

# **Adolescent Girls in Selected Novels by John Green**

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**Představte Johna Greena a jeho tvorbu.**

**Nastiňte problematiku dospívání současných dívek v západních společnostech.**

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Tato práce analyzuje dospívající dívčí postavy Alasku Young, Margo Roth Spiegelman a Jane Turner v knihách Johna Greena *Hledání Aljašky* (Looking for Alaska, 2005), *Papírová města* (Paper Towns, 2008) a *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* (Will Grayson, Will Grayson, 2010), jejímž spoluautorem je David Levithan. Začátek práce popisuje Johna Greena a jeho tvorbu. Dále práce pojednává o dospívání dívek v západních společnostech a současné problematice vztahující se k tomuto životnímu období. Těžištěm práce je analýza podobností a rozdílů mezi hlavními dívčími postavami vybraných románů a jejich vztahu k hlavním chlapeckým postavám. Práce dochází k závěru, že všechny tři hrdinky zastávají v románech zejména podpůrnou funkci ve vývoji hlavního protagonisty.

Klíčová slova: John Green, literatura pro mladé, dospívání, dívčí postavy, analýza díla, podobnosti.

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis analyses the adolescent girl characters Alaska Young, Margo Roth Spiegelman, and Jane Turner in John Green's novels *Looking for Alaska* (2005), *Paper Towns* (2008) and *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* (2010), which was co-written with David Levithan. The beginning of thesis deals with John Green and his works. It also describes feminine adolescence in Western societies and present-day problems related to it. The main goal of this thesis is to analyze both similarities and differences between the main adolescent girl characters within the selected novels and their relationships to the main male characters. The thesis concludes that all three girls serve mainly as a supporting element for the development of a main male protagonist.

Keywords: John Green, young adult literature, coming-of-age, girl characters, novel analysis, similarities.

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the American writer John Green has joined the icons of contemporary young adult literature in only a decade, his work must include some alluring elements for the readers' communities. The authors of a book *John Green: Teen Whisperer* (2015), the book which shows a great deal of variety of Green's elements, state: "Green is nothing if not a master of adolescent voice: voice in narration and voice in dialogue."<sup>1</sup> From this perspective, Green's handling of the adolescent characters can be seen as one of his contributions towards the art of young adult literature.

Most of John Green's novels are narrated through a voice of a first-person male narrator and three of such novels will be analyzed in the following pages: *Looking for Alaska* (2005), *Paper Towns* (2008), and *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* (2010). As the novel *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* is co-written with David Levithan, the following analysis will use only Green's part of the book to make the statements relevant. However, the analysis is not focused on the male protagonists; this thesis deals with the main adolescent girl characters and their depictions through the voices of the first-person narrators, to be more precise, the main male protagonists.

In this thesis, I will introduce John Green from his early beginnings to current achievements. As this thesis concerns the adolescent girls, a greater emphasis will be put on defining the period of feminine adolescence within the Western societies, and describing some of present-day problems relating to it. The main purpose of my thesis is to focus on portrayals of the main adolescent girl characters, find out both similarities and differences between them, evaluate a range of resemblance, and determine their roles in the relationships with the main male protagonists.

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<sup>1</sup> Kathleen Deakin, Laura A. Brown and James Blasingame, Jr., *John Green: Teen Whisperer* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 70.

## 1 JOHN GREEN

According to the formulation of Deakin, Brown and Blasingame, the authors of the book *John Green: Teen Whisperer*, John Green represents a type of an author who is “predictable but surprising; stable yet enigmatic; aloof but deeply caring; hip but homespun; Hollywood but also Indianapolis; and irreverent but deeply spiritual.”<sup>2</sup> Starting with such a voluminous delimitation, it should indicate that John Green’s personal style of writing is not easy to capture, nor is similar to the majority of successful young adult authors. Although in the European countries ranks this author among those overseas writers who are just starting to be widely known, in the United States has become one of the well-known and admired authors of his time, as it turns out, mainly through young adult (YA) fiction.

In the literary context, in the words of Steven VanderStaay, professor at Western Washington University, it is possible to define YA literature as a literature “wherein the protagonist is either teenager or one who approaches problems from a teenage perspective.”<sup>3</sup> The features which commonly figure in YA books, such as searching for identity or a plunge into the world of adulthood as well as facing a broad spectrum of problems of the contemporary life, form a necessary core of YA literature.<sup>4</sup> However, not all studies approach this literary term in the same way.

From the perspective of history, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact beginning of YA literature. From literary critics to common readers almost every opinion differs. For instance, to point out a conviction of Michael Cart, an expert in YA literature and former editor for Young Adult Library Services Association, Cart considers Maureen Daly’s *Seventeenth Summer* (1942) to be the first novel written especially for teenagers. He proves his opinion through the history of adolescence. At that time when Daly’s novel was published, *teenagers* have become a distinctive social group therefore this word started to be deemed as a part of common wont and routinely used.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, even when authors have not intended to write for adolescent readers, their works were later included

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<sup>2</sup> Deakin, Brown and Blasingame, *John Green: Teen Whisperer*, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Steven VanderStaay, “Young-Adult Literature: A Writer Strikes the Genre,” *English Journal* 81 (1992): 48.

<sup>4</sup> See VanderStaay, “Young-Adult Literature: A Writer Strikes the Genre,” 48-49.

<sup>5</sup> See Michael Cart, *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2010), 8-12.

into YA literature whereas they portrayed adolescents, so from perspective of genre, the first *coming-of-age* novel with an adolescent character is referred to be a German book *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795-96) by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, as Heike Mlakar, an Austrian writer, states in her book.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, as YA literature is a category, many books are seated within it. Furthermore, YA books reflect through its characters cultural and societal aspects which are constantly changing. These changes can be seen equally in a writing style of authors.

Considering the 1940s and Daly's *Seventeenth Summer* written in this period, it is hardly to find more comprehensive dialogue or some action-packed storyline in this novel. Although a notion of love story is present in the novel, as it is mostly story of girl for girls dealing with first love, still remains innocent. Later in the 1950s, since J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) have appeared between American young adult novels, the authors' position to writing has changed as well.<sup>7</sup> According to Cart, *The Catcher in the Rye*, "even more than *Seventeenth Summer*, helped establish a tradition of first-person narrative voice for young adult fiction."<sup>8</sup> Moreover, this novel aroused a controversy in public, mainly because of sexual content and profanity. From this perspective, also the late sixties were a notable period while, as Cart adds, "a literature that had traditionally offered a head-in-the-sand approach" transformed into "one that offered a more clear-eyed and unflinching look at the often unpleasant realities of American adolescent life."<sup>9</sup> However, in the 1970s, Cart also underlines the fact that "writers began to write new ground, in terms of both subject and style."<sup>10</sup> Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* (1974) launched debates about YA literature, while giving this genre new direction through courageously written text with themes of high school and peer pressure. Nevertheless, despite of the fact that the eighties signalized a return to romances, from the nineties to present day many writers of YA books focus again on realism.<sup>11</sup> They started to write more candidly about teen issues, and John Green is not an exception.

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<sup>6</sup> See Heike Mlakar, *Merely Being There Is Not Enough: Women's Roles in Autobiographical Text by Female Beat Writers* (Boca Raton: Universal-Publishers, 2008), 123.

<sup>7</sup> See Cart, *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism*, 27.

<sup>8</sup> Cart, *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism*, 28.

<sup>9</sup> Cart, *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism*, 29.

<sup>10</sup> Cart, *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism*, 30.

<sup>11</sup> See Cart, *Young Adult Literature: From Romance to Realism*, 30-49.

John Green was born on August 24, 1977 in Indianapolis, Indiana, but childhood spent in Orlando, Florida. John and his younger brother, Hank, were nurtured by their parents in a close-knit family. Despite of the fact that their love, care and support has accompanied him throughout life, for which he often expresses gratitude, during his early teen years at Glenridge Middle School and Lake Highland Prep came across to existential desperation, and as Deakin, Brown and Blasingame state, “found life as a sort of unacceptable and paralyzing”<sup>12</sup> due to being bullied.<sup>13</sup> In an interview for *Intelligent Life* he openly talks about this unhappy period and is aware of most probable reason: “I was a big nerd, so I was struggling society at school.”<sup>14</sup> However, as John Green sympathizes with the poem by Robert Frost “A Servant to Servants” in which it is written: “the best way out is always through,”<sup>15</sup> John survived and enrolling at boarding school in Indian Springs changed his life.<sup>16</sup> For the first time, he got to know how it tastes to be entertaining, popular, and to hang out in a *Dead Poets’ Society* clique; meaning a club of boys, who secretly discussed literature, as a reference to Peter Weir’s film of the same name “Dead Poets’ Society”.<sup>17</sup> Once Green finished Indian Springs School, he enrolled for English and religious studies at Kenyon College in Ohio. This was a place where he encountered Sarah, at that time his friend but later his wife. He self-identified himself as a Christian whose mind “flirted with the idea of getting ordained,”<sup>18</sup> so after graduation, in 2000, headed for an Episcopal seminary to Chicago.<sup>19</sup>

When it comes to first important moment of his working career, he began as a hospital chaplain working with terminally ill kids. Four hundred hours of serving at this position were required for ordination. Nevertheless, he was not able to bear these experiences of real suffering. As a result of that, he skipped divinity school and chose path of writing.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Deakin, Brown and Blasingame, *John Green: Teen Whisperer*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> See Deakin, Brown and Blasingame, *John Green: Teen Whisperer*, 1-3.

<sup>14</sup> Emma Brokers, “John Green: Teenager, Aged 36,” *Intelligent Life*, May/June, 2014, accessed November 11, 2015, <http://www.intelligentlifemagazine.com/>.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Fasano, *Selected Early Poems of Robert Frost* (Claremont: Coyote Canyon Press, 2008), 89.

<sup>16</sup> See Deakin, Brown and Blasingame, *John Green: Teen Whisperer*, 4.

<sup>17</sup> See Brokers, “John Green: Teenager, Aged 36.”

<sup>18</sup> Brokers, “John Green: Teenager, Aged 36.”

<sup>19</sup> See Deakin, Brown and Blasingame, *John Green: Teen Whisperer*, 6.

<sup>20</sup> See Jessica Grose, “The Green Movement,” *Mental Floss*, January 15, 2014, accessed November 26, 2015, <http://mentalfloss.com/>.

John himself has claimed that writers also have to make from reading a habitual activity, and his high school and college teachers taught him to create a positive attitude towards reading a lot which has been extremely important for him. For the next six years, he worked as a publishing assistant and a book reviewer for a review journal *Booklist* and the *New York Times Book Review*. Nothing indicated that John Green would be on a way to hit the shelves, since a manuscript of his first debut novel has undergone four years of revisions by *Booklist* and Penguin editors.<sup>21</sup>

Nonetheless, *Looking for Alaska* (2005), which captures life in boarding school, has become a turning-point in Green's life. He did not anticipate setting the world of YA literature on fire with teenage characters, which according to opinions depicted in *John Green: Teen Whisperer* "attempt to assimilate themselves in a world full of addiction, death, identity, love and loss."<sup>22</sup> In an interview given to a public radio magazine program *Here and Now* he states he tries "to take teenagers seriously and credit them with intelligence and curiosity that [he] [has] seen in them."<sup>23</sup> Many critics of adolescent literature led by Patty Campbell, a renowned authority in this field, claim: "YA literature has been seeking for an odyssey, a teenage epic like *Looking for Alaska*, since Holden left Pencey Preparatory in 1951."<sup>24</sup> Holden Caulfield, a name universally acknowledged, is the teenage protagonist of Salinger's novel *The Catcher in the Rye* to which is *Looking for Alaska* often compared.<sup>25</sup> A staff writer at *The New Yorker*, Margaret Talbot, claims that although Green is "more forgiving" towards adults than Salinger was both authors share conviction that "adults underestimate the emotional depth of adolescents."<sup>26</sup> Her understanding of Green's approach towards adolescents is most presumably interconnected with the way how he portraits and depicts his characters. Green himself points out that he treats the intensity which teenagers give to first love, to the first time of tussling with grief, and to the first time of investigating why people suffer and whether the life is meaningful.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> See Deakin, Brown and Blasingame, *John Green: Teen Whisperer*, 6-7.

<sup>22</sup> Deakin, Brown and Blasingame, *John Green: Teen Whisperer*, 13.

<sup>23</sup> Meghna Chakrabarti, "Paper Towns' Author John Green Taps Into Teens," *Hereandnow*, July 23, 2015, accessed December 7, 2015, <http://hereandnow.wbur.org/2015/07/23/paper-towns-john-green>.

<sup>24</sup> Deakin, Brown and Blasingame, *John Green: Teen Whisperer*, 23.

<sup>25</sup> See Deakin, Brown and Blasingame, *John Green: Teen Whisperer*, 23.

<sup>26</sup> Margret Talbot, "The Teen Whisperer," *New Yorker*, June 9, 2014, accessed October 29, 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/>.

<sup>27</sup> See Talbot, "The Teen Whisperer."

These statements could be the reasons why at the time when his second novel *An Abundance of Katherines* (2006) was published, *Looking for Alaska* won the Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature by American Library Association. For those who liked Green's approach to characters in his debut novel, also *An Abundance of Katherines* as well as *Paper Towns* (2008), the winner of Edgar Award for Best Young Adult Mystery of 2009, were the clear choices.<sup>28</sup> Even though almost none of the characters prove to be heroic or requisite for their peers, the novels uncover their uniqueness. The analysis in *John Green: Teen Whisperer* asserts that Green's characters are "often wiser than their adult counterparts, certainly smarter than their peers,"<sup>29</sup> and have in minds notion of the famous names in a literature such as Walt Whitman or T. S. Eliot.<sup>30</sup>

Green's writing career also includes collaboration. The book *Let It Snow* (2008) was brought into existence with Maureen Johnson and Lauren Myracle, fellow YA authors, and his another co-written book with David Levithan is titled *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* (2010). Levithan brings to Green's style a new dimension. Although Green sticks to his style, in the book divided into alternate chapters with two stories, one belonging to Green, one to Levithan, Green treats gay character as well as does Levithan. Moreover, two years later, author in his latest book *The Fault in Our Stars* (2012) deals with another matter, cancer.

From perspective of his public image, aside from writing, he came and keeps going to popularity through many projects. On YouTube channel *Vlogbrothers*, John together with brother Hank weekly "provide strands of wisdom for life,"<sup>31</sup> as Deakin, Brown and Blasingame refer to Green brothers' wide range of learning videos, and both brothers also host educational channel *Crash Course* where they give lectures, to name some. Green's *Nerdfighters*, how multitude of his fans are used to call themselves, survived and warmly received transformation of two book storylines into movie scenes. Despite it has not been a long time since John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars* and *Paper Towns* have been made into movies, the fans are full of expectations what will happen with upcoming *Looking for Alaska*.

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<sup>28</sup> See Deakin, Brown and Blasingame, *John Green: Teen Whisperer*, 121.

<sup>29</sup> Deakin, Brown and Blasingame, *John Green: Teen Whisperer*, 13.

<sup>30</sup> See Deakin, Brown and Blasingame, *John Green: Teen Whisperer*, 13.

<sup>31</sup> Deakin, Brown and Blasingame, *John Green: Teen Whisperer*, 10.



## 2 ADOLESCENCE

All around the world the adolescent girls have to face a period of *coming-of-age*. However, the process and the perception of this stage of life differ from culture to culture. This bachelor thesis deals with feminine adolescence in Western societies. From cultural, political, and economic point of view, to be more precise, based on cultures of European heritage which also in American patrimony still plays an important role, liberal democracy within countries' political ideologies as well as an attention to human rights and high level of human development, it is practical to use a term *European-American societies*. In the other cultures, such as for example Islamic cultures in Eastern countries, process of *coming-of-age* fundamentally differs, and this thesis is aware of this fact. Many psychologists and sociologists deal with studies relating to feminine adolescence in Western societies and its problems. Their opinions on a range of problems concerning this area are both identical and different. But in contemporary era, the key problems of feminine adolescence can be observed and connected with the areas of sexual lifestyle, self-identification, peer pressure, and trends of modern world as well.

In general, adolescence or *coming-of-age* is a significant period in each person's life. According to the classic sociology, a *coming-of-age* stage is characterized as "the transition from childhood to adulthood" or as "the transition from a state of dependence to a state of independence."<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, it is an important stepping stone in preparing for adult life and has its own basic characteristics.

Both boys and girls undergo during this period physical and mental development. It is important to emphasize that adolescence is not a fluent process. During the period of adolescence teenagers go through three main stages,<sup>33</sup> discerned as: early adolescence (11-14), which is characterized mainly by a spur of growth including the development of secondary sexual characteristics; middle adolescence (15-17), a stage typical for adolescents' grouping into cliques as well as closer getting to know of the opposite sex; and late adolescence (18-21), at which forming of adult opinions should appear.<sup>34</sup> However, these age borders are not as fixed as seem. According to well-respected medical

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<sup>32</sup> J. Ch. Lagree, "Youth in Europe: Cultural Patterns of Transition," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 41 (1996-1997): 67.

<sup>33</sup> See David E. Barrett, "The Three Stages of Adolescence," *High School Journal* 79 (1996): 333.

<sup>34</sup> See "Stages of Adolescence Development," *Kidsgrowth*, accessed December 5, 2015, <http://www.kidsgrowth.com/resources/articledetail.cfm?id=1140>.

leaders in the field of pediatrics, considering physical development, teenagers are nowadays complete with their physical growth much sooner than in the past. Their weight, height, and mainly appearance are comparable to adults' by middle adolescence, sometimes even sooner. On the other hand, mental development in an adolescent age, including intellectual and also emotional progress, is considered to have a long-term character.<sup>35</sup> In spite of the fact that these three different rates of maturation have their particular features, explanation above proves that each adolescent is an individual human being, so the age when one stage is reached differs from teenager to teenager.

Nevertheless, to begin without a gender split, there exist certain descriptions how the period of *coming-of-age* runs through in an average teenager. As Kathlyn Gay asserts in her book called *Body Image and Appearance: The Ultimate Teen Guide* (2009), nonfiction informational book for teenagers, aside from rapid body changes which are often connected with measuring physical appearance against idealized beauty, shyness, need for privacy, and simultaneously curiosity about sexual matters; the teenage years represent also a chapter of personal, intellectual and social needs. As soon as teenagers start to perceive themselves as the objects of other people's judgments, they devote a greater time to experimenting with appearance, from haircuts to clothing styles.<sup>36</sup> This leads to creation of body image which is supposed to be as natural as possible. Many sociologists express to this topic their opinions, some of which claim that self-esteem requires a lot of attention. The way how teenagers behave and their mental health is affected by a good or bad feeling they have about themselves.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, well-respected pediatricians generalize that adolescents' taking care of physical appearance goes hand in hand with the "increased concerns about their own sexual attractiveness."<sup>38</sup> Moreover, perceiving sexuality, about which little was known before puberty, can contribute to identification of sexual orientation, if it is uncertain.<sup>39</sup>

Even though parents' advice is for young adults hard to listen, the presence of caring is for them essential and they tend to seek for it at the end of the process of *coming-of-age*.

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<sup>35</sup> See "Stages of Adolescence Development," Kidsgrowth.

<sup>36</sup> See Kathlyn Gay, *Body Image and Appearance: The Ultimate Teen Guide* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 1-8.

<sup>37</sup> See Morris Rosenberg, Carmi Schooler and Carrie Schoenbach, "Self-Esteem and Adolescent Problems: Modeling Reciprocal Effects," *American Sociological Review* 54 (1989): 1004-1018.

<sup>38</sup> "Stages of Adolescence Development," Kidsgrowth.

<sup>39</sup> See "Stages of Adolescence Development," Kidsgrowth.

However, in time before such a realization occurs, close relationships with peer groups become more important. Friends influence many aspects of teenager's life, because teenagers typically spend much time with their peers. For most teenagers is picking the right friends inevitable. According to a journal article published in *Child Development* which covers developmental psychology, if a teenager is a part of group, feels accepted and confidently, it acts positively on their social development.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, not only conflicts with parents including refusals to help with housework, disputes about untidy room or the other annoying habits such as spending hours on the Internet by communicating through a virtual reality and losing the touch with world, but also experimenting with smoking, alcohol, and sometimes even drugs are typical side effects of a peer pressure.<sup>41</sup>

From the perspective of inner life, frustration, anxiety or disability to express feeling critically occurs. During the teen years is dealing with concepts of what is right and what is wrong often present. Furthermore, the term future becomes a common part of teenagers' daily contemplation.<sup>42</sup>

Adolescence is closely accompanied with the presence of the rites of passage. The online Macmillan English Dictionary defines a *rite of passage* itself as "a ceremony or event that marks an important stage in someone's life."<sup>43</sup> Western societies incorporate different examples of the events signaling *coming-of-age* than the other societies around the world. However, while some of the other smaller cultures have precisely formalized the *rites of passage*, Western cultures have not done so, therefore in the *European-American societies* can be found a wide range of *coming-of-age* events. The writer of *Adolescent Magazine*, Delaney, argues that this cross-cultural phenomenon has its specifics which are "based on tradition, but altered to make them relevant to present day culture."<sup>44</sup> Linda Bickerstaff, author of the book *Stress: Coping in a Challenging World* (2008), mentions in this work that among the *rites of passage*, referred as transition points, stand out in

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<sup>40</sup> See Dustin Wood, Reed W. Larson and Jane R. Brown, "How Adolescents Come to See Themselves as More Responsible through Participation in Youth Programs," *Child Development* 80 (2009): 295-309.

<sup>41</sup> See Robyn M. Feller, *Everything You Need To Know about Peer Pressure* (New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, 2001), 7-10.

<sup>42</sup> See "Stages of Adolescence Development," Kidsgrowth.

<sup>43</sup> "Rite of Passage," Macmillandictionary.

<sup>44</sup> C.H. Delaney, "Rites of Passage in Adolescence," *Adolescence Magazine* 30 (1995): 893-98.

America mainly puberty, graduation from high school, getting a drivers license and first date.<sup>45</sup>

The overall view of teenagers serves as a stepping stone for shifting to the main issue. Obviously, the process of adolescence does include divergences in terms of gender. Feminine adolescence, which this thesis deals with, has number of specifics and aforementioned problems which are going to be discussed in detail.

As many other divisions of people who share particular characteristics, also feminine adolescence is perceived as a category which has distinctive features and its own history. Catherine Driscoll, a researcher in the field of youth and girls studies, claims that feminine adolescence is “not a transitional period but an assemblage of transitions,” and “all of [them] are culturally specific.”<sup>46</sup> Some of the typical examples of these transitions are for adolescent girls mainly the first occurrence of menstruation, so called *menarche*, all aspects of puberty, or first date along with first sex<sup>47</sup> which are perceived differently in contrary to male counterparts.

From a historical perspective, it is no longer true that adolescent girls are an invisible part of public life as they used to be. According to the historical facts which Max Sugar depicts in a book *Female Adolescent Development* (1993), there existed in societies in Europe and America “relatively little age-stage differentiation separated childhood from youth and youth from adulthood”<sup>48</sup> before then, when in the nineteenth-century adolescent girls changed their position, and as Driscoll adds, their process of *coming-of-age* started to be viewed as a way of “understanding, positioning and disciplining that period of transition.”<sup>49</sup> By the twentieth-century this understanding of girls as subjects who have to face new freedoms and obligations has become a natural phase of a becoming of woman, and as Max Sugar also points out, young girls could “find themselves” in an “altered social world,” for instance, due to “greater availability of education and experience for adolescent

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<sup>45</sup> See Linda Bickerstaff, *Stress: Coping in a Challenging World* (New York: Rosen, 2008), 46.

<sup>46</sup> Catherine Driscoll, *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 58.

<sup>47</sup> See Driscoll, *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory*, 58.

<sup>48</sup> Max Sugar, *Female Adolescent Development: Second Edition* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1993), 117.

<sup>49</sup> Driscoll, *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory*, 59.

girls.”<sup>50</sup> Nonetheless, American pop culture’s discovery of teenage girls enabled to create a view of the adolescent girl as an association with products of popular culture, so teenage girls has become parts of books, comics and appeared in films and television.<sup>51</sup>

Obviously, along with a contemporary era came also other social changes. It is possible to describe a contemporary society, as a modern society which represents the issues and attributes of the presence, and its features change from generation to generation. Modern approaches, concerning feminine adolescence, describe girls as “goal-oriented, pleasure seeking individuals adept at reading the new world order and finding their place within it.”<sup>52</sup> Through perceiving process of feminine adolescence in a culture, it helps to understand girls. A visual perception is an important part of every culture. A sign, as a major sense which allows perceiving aspects of culture by recording visual images, has become due to contemporary society even more significant. How people look like is becoming to be substantial matter in a current social life. This statement is not only interconnected with the way how is the value of a human being perceived, especially the value of the adolescent girl, but also with a variety of problems which concern contemporary adolescent girls’ lives.

Firstly, many adolescent girls have nowadays a lack of ability to live an active and authentic life. One of the reasons to which psychologists attach a great importance could be sexuality. A current lifestyle and modern trends in terms of sexuality have become dangerous for young girls. It is not temerity to claim that cult of *Lolita*, according to the online Oxford Learner’s Dictionary *Lolita* as “a young girl who behaves in a more sexually developed way than is usual for her age, which makes her sexually attractive,”<sup>53</sup> has become a modern trend. Professor of gender, women’s and sexuality studies, M.G. Durham, points out that with “the turn of the new millennium,” this phenomenon, referred as the *sexy little girl*, entered the environment which is saturated with media. He adds that preference of mature and sexual provocative entity with girlish appearance “has become a

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<sup>50</sup> Max Sugar, *Female Adolescent Development: Second Edition*, 117.

<sup>51</sup> See Ilana Nash, *Teenage Girls in Twentieth-Century Popular Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 29-36.

<sup>52</sup> Mary Jane Kehily, “Taking Centre Stage? Girlhood and the Contradictions of Femininity Across Three Generations,” *Girlhood Studies* 1 (2008): 51-71.

<sup>53</sup> “Lolita” Oxfordlearnersdisctionaries.

fixture in Western pop culture,”<sup>54</sup> and it is vital to claim that it poses a kind of ideal that makes the girls confused and got rid of natural barriers. The point of sexuality has appeared to be playfulness and fun without barriers, rather than act of becoming closer to each other. Adolescent girls are led to this role through contemporary culture, and this happens even sooner than they are mature enough.<sup>55</sup>

Aside from sexuality, craving for popularity is one of the dramatic challenges which most of teenage girls are compelled to meet in order to be satisfied. They tend to use a lot of techniques, and simultaneously they have to face a lot of obstacles. This endeavor can be easily compared to a vicious cycle. Generally, on one hand teenage girls want to be accepted by peers, but on the other hand they try to stay unique as well. To look at this problem with a critical eye, it is almost obvious that these two things are not able to work together in most cases at the same time. As a result of that, it is possible to observe different situations in current world.

The present world full of new technologies has both advantages and disadvantages. Not only teenage girls but teenagers in general have entered the digital landscape. Almost in every corner is common to notice people holding or working with devices, such as notebooks, tablets or mobile phones. The Internet, as a great source of information, provides many opportunities to teenagers. It is no longer such a problem to do research for school, check out a potential college or find a part time job in few minutes as it used be without this invention. However, the Internet has become for teenagers rather a connotation with a source of entertainment in the recent times. According to the article published in *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, “the opportunities for adolescents to form and maintain relationships on the Internet have multiplied in the past few years.”<sup>56</sup> Considering teenage life, virtual reality and virtual communication have become a normal part of their lives. To go back and focus on teenage girls in this issue, this kind of escape from the real world to the virtual one enables them to become who they would like to be. Even though someone might claim there is no relevant problem about communicating through social networks,

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<sup>54</sup> M. Gigi Durham, *The Lolita Effect: The Media Sexualization of Young Girls and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Woodstock, 2008), 24.

<sup>55</sup> See Durham, *The Lolita Effect: The Media Sexualization of Young Girls and What We Can Do About It*, 24-26.

<sup>56</sup> P. M. Valkenburg, J. Peter and A. P. Schouten, “Friend Networking Sites and Their Relationship to Adolescents’ Well-Being and Social Self-Esteem,” *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 9 (2006): 584-90.



moreover, it is a common part of contemporary teenage life, considering social media as problem or not, it is not real. Nevertheless, social networks, as a great tool to gain popularity, are extremely preferred by teenage girls. However, it is an undeniable fact that some dangers exist within such a lifestyle. According to research published in *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, it is becoming increasingly visible how the social media affect well-being of teenage girls.<sup>57</sup>

This idea can be further developed into teenage girls' behavior on the Internet. Many of them prefer sharing of their experiences and emotions through chatting with several friends online, as it seems to be easier to write feelings about which only the one person knows whether it includes true, rather than to have a real conversation and face reality. As a consequence, communication skills suffer from the lack of usage. Also the research which examined the psychological and social impact of the Internet asserts that "greater use of the Internet [is] associated with declines in communication with family members in the households, declines in the size of [person's] social circle, and increases in depression and loneliness."<sup>58</sup> So, even though the life could be in modern period more public, publicity is not far away from loneliness. Those girls who are not able to bear these contrasts tend to seek for rebellion.

Driscoll associates rebellion with attempts of adolescent girls to find coherence in places where occurs none, to solve problems with no possible solutions, and consolidate unsuitable things.<sup>59</sup> Rebellion, as an unwillingness of teenage girls to follow common standards of behaviour, can represent an innate desire for understanding or a need for independence at the same time. Many teenage girls seek for responsibility. They want to gain recognition of their opinions, and these efforts cause negative attitude towards authorities whether it happens at school or at home.

Nevertheless, contemporary society overwhelms girls with a duty to face unprecedented stresses which affect their inclination to rebellion. Some of which include dealing with education, more precisely, considering an important decision about a life

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<sup>57</sup> See P. M. Valkenburg and J. Peter, "Online Communication and Adolescent Well-Being: Testing the Stimulation Versus the Displacement Hypothesis," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12 (2007): article 2.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Kraut, M. Peterson, V. Lundmark, S. Kiesler, T. Mukopadhyay and W. Scherlis, "Internet Paradox: A Social Technology That Reduces Social Involvement and Psychological Well-Being?," *American Psychologist* 53 (1998): 1017.

<sup>59</sup> See Driscoll, *Girl: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory*, 58.

direction. Nowadays pressures from outside force girls to regard the set systems. It has become almost necessity to have a degree from university, and decide whether it is a right path for future can be frustrating. As Anita Harris depicts in her book *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-first Century* (2004), also the adolescent girls belong to those who “must try to forge their futures by the mastering anxieties, uncertainties, and insecurities conjured up by unpredictable times.”<sup>60</sup> Taking into consideration education and future in these unpredictable times, it is vital to emphasize an interconnected matter that most of teenage girls are going to be future mothers, and even in this young age some girls think about suitable age of giving a birth. According to Harris, in modern era it is not so easy to have established career, earned money and have children until early thirties.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, focusing on whether to attend a university and become a mother in advanced maternal age, as it seems to turn into a modern trend, or skip it, start a family sooner and have more friendly relationship with children is another nowadays problem of adolescent girls. As a result, refusals of teenage girls to do things in the same way as others do represent kind of rebellion. Moreover, not only tensions at school or at home, but also the interpersonal relationships at all are interconnected with the internal struggles and difficult to deal with during the period of adolescence. Aside from side effect of depressions, an inclination to smoking or drinking alcohol might act a crucial role, as it was already mentioned.

Many other problems of adolescent girls exist, as do opinions. Some of them are generally known to wider public, other only the psychologists are aware of. However, many of them could be found in a literary representation along with different interpretations of adolescent girls themselves, as a part of young adult narrative.

## 2.1 Adolescent girls in literature

From the context of literary depiction of adolescent girls, considering Professor Kerry Mallan’s extensive field of research, out of which theories of gender and sexuality as well as discourse analysis and narrative stand out, “gender is inevitably part of the discursive frameworks operating often implicitly in text.”<sup>62</sup> These concepts are bound up with understanding of girlhood and interconnected with the way how the young girls are

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<sup>60</sup> Anita Harris, *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 5.

<sup>61</sup> See Harris, *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-first Century*, 24.

<sup>62</sup> Kerry Mallan, *Gender Dilemmas in Children’s Fiction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 8.

portrayed in a present-day literature, especially in YA literature, and what purpose it represents.

As it was mentioned in the first chapter, John Green belongs to writers of contemporary YA literature. In general, narrative closure in YA novels, according to Mallan, “typically provides a point where the individual has arrived; a moment of self-realization or self-actualization; whereby the struggles of finding one’s ‘true’ identity have been overcome.”<sup>63</sup> The attempts of YA authors are to focus on creating an adolescent world as real as possible, and achieving not only identification of readers with characters but also getting over troublesome problems and edification. However, as a writer J. S. Kaplan depicts in an article about YA literature in twenty-first century, he states that YA literature is “moving beyond traditional constraints and conventions.” He also adds that “in the dawn of the twenty-first century, YA literature looks very different than it did fifty years ago,” and “the world of young adult literature is being transformed by topics and themes that years ago would have never been conceived.”<sup>64</sup> This idea can be further developed into examination of the adolescent girls in YA literature, while they go hand in hand with contemporary era and bring to the narratives new topics and problems.

As YA literature provides to readers protagonists whom they can identify with, albeit by age or certain circumstances, it uses many techniques to reach the objective. To come up with some degree of identification, authors utilize method of the first-person narrator. While everything is interpolated through narrator’s point of view, identification between reader and text is easier to achieve. However, in terms of main adolescent girl characters in all selected Green’s novels for the following analysis, girls are in any of them used as the first-person narrators. Girls’ thoughts are revealed, but only through interpretations of the male protagonists which are the first-person narrators in all of selected books. However, it is interesting to observe how powerfully girls’ feelings and opinions can affect a reader also in this way. On the other hand, not only the reader undergoes during the story an act of figuring out what the main adolescent girl characters represent in the stories but also, and mainly, the main protagonists do. The portrayals of adolescent girls in Green’s novels not only fit the contemporary era and create similarities to each other, but also provide deeper

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<sup>63</sup> Mallan, *Gender Dilemmas in Children’s Fiction*, 7.

<sup>64</sup> Jeffrey S. Kaplan, “Young Adult Literature in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Moving Beyond Traditional Constraints and Conventions,” *ALAN Review* 32 (2005): 11.

thoughts and unforeseen tension for the reader before the revelation of what is substantial within the stories.

### 3 JOHN GREEN'S NOVELS

John Green's books belong to those YA novels which are currently widely read by young adult readers and adults alike. However, not only received literary awards give to Green's books popularity and the acknowledged literary value. With regard to their both implicit and explicit messages, his novels are recommended by librarians, and *Penguin Young Readers Group* itself has created an educator's guide to some of John Green's books as a useful tool for teachers. Therefore, some of his works are getting progressively into usage as a study material involving students to think deeply about Green's typical topics, out of which mainly meaning of life, friendship, love, and mortality stand out.<sup>65</sup>

In the following analysis, I am going to be dealing with adolescents' lives captured in the novels *Looking for Alaska*, *Paper Towns*, and *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*. I have chosen these three particular Green's book in attempt to focus on portrayals of the main female characters, to be more precise, adolescent girls, in all three novels. It is necessary to point out that even if the book *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* is co-written with David Levithan, I am focusing directly on the Green's part of this book and his characters to make my statements relevant. The main aim of this thesis is to show not only similarities but also differences between main adolescent girl characters, evaluate a range of resemblance of their depictions, and determine their roles in the relationships with the main male protagonists.

#### 3.1 Looking for Alaska

Out of Green's selected novels the very first one, *Looking for Alaska*, tells a distinctively unforgettable story, while a splitting of the novel between "Before" and "After" plays a fundamental role. Until an unexpected twist in storyline happens, which represents a death of Alaska Young, a main adolescent girl character, an unavoidable tension accompanies a reader. Moreover, when this catastrophic event hits, it leads to turning a spotlight on a development of a main protagonist.

The protagonist of the novel is not the eponymous female character, but her new classmate, Miles Halter, a sixteen-years-old, nerdy outsider who only excels at a strange

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<sup>65</sup> See "An Educator's Guide to the Works of John Green," Penguin, accessed March 29, 2016, [http://www.penguin.com/static/images/yr/pdf/JohnGreen\\_Guide\\_june\\_2014.pdf](http://www.penguin.com/static/images/yr/pdf/JohnGreen_Guide_june_2014.pdf).

hobby of collecting famous people's dying words. Therefore he abandons his boring life in Florida, and nervous, yet seeking for opportunity of making new friends and eventful life, he enrolls in Culver Creek boarding school in Alabama, where the events of the novel take place. The story begins in Miles's dormitory where he encounters Chip Martin, his roommate. Unexpectedly for Miles, confident and clearly comfortable at Culver Creek "The Colonel," as Chip is used to call himself, immediately takes Miles under his wing, introduces him to the system of social statuses in a campus, and welcomes into the world of breaking rules and everyday adventures, which Miles perceives as something yet unrecognized as well as meeting a group of new friends. However, as the authors of *John Green: Teen Whisperer* appropriately formulate, not Takumi, "the thinker of the group,"<sup>66</sup> or Lara, "his first sexual encounter,"<sup>67</sup> evokes in him such feelings as funny, clever girl who takes him into her unattainable world, mysterious Alaska Young does. Later; a group of friends spend a night by drinking and telling stories during which Alaska uncovers the reason of her hidden grief. She blames herself for her mother's death through inability to act and prevent it. It transpires that not only knows Miles very little about her but he also knows very little about the following turning point in lives of all characters, who are convened into the gym in the morning before which Alaska furiously disappeared from the school. While the dean of Culver Creek, "The Eagle," is standing in the gym in front of all the students and crying noiselessly, says quietly: "Last night, Alaska Young was in a terrible accident. And she was killed. Alaska has passed away."<sup>68</sup> Alaska has died in a car crash and it remains mystery whether the Alaska's death was an accident or a suicide. Nevertheless, despite the fact Miles is unwilling to admit situation, the conclusion leads to Miles's realization that whether she did not leave him enough to discover her, she left him to rediscover an importance of a notion that "we are as indestructible as we believe ourselves to be."<sup>69</sup>

Alaska herself represents a complicated and unpredictable type of adolescent girl. At the beginning of the novel, Alaska is introduced through a blue sign written on a dry-erase board hung upon the door of her dorm room which states: "Alaska has a single!"<sup>70</sup> On one

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<sup>66</sup> Deakin, Brown and Blasingame, *John Green: Teen Whisperer*, 25.

<sup>67</sup> Deakin, Brown and Blasingame, *John Green: Teen Whisperer*, 26.

<sup>68</sup> John Green, *Looking for Alaska*, (New York: Penguin, 2007), 139.

<sup>69</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 220.

<sup>70</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 14.



hand, it would evoke in a reader an assumption of preferring being alone rather than being an accessible and communicative person. However, Alaska's response: "Oh my God come in you short little man because I have the best story,"<sup>71</sup> to The Colonel's knocking on her door in order to get some cigarettes for him and Miles, does not correspond to a person who is reserved. Nevertheless, starting with such a deep analyzing, it should indicate that this girl has a lot of shady, ambiguous characteristics.

"The hottest girl in all of human history was standing before me in cutoff jeans and a peach tank top."<sup>72</sup> Miles's portrayal of Alaska as a beautiful girl suggests that he is fascinated by her. However, not only physical appearance makes from Alaska Miles's affectionate pursuit but also her sense of humor, moody, yet life enjoying behaviors as well as hidden suffering, and mainly, her intelligence and unconventionality.

When Alaska asks Miles whether he really memorizes last words, he nods, replies he does, and says towards Alaska's curiosity: "You want to quiz me?"<sup>73</sup> With no hesitation, Alaska strews the names and while she is raking around in her overstuffed backpack for her favorite book, she recites: "How will I ever get out of this labyrinth?"<sup>74</sup> She explains that these are the last words of Simón Bolívar, written in a historical novel by Gabriel García Márquez. Not only this question becomes fundamental in the events of novel through the particular problems of characters, out of which Miles eventually finds a potential answer, but also connects Alaska with her intellect and interest in books. She does not represent a typical teenage girl whose main concerns include making herself attractive or chasing popularity, but otherwise she devotes much of her time to reading which is represented, for instance, by a fraction of Miles's description of Alaska's room: "Her library filled her bookshelves and then overflowed into waist-high stacks of books everywhere, ...,"<sup>75</sup> when he appears there in order to ask for some cigarettes. Moreover, later on Alaska convinces Miles to stay at the Culver Creek for Thanksgiving suggesting, aside from plans for drinking wine together in woods and smoking cigarettes, "reading a Kurt Vonnegut book by moonlight."<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 14.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 18.

<sup>74</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 19.

<sup>75</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 15.

<sup>76</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 76.

Nevertheless, as Miles asks her if she really has read all those books in her room, she replies with laugh that she used to buy books which are interesting in garage sales since she was a small girl,<sup>77</sup> and adds: “So I always have something to read. But there is so much to do: cigarettes to smoke, sex to have, swing to swing on. I’ll have more time for reading when I’m old and boring.”<sup>78</sup> Although Alaska is not in the early stage of adolescence as she is sixteen, which was mentioned in the second chapter, yet she is in the process and definitely did not reach adulthood. Nonetheless, her opinions and behaviour defy conventional way of thinking of an adolescent girl. Considering the way how she talks about leisure time, sexuality plays a substantial role. However, not in the sense of perceiving sexuality as something yet untouched or something which is natural to experiment with in this stage of life, but mostly in more developed way, taking into consideration her adolescent stage of life. This statement can be also illustrated on the extract from The Colonel’s conversation with Miles. While they are engaged in gossiping about marijuana addicted, famous Culver Creek basketball player, The Colonel takes a deep breath and says: “He loves weed like Alaska loves sex.”<sup>79</sup> These facts support the assertions concerning the modern cult of Lolita which were already discussed and ranked between contemporary problems of adolescent girls, as Green depicts Alaska clearly as a young girl behaving unusual for her age, in terms of sexuality, and perceiving it in a way of entertainment rather than spirituality. These arguments can represent a shift of conventions in Western societies and the pressure on adolescent girls from modern cultures to perceive sexuality in a playful way without any barriers.

Alaska finds herself in a position of having manners which are not able to be predicted. One afternoon she finds Miles sleeping in his room, so she wakes him up in a quiet unusual way and yells into his ear. As Miles is frightened to death, he says: “What do I need to do to ensure that [it] never happens to me again?”<sup>80</sup> And Alaska immediately answers: “Nothing can you do! I’m unpredictable.”<sup>81</sup> And this represents actually one of the attributes which makes her attractive for Miles. Alaska is not a person who cannot make spontaneous decisions. If it were otherwise, she would be unable to do various things

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<sup>77</sup> See Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 19-20.

<sup>78</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 20.

<sup>79</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 46.

<sup>80</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 33.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

out of blue which belong among her marked features. This can be also seen in the following scene where Alaska suddenly and completely changes her mood and behaviour. When Alaska, Miles and The Colonel are sitting in Alaska's room while drinking "Strawberry Hill," referred as a pink wine, Miles uncovers his past and unveils that he was not surrounded by any friends, and adds to Alaska memories about worn out play "Truth or Dare": "Never played it."<sup>82</sup> Alaska immediately with no hesitation declares: "Well, that does it!"<sup>83</sup> Not only is this situation unexpected for Miles but mainly the act which follows is. When Miles is challenged to start, he selects the dare, and at this point here the situation becomes appealing while Alaska yells out: "Hook up with me."<sup>84</sup> It seems to be not a remarkable event on the first sight as it is nothing special for teenagers. However, firstly, Alaska has a boyfriend about whom she constantly repeats how much she loves him, and secondly, this precedes one more essential event. Whispering "this is so fun, but I'm so sleepy,"<sup>85</sup> Alaska falls asleep as well as Miles does. However, Miles is awoken on Alaska's slamming of the door and noisy crying: "I have to get out of here! I forgot! ... I JUST HAVE TO GO. HELP ME GET OUT OF HERE!"<sup>86</sup> This scene is not only describing Alaska's unpredictability but it simultaneously leads to the pivotal point of the story and uncovers many shady areas.

Alaska dies during a car accident before which she was emotionally shattered due to forgetting the anniversary of her mother's death. The death of her mother can be suggested as the act through which the character of Alaska is formed. It makes her mysterious because none of the characters knows about this tragedy until one night. Alaska is an extraordinary character but everything which makes her so perfect for Miles is rooted from her hidden grief. When she was an eight-years-old child, her mother died right in front of her eyes as she fainted, and since that time Alaska blames herself for that she was not able to help her. As Alaska talks about this tragic event it transpires not only she blames herself but also her father blames her too. While her friends are arguing the fact she was just a little girl, she states: "Yeah. I was a little kid. Little kids can dial 911. They do it all the time. Give me the

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<sup>82</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 130.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 131.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

wine.”<sup>87</sup> It is not temerity to claim that this affected her whole life and made her emotionally unstable.

Her suffering and psychological unbalance can be shown also on the following scenes. When the group of friends is smoking secretly, Miles asks Alaska: “Why do you smoke so damn fast?”<sup>88</sup> The Alaska’s answer, “Y’all smoke to enjoy it. I smoke to die,”<sup>89</sup> poses as a notion of self-destruction. Moreover, the following lines also prove the fact that her inner life is struggling with suffering in a wide range. While Alaska is reading a book for Miles, she stops suddenly, and as a reference to the essential question of this book, “How will I ever get out of this labyrinth,”<sup>90</sup> she states: “It’s not life or death, the labyrinth.”<sup>91</sup> As Miles is trying to figure out what it is, Alaska continues: “Suffering; doing wrong and having wrong things happen to you. That’s the problem. Bolívar was talking about the pain, not about the living or dying. How do you get out of the labyrinth of suffering?”<sup>92</sup> From this interpretation, it suggests that Alaska perceives all aspects of her existence as suffering. She seems to be unable to live authentically anymore since she has considered herself as the reason of her mother’s death.

However, despite of her hidden pain, or because of her hidden pain, it works as an ambivalent statement here; she is thinking rationally and has a very clear picture of perceiving future. One afternoon, when Alaska and Miles are occupying the TV room and having a conversation, Alaska mentions that she would like to teach disabled kids. However, on the spur of the moment, she changes a calm tone of voice and says: “Jesus, I’m not going to be one of those people who [sits] around talking about what they’re going to do. I’m just going to do it. Imagining the future is a kind of nostalgia.”<sup>93</sup> Alaska is aware of other people’s pursuits of the future. And she knows that the future is not a lottery, otherwise the presence is. When Miles seems to look like without understanding her monologue, she adds: “You spend your whole life stuck in the labyrinth, thinking about how you’ll escape it one day, and how awesome it will be, and imagining of future keeps

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<sup>87</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 119.

<sup>88</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 44.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 19.

<sup>91</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 82.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 54.

you going, but you never do it. You just use the future to escape the present.”<sup>94</sup> As far as her rationality is concerned, Alaska’s position to fulfilled life makes sense. Nonetheless, it does not confirm that she is able to be satisfied in a presence.

All of the Alaska’s aforementioned characteristics can be viewed as the reasons of Miles’s inclination to her personality. His perceiving of Alaska seems sometimes to be even far-fetched. This can be observed in the following Miles’s description of their positions: “I was hopelessly boring and she was endlessly fascinating ... if people were rain, I was drizzle and she was a hurricane.”<sup>95</sup> However, even though Alaska dies in the middle of the story, Miles together with other friends creating a central clique of the book are trying to find out if her death was a deliberate attempt to escape the suffering or a fault of circumstances.

Nevertheless, to uncover the mystery turns out to be not the main point of the story. Alaska’s power of personality in this story helps to the main protagonist of the story, Miles, to give a shape to his own view of himself. And this seems to play a fundamental role at the end of the story. He realizes that to be concentrated only to the investigation of that car accident and to be unable to disconnect from his love pursuit is going to change nothing. While Miles is thinking about his perception of labyrinth and life itself, the following thoughts appear in his mind: “When she fucked up, all those years ago, just a little girl terrified into paralysis, she collapsed into enigma of herself. And I could have done that, but I saw where it led for her.”<sup>96</sup> One of the possible explanations for why Green treats such a character as Alaska could be not only an effort to help Miles in identifying his true self but also an effort to create for a reader a real, authentic character with a serious problem. Green is possibly trying to create a deeper meaning of Alaska’s existence. The readers can observe how pain, suffering, and hidden emotions work in teenager. As it was mentioned in the first chapter, Green claims that adults underestimate the emotional depth of adolescents. And this book reveals how important the emotions of adolescents are. This statement can be simply demonstrated in the following extract in which Miles states: “When adults say, ‘Teenagers think they are invincible’ with the sly, stupid smile on their faces, they don’t know how right they are. We need never be hopeless, because we can

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<sup>94</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 54.

<sup>95</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 88.

<sup>96</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 219.

never be irreparably broken.”<sup>97</sup> Miles comes up with this statement even though it was proved that Alaska was irreparably broken. Green seems to show that Alaska’s problems serve to help Miles to rediscover himself, and her existence is only creating a background for the development of the main protagonist.

### 3.2 Paper Towns

Out of Green’s selected novels *Looking for Alaska* deals with a personal development of the main adolescent girl character to the most unpleasant extent as she dies. Yet, a contact with death and a notion of mystery which accompanies the main adolescent girl character along with the other similarities to the character of Alaska appear also in *Paper Towns*, Green’s third published novel. The book *Paper Towns* captures a story of the quest for a not trivial teenage girl who often runs away from home. In this novel, the author provides a number of explanations through a figurative language. However, the most important attribute of the story seems to be a main male protagonist’s finding himself through discovering a personality of Margo Roth Spiegelman, the main adolescent girl character.

The beginning of the novel takes place in Florida where Quentin Jacobsen, a first-person narrator and the main protagonist, attends a senior year of his high school studies. He has fallen head over heels in love with his neighbor, a self-centered and popular girl of school, Margo Roth Spiegelman, since they used to hang out together as they were children. However, over the years their friendship faded and it appears to be only on the base of being aware of existence of each other. Nevertheless, Quentin, referred as “Q,” does not stop to be patient and persistent while hoping their relationship could fasten its strings of companionship one day again. As Quentin states at the beginning of the novel, “the way [he] [figures] it, everyone gets a miracle.”<sup>98</sup> However, for Quentin the miracle turns out not only to be living in a house situated right next to Margo Roth Spiegelman’s one as he himself states,<sup>99</sup> but also the events of the night during which Margo Roth Spiegelman unexpectedly comes to Quentin’s bedroom window. She involves him into her adventurous eleven-part revenge in order to give a lesson to a few people for betraying her. Nevertheless, despite Quentin is excited and full of expectations how his action of help and

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<sup>97</sup> Green, *Looking for Alaska*, 220.

<sup>98</sup> John Green, *Paper Towns* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 3.

<sup>99</sup> See Green, *Paper Towns*, 3.

shared adventure will change their relationship, in the following morning Margo does not appear at school. However, she does not appear at school or in a hometown anymore. Quentin being unable to blow a notion of her name away from his mind, he stops to maintain his persistent approach and hidebound manners, and along with “Radar,” Ben and Lacey, his high school peers, he starts the quest for Margo based on an assumption that she has prepared the clues for him on a purpose under an intention to find her. When finally after a journey a lot of efforts, insecurities and obstacles Quentin finds her, he discovers that his fantastical image of Margo is only a distorted idea. Her artificial personal attributes which create the admired Margo Roth Spiegelman suddenly fall apart, and Quentin reveals her real identity and life expectations as well as himself ones.

Margo Roth Spiegelman represents an adventurous, self-centered, and mysterious type of adolescent girl. At the beginning of the story, Quentin himself points out: “Margo always loved mysteries. And in everything that came afterwards, I could never stop thinking that maybe she loved mysteries so much that she became one.”<sup>100</sup> This interpretation could evoke an assumption that such an understanding of Margo’s personality has to root from previous experiences. Therefore, the following lines confirm this supposition. When Margo and Quentin were small kids they were often biking together around their familiar street, and many times ended up in the local park which was the centre of their adventures. However, one day a usual children’s afternoon in park became an unusual and unpleasant experience which Quentin describes in a flashback. While Margo was pointing on a corpse of elderly guy which was surrounded by blood everywhere, Quentin remembers as she states: “He is dead.”<sup>101</sup> Nevertheless, as it could be anticipated from a small girl to get scared and run away, Margo steps closer and adds: “I thought you closed your eyes when you died, ... what do you think happened to him?”<sup>102</sup> From this scene, it can be not only asserted that Margo has had an inclination to mysteries and adventures from an early childhood, but it also creates a substantially similar experience to the one that the main adolescent girl character Alaska Young undergoes in *Looking for Alaska*. Both young girls come into a direct contact with death while they are just small girls. Despite the fact that while for Alaska it is actually her own mother who she

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<sup>100</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 8.

<sup>101</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 5.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

sees without signs of life as a child and Margo sees just a strange person; yet these experiences play a fundamental role in lives of both characters. As it was already discussed in terms of Alaska, the event of death affects Alaska in the way of being unable to live without suffering anymore. Margo, otherwise, does not seem to be affected in such way. However, it brings her to investigating the reason of the stranger's death, and simultaneously to inducing one of the essential metaphorical notions of the story as she says: "Maybe all strings inside him broke."<sup>103</sup> When Margo discovers that the death was actually suicide, it evokes in her a notion of an existence of inner problems while a lady named Alvarez, the stranger's neighbour, provides her an information that "[he] was troubled,"<sup>104</sup> and Margo transforms it into a metaphor of broken strings. Nevertheless, the importance of the aforementioned metaphor works doubly throughout the story. Not only it interprets the beginning of Margo's viewing of life but it also connects Quentin with a persistent chasing for Margo's personality.

In Quentin's point of view, Margo Roth Spiegelman poses as "the only legend"<sup>105</sup> living in his vicinity. His conviction roots from her undeniably generally-known social reputation which can be summarized in two sentences: "Margo Roth Spiegelman, whose six-syllable name was often spoken in its entirety with a kind of quiet reverence. Margo Roth Spiegelman, whose stories of epic adventures would blow through school like a summer storm."<sup>106</sup> From this perspective, in contrary to Alaska, it shows that it is hard to find someone in school who would be not aware of her existence. However, the fact that she is popular between peers should not denote immediately a proof of her happiness and enjoyment from public awareness of her existence. Even someone could claim that popularity lies on top of girls' desires, which cannot be refuted, moreover the theories discussed in the second chapter confirm this statement; in this case it is not as simple as it may look. Margo self-identifies herself as "a paper girl,"<sup>107</sup> a girl who is not real but "an idea that everybody likes."<sup>108</sup> She feels that she is a different person under the surface. Despite she seems to be satisfied with her image and notional power in school at the

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<sup>103</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 8.

<sup>104</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 7.

<sup>105</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 14.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 293.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.



beginning of the story. In the scene when Margo unexpectedly appears in Quentin bedroom window and tries to persuade Quentin to use his parents' car for her revenge, she argues: "Oh, Christ, Q. Am I not nice to you? Do I not order my various and sundry minions to be kind to you at school?"<sup>109</sup> Although this extract shows Margo's awareness of her power, it shows more importantly her attitude towards her friends. Referring to friends in such way, it unveils her superficial personality and the fact that she is not easily attainable. This is why she perceives herself as a "flimsy-foldable person"<sup>110</sup> who "cared about popularity and clothes and everything else,"<sup>111</sup> while explaining the reason of her escape. However, the story provides also an assumption of another cause due to which she disappears from a hometown.

On that night of her already mentioned unexpected presence in the middle of Quentin's bedroom window, Margo's father shouts from Spiegelmans' house: "In the house, this minute!"<sup>112</sup> In order to satisfy him, Margo returns back to their house escaping after a while again. When she repeatedly occurs in Quentin's presence, in referring to her parents, she says: "The thing is they don't even really care; they just feel like my exploits make them look bad. Just now, do you know what he said? He said, 'I don't care if you screw up your life, but don't embarrass us in front of the Jacobsens - they're our friends.' Ridiculous."<sup>113</sup> Such a description of parents seems to evoke not a very pleasant relationship between them. Although Margo's parents are often in troubles with her daughter's repeatable escapes from home, instead of making worries about her they view the situation differently. During the conversation with the detective who is in charge of investigation of Margo's later disappearance, her mother states: "I'm not frustrated. I'm done."<sup>114</sup> Moreover, she also adds another unpleasant comment: "I don't want her under our roof. I know that's terrible, but it's true."<sup>115</sup> From this statement, it seems to be obvious that Margo is not a person who has an amiable family background, or at least that her parents have a lack of effort to prevent her escapes and solve the reason. And this brings

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<sup>109</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 28.

<sup>110</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 293.

<sup>111</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 294.

<sup>112</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 27.

<sup>113</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 29.

<sup>114</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 101.

<sup>115</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 102.

another similarity to Alaska Young. Despite the stories with parents are different, the presence of problems concerning interpersonal relationship in terms of family are there.

Nonetheless, Quentin considers Margo Roth Spiegelman as an impersonation of perfection in the same way as Miles Halter does in perceiving of Alaska Young, and is able to break his conventional behavior in order to be in her proximity. Quentin is not type of a person who has no difficulties to make crazy, spontaneous decisions. He is rather cautious and anxious person who does not live eventful life but tries to avoid the problems. It can be seen in the following scene when Quentin despite the fear accompanies Margo and sets off on a night journey of revenge before which he states: “I really don’t want to get in any trouble.”<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, his worries about the future are also present, as he adds: “I mean, I want to have fun and everything, but not at the expense of, like, my future.”<sup>117</sup>

However, Margo represents the exact opposite. She provides unconventional opinions for a young girl concerning a future. As Quentin is done with his expressions of uncertainties, Margo immediately replies: “It amazes me that you can find all that shit even remotely interesting. College: getting in or not getting in. Trouble: getting in or not getting in. School: getting A’s or getting D’s. Career: having or not having. House: big or small, owning or renting. Money: having or not having. It’s all so boring.”<sup>118</sup> Nevertheless, her opinions are not straightforward in terms of not caring about her future. Green provides through the character of Quentin an interesting Margo’s background, as Quentin’s concept of her current school stage goes through his mind: “She obviously [cares] a little, because she [has] good grades and [is] going to the University of Florida’s honors program next year.”<sup>119</sup> At this point, it can be asserted that even though Margo has a certain idea about a life without being afraid of the future life, she creates a backdoor; meaning that despite the fact that she has own careless perspective, she is going to the university and work hard for that. However, Margo provides another concept of her opinions that creates a relation to the common contemporary problem of adolescent girls concerning the plans for future, and connects Margo with Alaska in considering the future in unconventional way.

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<sup>116</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 32.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 33.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

And now life has become the future. Every moment of your life is lived for the future—you go to high school so you can go to college so you can get a good job so you can get a nice house so you can afford to send your kids to college so they can get a good job so they can get a nice house so they can afford to send their kids to college.<sup>120</sup>

From this perspective, it can be asserted that Margo represents an example of an adolescent girl, concerning the statements in the second chapter, who is affected by an indirect pressure from society to think deeply about future. And many times, even if the young adolescent girls have idealized future, the widespread notion that nowadays is a degree from university a necessity for better future limits their lives.

Nevertheless, Margo's intelligence can be observed not only through her results at school but also through her inclination to books, in the same way as in Alaska's case. When Margo recites to Quentin a line from Emily Dickinson: "Forever is composed of nows," she adds: "Like I said, I'm doing a lot of reading."<sup>121</sup> Moreover, when Margo disappears, it is actually a poem "Song of Myself" from Walt Whitman to which discovery Quentin comes across in Margo's room through Margo's clues, and uses it as a piece of information in the detection of solving her disappearance. In a highlighted stanza, there is written:

*Unscrew the locks from the doors!*

*Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!*<sup>122</sup>

Therefore, Quentin thinks deeply about the meaning of the lines and eventually it brings him to another clue which represents a piece of paper with a strange address stuck in the pin of his bedroom door. This triggers his journey for finding Margo. However, although the long journey of overcoming himself and facing a lot of obstacles takes him, along with his companions, to finding Margo, it uncovers Margo's true identity.

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<sup>120</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 33-34.

<sup>121</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 296.

<sup>122</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 116.

In contrary to Alaska Young, Margo Roth Spiegelman's disappearance does not end up with a death, otherwise she is found in an abandoned place. As soon as Margo glances on Ben, Quentin's friend who is associated with the unpleasant rumors about him at school, and Lacey, Margo's former friend, Margo says: "Oh, my God, are you hooking up with him? You are not actually hooking up with him."<sup>123</sup> While Lacey feels sadly, she says: "Actually, yes. And actually he's great. And actually you are a bitch. .... Thanks for terrifying me and making me feel like shit for the entire last month of my senior year, and then being a bitch when we track you down to make sure you're okay."<sup>124</sup> This conversation can be stated to be an initial affair which shows to Quentin that a real Margo does not represent an artificial Margo created in his head.

Nevertheless, both of Quentin's companions leave and Quentin, realizing that those are his real friends, asks Margo: "Why are you acting like such a brat?"<sup>125</sup> As a response, Margo shouts immediately: "You didn't come here to make sure I was okay. You came here because you wanted to save poor little Margo from her troubled little self, so that I would be oh-so-thankful to my knight in shining armor that I would strip my clothes off and beg you to ravage my body."<sup>126</sup> Quentin suddenly realizes the situation and responds: "Bullshit! ... You were just playing with us, weren't you? You just wanted to make sure that even after you left to go your fun, you were still the axis we spun around."<sup>127</sup> Through this emotive conversation, it turns out that Margo is a type of person who does not really care about feelings of others. However, when the tension calms down, Margo explains: "I couldn't figure out any other way that I could leave without getting dragged back."<sup>128</sup> At this point, it becomes clear for Quentin, that Margo is troubled inside. When he is linking things together, he realizes that famous Margo Roth Spiegelman is unsatisfied with her life, if it concerns relationships at school or at home, and is definitely not going to return back. When Margo after the hours of a mutual conversation of understanding each other uncovers her plans to travel to New York, she says: "You can come to New York. It will be fun."<sup>129</sup> However, Quentin confidently states: "Margo, I have a whole life [in my

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<sup>123</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 283.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*. 284.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 286.

<sup>129</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 302.

hometown], and I'm not you.<sup>130</sup> The preceding lines show that not only Quentin's courageous journey led him to discover the real, imperfect Margo and uncover her problems, but it also helped him to find himself. Despite it seems to be a central attribute of the story to find Margo, Green possibly uses the character of Margo, similarly to the character of Alaska, to shape a personality of the unsure, confused boy, and brings him to self-identification.

### 3.3 Will Grayson, Will Grayson

As it was mentioned in the first chapter, the book *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* is co-written with David Levithan. The book is composed of alternating chapters, while the odd ones belong to Green and those with the even numbers belong to Levithan. Green and Levithan's story is about two teenage boys of the same name Will Grayson. The central element which creates a joining point of individual stories represents Green's character Tiny Cooper, a homosexual football star who creates a musical. For Green's Will Grayson, who is straight, Tiny represents the best friend from his childhood. On the other hand, for Levithan's Will Grayson, who is also gay and always without capitalization during the story, Tiny represents a person with he falls in love. Nevertheless, as this thesis is focusing on Green's works and his portrayals of adolescent girl characters, the following analysis is going to be deal with Green's part of the book, and mainly with his depiction of Jane, the main adolescent girl character within this part.

Will Grayson, the first-person narrator and the main character, is the student who lives in Chicago. The story begins with his description of his best friend, Tiny Cooper: "Tiny has been my best friend since fifth grade, except for all last semester, when he was busy discovering the sheer scope of his own gayness."<sup>131</sup> Since Tiny has devoted much of his time to writing and preparing a musical play *Tiny Dancer, Hold Me Closer*, which Deakin, Brown and Blasingame suitably identifies as "Tiny's expression of his love for himself, his sexual identity, and for life in general manifests itself,"<sup>132</sup> boys' friendship has been marked by disagreements. While a content of the musical provides a realistic background of lives of its characters, Will is definitely against towards a humiliation of his character.

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<sup>130</sup> Green, *Paper Towns*, 303.

<sup>131</sup> John Green and David Levithan, *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* (London: Penguin, 2013), 1.

<sup>132</sup> Deakin, Brown and Blasingame, *John Green: Teen Whisperer*, 33.

Nevertheless, Will gets to know through Tiny's connections Jane Turner, a loyal Tiny's friend who has a crush on Will. When the story progresses, Tiny Cooper meets the other will grayson, and immediately falls in love with him. However, even if Will Grayson despite his initial disinterest ends up with Jane, Tiny's love affair causes that Will is jealous on his friend. Nevertheless, at the end of the story it is actually Jane, Will's new girlfriend, who helps him to make up life-long friendship with Tiny.

At the beginning of the story, Will Grayson self-identifies himself as a person who is trying to "follow two very simple rules: 1. Don't care too much. 2. Shut up."<sup>133</sup> Therefore, when he becomes a friend with Jane, even though he likes her, he states towards a reader's understanding: "She becomes pretty so suddenly that it's almost like a magic trick—but it's not like I want her or anything. Not to sound like a jerk, but Jane isn't really my type."<sup>134</sup> In contrary to Alaska Young and Margo Roth Spiegelman, Jane Turner does not represent for the main protagonist a love pursuit from the beginning of the story. Otherwise, Jane is interested in fastening the relationship with Will, as it can be seen in the following lines when Jane writes to Will via the social media: "I didn't know you had a Facebook. Your profile is funny. I like 'ACTIVITIES: ought to involve sunglasses."<sup>135</sup> This extract shows that not only the book *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* provides a different situation concerning the love stories, but also a presence of using the social media. As it was discussed in the second chapter, nowadays adolescent girls have an inclination to use online communication in order to fasten the relationships, and Jane represents an example of one of those girls, as she is trying to influence Will's behaviour towards her with the help of chatting.

Nevertheless, the character of Jane seems to be the positive character. Moreover, her opinions uncover her intelligence. When there are during the story doubts about Tiny's musical, she says: "Look, are people going to make fun of it? Absuh-freakin'-lutely. But it's honest. It's funny, and it's accurate, and it's not full of crap. It shows gay people as whole and complicated—not just like 'oh my God I have to tell my daddy that I like boys and wah-wah it's so hard."<sup>136</sup> This kind of behaviour makes an impression on Will. Furthermore, also Tiny is trying to create a loving couple from Will and Jane, as he says

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<sup>133</sup> Green and Levithan, *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, 3.

<sup>134</sup> Green and Levithan, *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, 18.

<sup>135</sup> Green and Levithan, *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, 39.

<sup>136</sup> Green and Levithan, *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, 43.

towards Will: “Listen, dude. She likes you.”<sup>137</sup> Despite the fact that Will is trying to stick to following his rules, he feels inside that he is sympathetic towards Jane. But not only does her behaviour affect Will, but also her intellect does which creates a similarity towards Green’s adolescent girl characters Alaska in *Looking for Alaska* and Margo in *Paper Towns*. The situation when Jane explains to Will “Schrödinger’s cat,” referred as a famous thought experiment,<sup>138</sup> serves Will to realize that he likes her as well as the situation when she asks him a question: “Do you believe in epiphanies? Like, do you believe that people’s attitudes can change?”<sup>139</sup> As a result, the following thoughts appear in Will’s mind: “I learn the truth: I like her. She’s cute and she’s really smart in precisely the right slightly pretentious way.”<sup>140</sup>

However, despite the fact that in the cases of Alaska and Margo they both represent for the main characters the crucial role in their lives, in the case of Jane Turner it is different. Not only Jane Turner, in contrast to Alaska and Margo, does not disappear or die, otherwise she becomes Will’s girlfriend, nor does she seem to be the most important person for Will Grayson. It could be asserted that the friendship with Tiny is for Will more important than the relationship with Jane, which can be noticed in the following sentences. While after sometime of not often seeing each other Will asks Tiny “how’s the other [will grayson],”<sup>141</sup> he receives a very plain answer from Tiny: “Fine.”<sup>142</sup> As soon as Will finds out from the rumors that Tiny and his boyfriend actually broke up, the following thoughts run through his mind: “I know why he didn’t tell me: it isn’t because he feels weird that for the first time in human history, he’s single and I’m taken(ish). He said the other [will grayson] was fine because I don’t matter.”<sup>143</sup> From this interpretation, it can be assumed that Will Grayson starts to realize that it is not a right direction towards which he would like to move their friendship.

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<sup>137</sup> Green and Levithan, *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, 44.

<sup>138</sup> See Green and Levithan, *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, 194.

<sup>139</sup> Green and Levithan, *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, 128.

<sup>140</sup> Green and Levithan, *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, 129.

<sup>141</sup> Green and Levithan, *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, 249.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Green and Levithan, *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, 250.

When Jane and Will have a conversation, she says: “I just think if you don’t say the honest things, sometimes the honest things never become true.”<sup>144</sup> Will immediately turns the conversation on his side and says:

“You’re amazing, and I so want to be your boyfriend, because of what you just said, and also because that shirt makes me want to take you home now and do unspeakable things while we watch live-action Sailor Moon videos. But but but you’re totally right about saying the honest things. ... And—God, I hope you won’t take this personally—but I love my best friend more than anyone in the world. ... I do. I fucking love Tiny Cooper.”<sup>145</sup>

Jane, full of confusion, asks: “Um, okay. Are you asking me to be your girlfriend, or are you telling me that you’re gay?”<sup>146</sup> The Will’s response sounds clearly: “The first one. The girlfriend one. I gotta go find Tiny.”<sup>147</sup> Despite the conversation reveals Will’s hidden feelings concerning Jane and a creation of a new couple itself, it reveals more importantly Will’s attitude towards Tiny. And the situation becomes substantial at this point for the analysis because Will’s behaviour suggests a certain level of priorities.

In spite of a fact that it is expected to enjoy a moment of being close to a person to whom is expressed love, Will does not follow the common sense and goes to make up the friendship with Tiny. While is Will trying to express his feelings towards Tiny, he says: “Being in a relationship, that’s something you choose. Being friends, that’s just something you are. ... I want you to come over to my house in twenty years with your dude and your adopted kids and I want our fucking kids hang out and ...”<sup>148</sup> This extract shows the importance of having Tiny in Will’s life. However, it is also revealed that Jane, as the main adolescent girl character, helps to transform the main male character from clumsy person to more confident, as it can be similarly seen in the cases of both Alaska and Margo.

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<sup>144</sup> Green and Levithan, *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, 254.

<sup>145</sup> Green and Levithan, *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, 254-255.

<sup>146</sup> Green and Levithan, *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, 255.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Green and Levithan, *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, 258.



## CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this bachelor thesis was to analyze three novels by John Green, one of which co-written with David Levithan, from the perspective of similarities and differences between the main adolescent girl characters within these novels.

When it comes to Green's very first novel, *Looking for Alaska*, and the third published novel, *Paper Towns*, a substantial amount of similarities have been found between the main adolescent girl characters within these two novels. The main adolescent girl character in Green's more recent novel, *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, has been revealed to be less similar to them. However, it does not mean that all three novels do not have any significant elements concerning portrayals of girls in common. Otherwise, aside from proven minor similarities, the major one turns out to be an influence of each of analyzed adolescent girl characters on the self-identification and development of the correspondent main male protagonist.

Miles Halter, the first-person narrator and the main protagonist in *Looking for Alaska*, is sick of his boring life. He enrolls in a new boarding school where he meets Alaska Young, the main adolescent girl character. Similarly to Quentin Jacobsen, who is the main protagonist of *Paper Towns*, Miles falls in love with Alaska, just like Quentin, who falls in love with Margo Roth Spiegelman, the main adolescent girl character of *Paper Towns*. Not only are these girls strong female characters, but they also are unattainable for these boys, who lack self-confidence. Both novels primarily deal with a teenage boy who loves an adolescent girl character. The girl later disappears, and her disappearance leads to a search for her. While Alaska's disappearance results in her death, Margo is actually found. Moreover, the search for Margo represents only an effort of Quentin, who tries to find her, whereas in the case of Alaska Miles attempts to understand her death. However, Jane Turner, the main adolescent girl character of Green's part of the novel *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, appears in a different position as it is her who actually has a crush on the male protagonist.

Both Alaska and Margo undergo a substantially similar experience, as they come into a direct contact with death while they are small girls. Alaska sees her own mother without signs of life as a child, while Margo sees just a strange person; yet both of them are affected by this experience. Alaska is unable to live without suffering anymore and Margo discovers a notion of inner problems. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that Margo

and Alaska are similar in their problems in interpersonal relationships with family. Both girls also have unconventional views of future.

When it comes to girls' individual temperaments, Alaska poses as a mysterious girl full of suffering. Margo represents a self-centered and popular girl. And Jane is illustrated as a neutral character. However, despite of these differences, all three girls are portrayed as intelligent characters. Furthermore, this attribute of wisdom plays a fundamental role in an attraction of the main male protagonists, mainly in case of Will Grayson who due to Jane's wide range of knowledge falls in love with her. Moreover, all of girls' portrayals depict some of contemporary problems of adolescent girls discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, such as perception of sexuality in a playful way without any barriers, indirect pressure from society to attend universities or dangers concerning social media.

Finally, the most important revelation of this analysis concerns the main male protagonists. The novels seem to be concentrating on the main adolescent girl characters and their relationships with the main male protagonists, yet this analysis has shown that all three main adolescent girl characters actually serve primarily as a background for the development and self-identification of the main male protagonists.

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