

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The kind of story told within *If We Were Villains* is morally questionable through the characters' collective involvement in crime. However, this research thesis has shown that the novel also offers a significant queer subtext through the relationship between Oliver Marks and James Farrow. Although George Levinger's relationship model was originally formulated within a heterosexual framework, this study demonstrates that its stages can still be meaningfully applied to analyze a queer relationship that remains largely unspoken within the narrative. The novel portrays a tragic yet emotionally complex bond between Oliver and James, whose relationship develops alongside the unfolding events surrounding Richard Stirling's death.

This thesis explores the development of the queer relationship between Oliver Marks and James Farrow by analyzing how they identify sexually and why and how their relationship transforms throughout the narrative. Their bond emerges within the shared environment of Dellecher Conservatory, where the characters study Shakespearean drama and live in close proximity. This environment fosters emotional dependence between the two characters, strengthened by theatrical intimacy through rehearsals and performances that blur the boundaries between acting and sincerity. Their relationship further intensifies through the shared guilt following Richard's death, which binds them together emotionally while simultaneously driving the conflicts that shape their

relationship development. The writer has found that Oliver is a protagonist who is dynamically changing, as he goes from being timid and meek to resolutely taking a serious consequence for James's crime. Meanwhile, James functions as an opposing force to Oliver's choices when he belatedly asks Oliver to exonerate himself and let James turn himself in, years after Oliver's prison sentence. In the middle of their conflicts, both characters go through a relationship development that Levinger has formulated.

Based on the analysis, Oliver's sexual orientation becomes clearer through the way he reflects on his relationships with both James and Meredith Dardenne, suggesting a bisexual identity that is mirrored, though more subtly, in James. The findings also show that Oliver and James experience each stage of Levinger's ABCDE relationship development model—from acquaintance, build-up, and continuation, to deterioration and its inevitable ending. Even without explicit declarations of love, their emotional attachment reveals a romantic involvement that aligns with Spargo's adaptation of Foucault's queer theory, where queer relationships are constructed through ambiguity, silence, and social circumstances rather than through fixed identity labels.

These findings highlight the importance of recognizing queer subtexts in narratives such as *If We Were Villains*. This choice of writing Oliver and James as a queer relationship marks the tragedy as more impactful, especially within the text's settings of Shakespearean drama. Therefore, the development of their relationship is essential to the tragic structure of the novel and gives a more

specific meaning to the tragedy, demonstrating how their emotional connection shapes the narrative tension and ultimately contributes to the novel's tragic resolution.