan 130). Schools also need to create supportive environments by promoting talking about conflicts between students and promote Queer clubs. All those strategies can also help fight bullying based on queerphobia, educate students on tolerance and empathy, and help to decrease depression and suicide rates among Queer students. All those measures must be included before junior high because young children are used to be educated inside the Heterosexual Matrix at that age, which seems to encourage bullying towards Queer people in junior high. The measures to prevent bullying must be applied at a younger age to teach young children tolerance and empathy.

Politics must begin by repealing the remaining ‘no promo homo’ laws and preventing reinstating new ones. They must also support legislation that creates safe environments for all

students creating anti-bullying laws, support librarians and give them the necessary tools to be more prepared to fight the pressure to censor books.

Despite all the climate of censorship and the sets back, and looking ahead, censorship of Queer materials is slowly fading away in the United States. Regarding Books with Queer characters, the fact that some of them are on the banned list year after year has had “a canonizing effect...lists of banned books thus function as the list of best books...[which reinforces] the idea that books are valuable because they are controversial” (Kidd 210). Those books ended by being promoted by prising them. Censoring some of those books has become a way to rescue them from oblivion, giving them “a place in public life and cultural memory” (Ibid.). As for animated movies, cartoons, and the Internet companies, they seem to be finally yielding, including positive Queer characters and plots, or allowing access to them, and all of them seem to become more egalitarian. However, all these advancements on the visibility of the Queer community have been only possible because of social pressure and organisations such as the American Library Association and the Office for Intellectual Freedom, side by side with Queer associations and organisations such as the Gay-Straight Alliances.

As a last remark, it must be said that although books with Queer characters are still challenged regularly, the Queer community has come a long way. Given the advance of the Queer community’s rights and the uprising of resistance movements, movements that sometimes take power and try to set back those advances, papers like this one are necessary to highlight the reactionary movements and try to fight them back. The same goes for other things that the research on this paper has brought to light, which seem interesting to be further explored and researched. Firstly, it has been interesting to find out that most Native American tribes were “capable of accommodating three, four, and possibly more genders, or having a gender system characterised by fluidity, transformation, and individual variation” (Roscoe 7). Also, most Queer people inside Native People societies suffer discrimination nowadays, as the Navajo Nation that banned same-sex marriage. It seems interesting to see how did they arrive at this situation.

Secondly, it has been interesting to find examples of Queer characters and stories that seem to have been hidden or erased from official history. For instance, the ‘Two-Spirit’ people from Native American tribes, or pirates, who used to form civil unions called matelotage that gave

them protection based on this union. Also, the island of Tortuga functioned as a sanctuary for the people who wanted to have matelotage, an island that was “the only place that openly accepted same-sex relationships” (Wagner). It seems interesting to research if there are some other examples in the history of same-sex societies or same-sex people being fully respected inside their societies, as pirates in Tortuga or ‘Two-Spirit’ people in Native American tribes.

Thirdly, it has been fascinating to see how canonical books, animated films, cartoons, and TV series aimed at children can be queered. For example, it is exciting to see that Yogi and Boo Boo could be read as a perfect gay couple; also, how their producers tried to erase this reading by introducing a girlfriend to Yogi and how that girlfriend was erased from the social imaginary. And that is as exciting as seeing that Timon and Pumbaa can also be read as a gay couple who adopted Simba and raised him until adulthood. It seems appealing to see if there are more examples of same-sex relations hidden in plain sight or that can be read as such.

Fourthly, it has been appealing to know that “the first law criminalizing homosexual relations in India was passed by the British rulers in 1860, imitating the British penal code [and that] most modern Indians firmly believe that homosexuality is a decadent Western import, whereas, in fact, homophobia was the product of British colonialism” (Norton Suppression). By pulling on that thread, purely out of curiosity, it was astonishing to find out that thirty-six of the Commonwealth's fifty-three countries have anti-homosexuality legislation (Reality Check Team), which represent more than the 50% of the countries that currently criminalise the members of the Queer community in the world.¹⁰ It seems that the British Empire has been one of the main contributors to expand queerphobia in history and that The Old Testament book of Leviticus, a 3.400 years old book, seems to be the source of all this queerphobia and the anti 'sodomy' laws, but maybe there are other factors. It seems interesting to do more research on the source of the queerphobia founded in former British colonies. This research could be carried under a philologist point of view, beginning by analysing some of the most representative UK's texts and audiovisual products aimed at young audiences to see if they contain Queer characters or plots (otherwise, if they do not, those fictional arts can be queered). The works chosen must represent the cornerstones of British literature, the best sellers, and the most distributed ones. J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* and BBC's series *Doctor*

¹⁰ “There are 69 countries that have laws that criminalise homosexuality” (Reality Check)

Who seem to fit into this category. This research tries to look at the different representations of Queer characters and plots in the main cultural products of the United Kingdom aimed at young audiences, both the obvious and the queered ones. It is also interesting to see how these fictional arts have been received by the UK and UK's former colonies' audiences and look at some examples of censorship or censorship attempts. Finally, it could also be appealing to investigate to what extent the colonial imposition of sex, gender, and sexuality has reached our days in British formerly colonised countries and how that can influence the reception of cultural products like those under analysis.

All the lines of research listed above seem to be useful for various shared reasons: For instance, to contribute resisting heteronormativity, providing Queer young people with a sense of inclusion; or for trying to bring to light some Queer history and referents buried by queerphobia; or finally, to put in my two cents to help demonstrating that, as Sheppard and Mayo said, “gender is socially and culturally constructed” (Sheppard and Mayo 260). Any of these questions are worth answering and can contain surprising and valuable findings for society.

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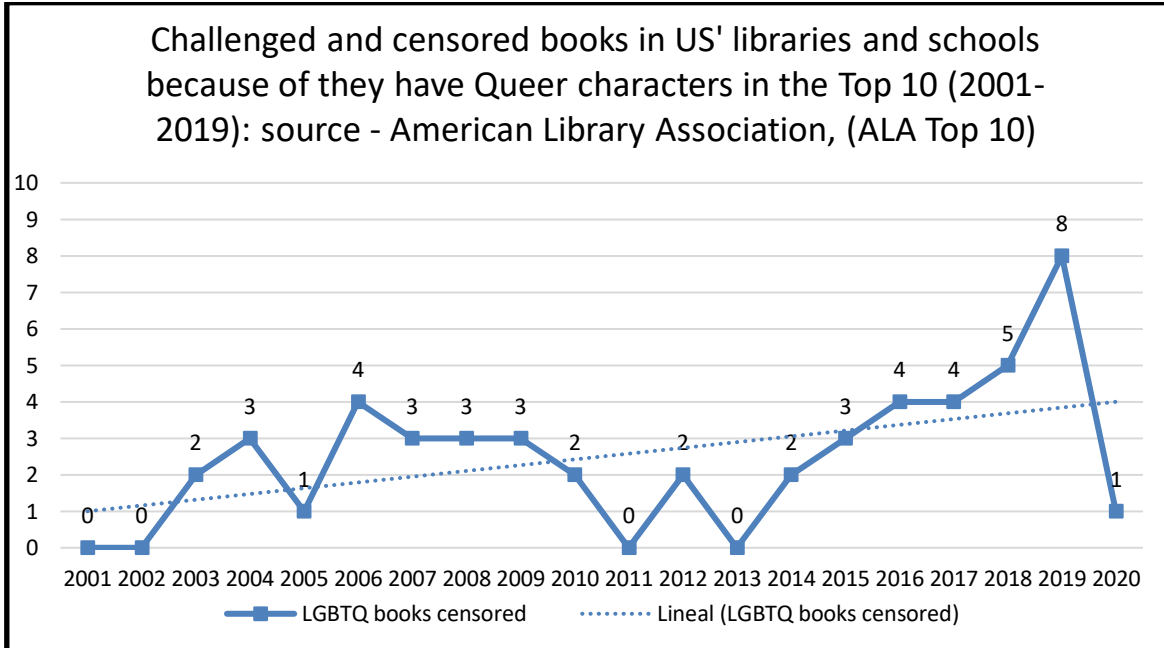
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Highlighted in yellow the books challenged and censored always because of their Queerness, and in blue the ones that are only sometimes:

100 most frequently challenged books: 1990-1999 (ALA 100):

1. Scary Stories (series), by Alvin Schwartz
2. Daddy's Roommate, by Michael Willhoite
3. I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, by Maya Angelou
4. The Chocolate War, by Robert Cormier
5. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, by Mark Twain
6. Of Mice and Men, by John Steinbeck
7. Forever, by Judy Blume
8. Bridge to Terabithia, by Katherine Paterson
9. Heather Has Two Mommies, by Leslea Newman
10. The Catcher in the Rye, by J.D. Salinger
11. The Giver, by Lois Lowry
12. My Brother Sam is Dead, by James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier
13. It's Perfectly Normal, by Robie Harris
14. Alice (series), by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
15. Goosebumps (series), by R.L. Stine
16. A Day No Pigs Would Die, by Robert Newton Peck
17. The Color Purple, by Alice Walker
18. Sex, by Madonna
19. Earth's Children (series), by Jean M. Auel
20. The Great Gilly Hopkins, by Katherine Paterson

Top 100 Banned/Challenged Books: 2000-2009:

1. Harry Potter (series) by J.K. Rowling
2. Alice series by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
3. The Chocolate War by Robert Cormier
4. And Tango Makes Three by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell
5. Of Mice and Men, by John Steinbeck
6. I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou
7. Scary Stories (series) by Alvin Schwartz
8. His Dark Materials (series) by Philip Pullman
9. ttyl; tftn; l8r g8r (series) by Lauren Myracle
10. The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky
11. Fallen Angels by Walter Dean Myers
12. It's Perfectly Normal by Robie Harris
13. Captain Underpants (series) by Dav Pilkey
14. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain
15. The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison
16. Forever by Judy Blume
17. The Color Purple by Alice Walker
18. Go Ask Alice by Anonymous
19. Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger
20. King and King by Linda de Haan

Top 100 Most Banned and Challenged Books: 2010-2019:

1. The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie
2. Captain Underpants (series) by Dav Pilkey
3. Thirteen Reasons Why by Jay Asher
4. Looking for Alaska by John Green
5. George by Alex Gino
6. And Tango Makes Three by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell
7. Drama by Raina Telgemeier
8. Fifty Shades of Grey by E. L. James
9. Internet Girls (series) by Lauren Myracle
10. The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison
11. The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini
12. Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins
13. I Am Jazz by Jazz Jennings and Jessica Herthel
14. The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky
15. To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee
16. Bone (series) by Jeff Smith
17. The Glass Castle by Jeannette Walls
18. Two Boys Kissing by David Levithan
19. A Day in the Life of Marlon Bundo by Jill Twiss
20. Sex is a Funny Word by Cory Silverberg

Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019.

Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

The Freedom to Read Statement

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label "controversial" views, to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to counter threats to safety or national security, as well as to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as individuals devoted to reading and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating ideas, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

Most attempts at suppression rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary individual, by exercising critical judgment, will select the good and reject the bad. We trust Americans to recognize propaganda and misinformation, and to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. We do not believe they are

prepared to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be "protected" against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

These efforts at suppression are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, art and images, films, broadcast media, and the Internet. The problem is not only one of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even larger voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy or unwelcome scrutiny by government officials.

Such pressure toward conformity is perhaps natural to a time of accelerated change. And yet suppression is never more dangerous than in such a time of social tension. Freedom has given the United States the elasticity to endure strain. Freedom keeps open the path of novel and creative solutions, and enables change to come by choice. Every silencing of a heresy, every enforcement of an orthodoxy, diminishes the toughness and resilience of our society and leaves it the less able to deal with controversy and difference.

Now as always in our history, reading is among our greatest freedoms. The freedom to read and write is almost the only means for making generally available ideas or manners of expression that can initially command only a small audience. The written word is the natural medium for the new idea and the untried voice from which come the original contributions to social growth. It is essential to the extended discussion that serious thought requires, and to the accumulation of knowledge and ideas into organized collections.

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings.

The freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights.

We therefore affirm these propositions:

1. *It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.*

Creative thought is by definition new, and what is new is different. The bearer of every new thought is a rebel until that idea is refined and tested. Totalitarian systems attempt to maintain themselves in power by the ruthless suppression of any concept that challenges the established orthodoxy. The power of a democratic system to adapt to change is vastly strengthened by the freedom of its citizens to choose widely from among conflicting opinions offered freely to them. To stifle every nonconformist idea at birth would mark the end of the democratic process. Furthermore, only through the constant activity of weighing and selecting can the democratic mind attain the strength demanded by times like these. We need to know not only what we believe but why we believe it.

2. *Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation they make available. It would conflict with the public interest for them to establish their own political, moral, or aesthetic views as a standard for determining what should be published or circulated.*

Publishers and librarians serve the educational process by helping to make available knowledge and ideas required for the growth of the mind and the increase of learning. They do not foster education by imposing as mentors the patterns of their own thought. The people should have the freedom to read and consider a broader range of ideas than those that may be held by any single librarian or publisher or government or church. It is wrong that what one can read should be confined to what another thinks proper.

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3. *It is contrary to the public interest for publishers or librarians to bar access to writings on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.*

No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. No society of free people can flourish that draws up lists of writers to whom it will not listen, whatever they may have to say.

4. *There is no place in our society for efforts to coerce the taste of others, to confine adults to the reading matter deemed suitable for adolescents, or to inhibit the efforts of writers to achieve artistic expression.*

To some, much of modern expression is shocking. But is not much of life itself shocking? We cut off literature at the source if we prevent writers from dealing with the stuff of life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. In these matters values differ, and values cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised that will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

5. *It is not in the public interest to force a reader to accept the prejudice of a label characterizing any expression or its author as subversive or dangerous.*

The ideal of labeling presupposes the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for others. It presupposes that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. But Americans do not need others to do their thinking for them.

6. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large; and by the government whenever it seeks to reduce or deny public access to public information.*

It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read, and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. But no group has the right to take the law into its own hands, and to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is no freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive. Further, democratic societies are more safe, free, and creative when the free flow of public information is not restricted by governmental prerogative or self-censorship.

7. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing books that enrich the quality and diversity of thought and expression. By the exercise of this affirmative responsibility, they can demonstrate that the answer to a "bad" book is a good one, the answer to a "bad" idea is a good one.*

The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said. Books are the major channel by which the intellectual inheritance is handed down, and the principal means of its testing and growth. The defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all Americans the fullest of their support.

We state these propositions neither lightly nor as easy generalizations. We here stake out a lofty claim for the value of the written word. We do so because we believe that it is possessed of enormous variety and usefulness, worthy of cherishing and keeping free. We realize that the application of these propositions may mean the dissemination

of ideas and manners of expression that are repugnant to many persons. We do not state these propositions in the comfortable belief that what people read is unimportant. We believe rather that what people read is deeply important; that ideas can be dangerous; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours.

This statement was originally issued in May of 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, which in 1970 consolidated with the American Educational Publishers Institute to become the Association of American Publishers.

Adopted June 25, 1953, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee; amended January 28, 1972; January 16, 1991; July 12, 2000; June 30, 2004.

A Joint Statement by:

American Library Association

Association of American Publishers

Subsequently endorsed by:

American Booksellers for Free Expression

The Association of American University Presses

The Children's Book Council

Freedom to Read Foundation

National Association of College Stores

National Coalition Against Censorship

National Council of Teachers of English

The Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression

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The First Amendment provides that Congress make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting its free exercise. It protects freedom of speech, the press, assembly, and the right to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Books challenged or censored for their Queerness that appeared in the Top Ten ALA's Banned and Challenged Books list from the 2001 (ALA Top 10).

	Percentage	Released year	Years it could have been censored	Years in the Top 10
<i>Athletic Shorts</i> , by Chris Crutcher	5%	1991	20	1
<i>Captain Underparts</i> series written and illustrated by Dav Pilkey	5%	1997	20	1
<i>Go Ask Alice</i> , By Anonymous	5%	1971	20	1
<i>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</i> , by Maya Angelou	5%	1969	20	1
<i>It's Perfectly Normal</i> , by Robie Harris	5%	1994	20	1
<i>Revolutionary Voices</i> , edited by Amy Sonnie	5%	2000	20	1
<i>The Colour Purple</i> , by Alice Walker	5%	1982	20	1
<i>Gossip Girl</i> (series), Cecily Von Ziegesar	5,26%	2002	19	1
<i>The Kite Runner</i> , by Khaled Hosseini	5,56%	2003	18	1
<i>My Sister's Keeper</i> , by Jodi Picoult	5,88%	2004	17	1
<i>Uncle's Bobby's Wedding</i> , by Sarah S. Brannen	7,69%	2008	13	1
<i>King and King</i> , by Linda de Haan	10,53%	2002	19	2
<i>This Day in June</i> by Gayle E. Pitman, illustrated by Kristyna Litten	14,29%	2014	7	1
<i>This One Summer</i> written by Mariko Tamaki and illustrated by Jillian Tamaki	14,29%	2014	7	1
<i>Sex is a Funny Word</i> y Cory Silverberg, illustrated by Fiona Smyth	16,67%	2015	6	1
<i>Alice</i> (series), by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor	25%	1985	20	5
<i>Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out</i> by Susan Kuklin	28,57%	2014	7	2
<i>Prince & Knight</i> by Daniel Haack, illustrated by Stevie Lewis	33,33%	2018	3	1

<i>Sex is a Funny World</i> written by Cory Silverberg and illustrated by Fiona Smyth	33,33%	2015	6	2
<i>Two Boys Kissing</i> by David Levithan	37,5%	2013	8	3
<i>Drama</i> written and illustrated by Raina Telgemeier	55,55%	2012	9	5
<i>And Tango Makes Three</i> written by Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson and illustrated by Henry Cole	56,25%	2005	16	9
<i>I Am Jazz</i> written by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings, and illustrated by Shelagh McNicholas	57,14%	2014	7	4
<i>A Day in the Life of Marlon Bundo</i> by Jill Twiss, illustrated by EG Keller	66,67%	2018	3	2
<i>George</i> by Alex Gino	83,33%	2015	6	5

Appendix:

- I will only consider the years from the 2001 to the 2020 because the ALA has only published the Banned and Challenged Books list of those years.
- I will only consider the years the book has been challenged or censored because of their Queerness.