

## **Beyond Representation: LGBT YA in the Post-Obergefell Era**

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The March 2018 debut of *Love, Simon*, the cinematic adaptation of Becky Albertalli's 2015 novel *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*, amplified an ongoing debate in the world of YA literature: What obligations do LGBT-themed novels have in an era of unprecedented social acceptance? Specifically, is mere representation enough? If not, how can the diverse array of struggles and triumphs of LGBT youth be depicted and explored in thoughtful, innovative, and helpful ways? Drawing on influential past scholarship and more recent works, I offer a snapshot of the state of LGBT literature through the lens of four novels with gay male protagonists, all released shortly before and after the landmark June 2015 Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage: Albertalli's *Simon*, Adam Silvera's *More Happy Than Not*, Kate Scelsa's *Fans of the Impossible Life*, and Jeffrey Self's *Drag Teen*.

In the context of a half-century evolution, these narratives represent a step forward, but not an unqualified one. *Drag Teen* and *Impossible Life* may sidestep the oft-depicted tortured coming out and place their characters comfortably in a milieu of "queer visibility," but *Simon* and *More Happy* struggle to present physical intimacy and violence, respectively, in ways that don't evoke the subgenre's earlier days. Ultimately, I assert that the stakes are high enough to continue demanding the bar be raised for LGBT YA literature—that these works reflect not just a world that is, but a world that can be. These novels, at their best, represent a step in that direction but also demonstrate the progress that still can be made.