

Contextualizing Gender
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Lecture - 21
Introduction to Queer Literature


Welcome to this module dear participants. In recent years the study of queer literature has gathered increasing attention to examine and scrutinize the stories that history had tried to erase. In the previous week, we had looked at the core developments in queer theory with special focus to theories such as, Gayle Rubin and Eve Sedgwick who deconstructed the heteronormative view of cultural history.

Queer theory is a vibrant a school of thought and one which can be effectively applied to literature and art. Similar to how queer theory offers a significant avenue to reimagine gender identities, the literary space creatively explores the lives of non-heterosexual individuals. In today's module, we will trace how queer literature has a rich history and how classical queer texts influenced modern queer literature.


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Queer Literature



- Literature has always been concerned with questions of kinship, love, marriage, desire, and family relationships.
- In the last two decades, lesbian and gay studies have transformed literary studies and initiated debates on same-sex desire and queer identities.
- Queer Literature is a collective term for literature produced by or for the gay or lesbian community which involves characters, plot lines, or themes portraying homosexual behavior. *



Source: Penguin Books



* Woods, G. (1999). *A History of Gay Literature: The Male Tradition*. Yale University Press.

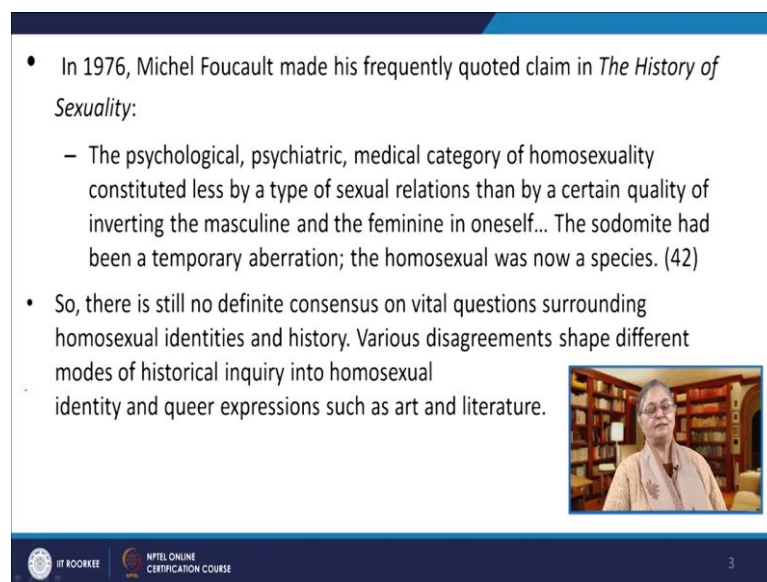
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lesbian community which involves characters, plot lines, or themes portraying homosexual behavior.

Historically, much of the literature which has been discussed in connection with homosexuality has not been written by writers who would identify themselves as gay. Therefore, defining gay and lesbian writing constitutes a problematic category because the meanings of gay, lesbian and other related concepts such as queer have been intensely contested.

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- In 1976, Michel Foucault made his frequently quoted claim in *The History of Sexuality*:
 - The psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality constituted less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself... The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species. (42)
- So, there is still no definite consensus on vital questions surrounding homosexual identities and history. Various disagreements shape different modes of historical inquiry into homosexual identity and queer expressions such as art and literature.

In 1976, Michel Foucault made his frequently quoted claim in ‘The History of Sexuality’ and I quote, “the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality constituted less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself... The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.” Unquote.

So, there is a still no definite consensus on vital questions surrounding homosexual identities in history. Various disagreements shape different modes of historical inquiry into homosexual identity and queer expressions such as art and literature. This module reflects the plurality of voices and approaches within queer literary studies as well as the diversity of queer life today.

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- In literature, homosexual identities negotiate with family structures, and nuanced accounts of homosexuality.
- The social acceptance of homosexuality has varied in many cultures throughout history, and queer literature has covered a vast array of themes and concepts.
- Non-heterosexual individuals have often turned to literature as a source of validation, understanding, and beautification of same-sex attraction.
- Literary works also document the psychological stress and alienation suffered by those experiencing prejudice, legal discrimination, violence, religious condemnation and persecution.



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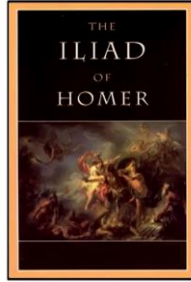
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By eliciting affective responses in readers, queer literature thus encourages embodied forms of critical reading and engenders imagining the alternative modes of social belonging. We shall now analyze how there have been queer plot elements or characters in some of the canonical texts in literary history.


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Greek and Roman Classics

- In classical mythology, male lovers were attributed to ancient Greek gods and heroes such as Zeus, Apollo, Poseidon and Heracles.
- Though Homer did not explicitly portray the heroes Achilles and Patroclus as homosexual lovers in *Iliad*, Greek dramatist Aeschylus casted both of them as pederastic lovers.
- The term pederasty is primarily used to refer to a homosexual relationship between an adult man and an adolescent boy. In most countries today such relationships are illegal.



Source: Kobo.com




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Pederasty in ancient Greece was a socially acknowledged romantic relationship. Plato in his ‘Symposium’ cites Aeschylus and holds Achilles up as an example of how people will be more daring and even sacrifice themselves for their lovers in homosexual relationships. The tradition of pederasty in ancient Greece and later the acceptance of limited homosexuality in ancient Rome infused an awareness of same sex attraction into ancient poetry.

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- Sappho (630-570 BC) was an ancient Greek poet from the island of Lesbos.
- She is the first known woman poet in Greek language and has been recognized as a lyric poet.
- She is renowned for her exceptional creativity and her daring act of celebrating the female erotic at a time when only the male erotic was recognized and proclaimed.
- Only a small fraction of her work has survived and all of it are in fragmented forms.
- Plato and Socrates called Sappho “the tenth Muse,” openly admiring her work (Lester, 2002).



Sappho of Lesbos
Source: worldhistory.org



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Sappho who is dated around 6th or 7th century BC was an ancient Greek poet from the island of Lesbos. She is the first known woman poet in Greek language and has been recognized as a lyric poet. She is renowned for her exceptional creativity and her daring act of celebrating the female erotic at a time when only the male erotic was recognized and proclaimed.


Only a small fraction of her work has survived and all of it are in fragmented forms. Plato and Socrates called Sappho “the tenth Muse” and openly admired her work. The English words sapphic and lesbian were derived from her name and the name of her home island respectively.

It is significant to note that Sappho was privileged and wealthy by birth and was thus allowed intellectual pursuits outside the world of procreative pursuits, which was the only accepted goal for most women at that time. Sappho writes of Aphrodite, the goddess of sexuality describing emotions of desire and longing for one’s beloved.


This was in contrast to values of labor and courage among the warriors depicted in Homer’s epics. Sappho celebrated female pleasure and women’s bodies disrupting many treasured concepts of western tradition.

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- Latin poet Catullus (c. 84-54 BC) of the Roman Republic turned away from the Homeric epic poetry and focused on personal lives rather than classical heroes.
- In 25 of his poems he mentions his devotion to a woman named Lesbia, which scholars believe is the false name for his love interest, Clodia – a married woman, source and inspiration for many of his poems.
- His poems about Lesbia are written in Sapphic meter and they contain descriptions of homosexual desires among women.
- The explicit sexual imagery in his poems shocked many readers and yet at many instruction levels, Catullus is considered a resource for teachers of Latin (Woods, 1999).



Roman poet Catullus
Source: Britannica



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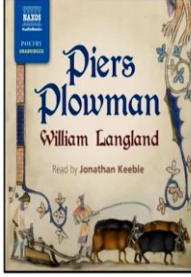
The explicit sexual imagery in his poems shocked many readers and yet at many instruction levels, Catullus is considered as a resource for teachers of Latin. Catullus did not reject traditional notions instead he tried to reinvent these notions from a personal point of view and to reintroduce them into human relationships.

Catullus has influenced poets like Ovid and Virgil. His works were rediscovered in the late Middle Ages and he became an inspiration for Renaissance poets like Petrarch. Elements of homoeroticism are located in the modern interpretations of Middle English literature as well.


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The Christian Middle Ages

- One of the earliest Middle English allegorical narrative poems *William's Vision of Piers Plowman* has the narrator Will who searches for truths about life.
- The poem begins by using female allegorical personifications for the main character Will. Through a transformative approach to gender, the poem asks what it means to need another being in order to understand something or get somewhere.
- Modern interpretations of *Piers Plowman* suggest that the poem ponders the difference between male same-sex and heterosexual love in its persistent search for a less arduous form of interdependence (Raskolnikov, 2005).



Source: Naxos Books



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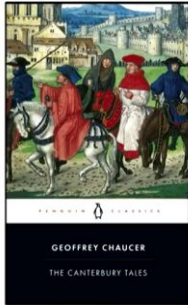
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Modern interpretations of the poem, however, suggest that it ponders the difference between male same-sex and heterosexual love in its persistent search for a less arduous form of interdependence. 'Piers Plowman' is structured in such a way that we begin and end the narrative poem with female personifications. Similar queer readings of Geoffrey Chaucer have also come up in a recent academic scholarship.

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- In the contemporary readings of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, many view the Pardoner as a possible homosexual.
- The oft-quoted line from such readings is from the General Prologue: "I trowe he were gelding or a mere" which roughly translates to "I am sure the pardoner was either a eunuch or gay" (McAlpine, 1980; Cocco, 2007).
- The word 'mare' suggests that the Pardoner is an 'effeminate' man.
- Woods (1999) considers the Pardoner is as the "first gay character in English literature" (61).



Source: Penguin Books



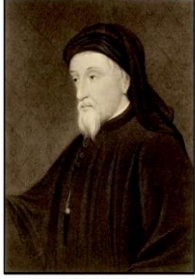
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The word 'mare' suggests that the pardoner is an 'effeminate' man. Woods considers the Pardoner as the "first gay character in English literature". It is also to be noted that the Pardoner was stigmatized for his personal appearance. With reference to his unmanly beardlessness, the narrator doubts him as a sinful sodomite and is even deemed guilty by the mere fact of his appearance.

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- Critics also note that depictions of homosexual desire in the literature of Middle Ages have equated homosexuality with 'male homosexuality'.
- In an important article titled "Where are the Lesbians in Chaucer?" published in the *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, Prof. Michelle Sauer says,
 - "Lesbians are consigned to footnotes, passing references and fleeting comments, or they are simply skipped altogether" (Sauer, 2007).
- This shows a marginalized invisibility of non-heteronormative woman historically situated in the 'dark ages'.



Portrait of Geoffrey Chaucer
Source: National Library of Wales



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This shows a marginalized invisibility of non-heteronormative women historically situated in the 'dark ages'. This also prompts a need for re-gendered readings of existing materials from medieval literary studies in order to deconstruct the silencing of female gender expression in the English tradition.

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Renaissance and Shakespeare

- Prof. Bruce R. Smith notes that in early modern England, there was a strong “disparity that separates the extreme punishments prescribed by the law and the apparent tolerance of homoerotic desire in visual arts and literature” (6). *
- But in Renaissance England, there were important revisions to draconian laws against sodomy. Such laws, during renaissance, were mostly enforced against rape of underaged boys by an adult male.
- One can locate a pervasiveness of male eroticism in the works of canonical authors such as Marlowe, Shakespeare, Sidney and Spenser.
- The literary works that afford us access to sexuality were never completely isolated from the fears and anxieties about religious and legal discourses.

* Smith, B. [1991]. *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England*. University of Chicago Press.




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One can locate a pervasiveness of male eroticism in the works of canonical authors such as Marlowe, Shakespeare, Sydney and Spenser. The literary works that afford us access to sexuality were never completely isolated from the fears and anxieties about religious and legal discourses. It can be mentioned that it was a revival of classical learning during the renaissance period which provided a rich body of literature pertaining to homosexuality.

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- Shakespeare mostly reflected the Elizabethan standards of heterosexuality in his plays by emphasizing the importance of marriage.
- All his plays followed contemporary codes of morality and homoeroticism in his plays was never openly explicit.
- A certain amount of same-sex eroticism was built in all Elizabethan theatre, as female parts were played by boys.
 - Boys playing female roles also meant that all onstage instances of love and courtship were acted between male actors.



Portrait of William Shakespeare
Source: National Portrait Gallery, London



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Boys playing female roles also meant that onstage instances of love and courtships were acted between male actors only. Numerous instances of homoeroticism have been extensively researched in modern Shakespearean scholarships. We will take up a few examples.

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- In *As You Like It*, Rosalind in the Forest of Arden dressed up as a boy named Ganymede, and courts the man she loves. Rosalind's lover Orlando also responds positively to this courtship.
- The name that Rosalind chose for her cross-dressing "Ganymede", belongs to a beautiful boy from Greek mythology who is considered as one of the lovers of Zeus.
- Shakespeare's most complex approach to the themes of gender and sexual desire can be located in *Twelfth Night*.
- The play's main character, a young woman Viola, dresses up as a man called "Cesario."
- As "Cesario," Viola becomes a servant to Duke Orsino.



Source: Maple Press



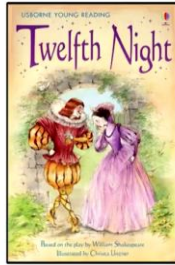
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- During the course of the play, Orsino falls in love with “Cesario,” though he is not able to declare his feelings until “Cesario” reveals that “he” is really a woman.
- As soon as Viola reveals her true gender identity, Orsino asks her to marry him. Viola is still dressed as a man when Orsino proposes, and he even continues to call her a “boy” during his proposal.
- Furthermore, another character Countess Olivia also falls in love with “Cesario”. Although she believes “Cesario” is really a man, she is attracted to “his” ‘feminine’ looks and way of speaking.



Source: Kobo Books



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During the course of the play, Orsino falls in love with “Cesario”, though he is not able to declare his feelings until “Cesario” reveals that “he” is in fact a woman. As soon as Viola reveals her true gender identity, Orsino asks her to marry him. Viola is still dressed as a man when Orsino proposes, and he even continues to call her a “boy” during his proposal.

Furthermore, another character Countess Olivia also falls in love with “Cesario”. Although she believes Cesario to be a man in fact, she is attracted to his feminine looks and feminine ways of speaking. Cross-dressing in the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries thus becomes a method for the layering of genders in sophisticated ways. This multitude of gender roles creates a flexibility that produces homoerotic relationships.

Moreover, the performance of gender on stage shows the ambiguous and flexible nature of gender desire and action which is strongly limited by society’s strict codes and laws. This is similar to how Judith Butler has outlined gender performativity. She views it as a combination of the societal pressures to conform to stereotypical notions of gender and at the same time thinks that one is given a certain a limited amount of freedom for individual gender expression.

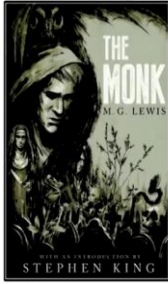
Butler’s understanding of gender shall be comprehensively analyzed in the upcoming weeks. Eve Sedgwick’s famous work on literature and homosexual desire had developed

out of her early work on Gothic fiction. She argues that the Gothic was the first novelistic form in England to have visible links to male homosexuality. Many early Gothic fiction authors like Matthew Lewis, William Thomas Beckford and Francis Latham were homosexuals and would sublimate related themes and express them in more acceptable forms in their literary works.


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The Gothic and New Bearings in the Novel

- The Gothic is an ideal site for investigating alternatives to the Romantic construction of the author as masculine, heterosexual, and autonomous.
- One of the best examples from early Gothic fiction in English is *The Monk* by Mathew Gregory Lewis published in 1796.
- Lewis's graphic depictions of incest, rape, murder, gender-bending, and illegal same-sex desire violated every major taboo of British society and drew immediate calls for censorship and criminal prosecution.



Source: Valencourt Books




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- Works in the Gothic mode have often been preoccupied with perversion and decadence; transgressive or aberrant sexuality; gender instability and permeable identities; and the paranoia, persecution, and violence of homosexual panic (Fitzgerald, 2005).
- Lewis's book begins with an epigraph from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. In the plot, a girl named Matilda enters a monastery disguised as a boy called "Rosario".
- The title character Ambrosio, a dedicated monk and a strict 'observer of chastity', falls in love with the young novice "Rosario", clearly marking the gay subtext.
- Lewis's condemnation of the Catholic Church is apparent through characters such as an unchaste nun and a lustful monk.



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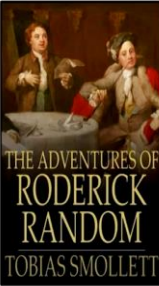
The title character Ambrosio, a dedicated monk and a strict 'observer of chastity', falls in love with the young novice "Rosario", clearly marking the gay subtext. Lewis's condemnation of the Catholic Church is apparent through characters such as an unchaste nun and a lustful monk. The vow of celibacy which many protestant writers at the time condemned as unnatural is presented as contributing significantly to Ambrosio's repressed sexuality.

The element of homoeroticism in this Gothic fiction between Rosario and Ambrosio is achieved through the motive of cross-dressing like we saw in Shakespearean plays. 'The Monk' also reprises Lewis's personal struggle against the sexual politics and constraints of the English society and the English literary tradition.


In the 1790's when Lewis was writing 'The Monk' judicial anti-homosexual persecution was at its height in England. Gangs of undercover police officers from anti-homosexual task forces infiltrated queer spaces creating a sense of paranoia and fear in England's underground LGBT communities.

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- Despite causing scandals and facing censorship, the novel became an eminent medium of changing social attitudes.
- In the 18th century, realist fiction became increasingly adept at representing a broad range of human types.
- As part of the same development, the homosexual person eventually became the homosexual character, a visible presence in the cultures of the industrial revolution.
- Tobias Smollett, for instance, in his novel *Roderick Random* (1748) provides a significant defense of homosexuality.
- ↳ In a comic scene, Earl Strutwell attempts to seduce Roderick Random by urging him to read Petronius and by arguing that male homosexuality is the best defense against the corruption of womankind.



Source: Kobo Books




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Smollett for instance, in his novel 'Roderick Random' published in 1748, provides a significant defense of homosexuality. In a comic scene, Earl Strutwell attempts to seduce Roderick Random by urging him to read Petronius and by arguing that male homosexuality is the best defense against the corruption of womankind. In one of his later novels 'Peregrine Pickle' published in 1751, Smollett gives us an early evidence of the practice of blackmailing same-sex lovers in English society.

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- The Victorian Era was marked by stability and progress; it also aimed at setting up a 'moral standard'.
- Oscar Wilde is one of the most prolific writers of this time, credited with writing a number of plays and short stories with an undercurrent of homosexuality.
- In Wilde's most famous play, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), two central characters, Jack and Algernon, create secret identities to avoid their social responsibilities.
- The plot of leading dual lives appears to be rooted in Wilde's own life as he himself led a double life-- he was married, even as he continued to have intimate relationships with men.



Oscar Wilde
Source: Library of Congress



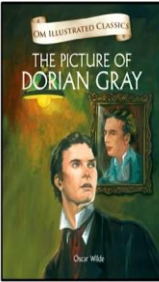
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The Victorian Era was marked by stability and progress and also aimed at setting up high moral standards. Oscar Wilde is one of the most prolific writers of this time, credited with writing a number of plays and short stories with an undercurrent of homosexuality. In his most famous play, 'The Importance of Being Earnest' 1895, two central characters, Jack and Algernon, create secret identities to avoid their social responsibilities.


The plot of leading dual lives appears to be rooted in Wilde's own life as he himself led a double life - he was married, even as he continued to have intimate relationships with men. The very title of the play is a nod to its homosexual undertones as the term 'earnest' was widely known as a British slang for homosexuality. Wilde had also coined the term 'bunburying', which means creating a different identity indicating homosexual connotations.

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- Wilde's only novel, *The Picture Of Dorian Gray* (1890) portrays a young, handsome and wealthy gentleman Dorian whose portrait is drawn by the artist Basil Hallward.
- Under the influence of Lord Henry Wotton, Dorian becomes extremely concerned with the transience of his beauty and begins to pursue his own pleasures above all else.
- Wotton's philosophy of "new Hedonism," advocates garnering experiences that stimulate the senses without regard for conventional morality, and this plays a vital role in Dorian's development.
- The homoerotic bonds between male characters play a great role in structuring the novel.



Source: Om Books International



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Wotton's philosophy of "new Hedonism", advocates garnering experiences that stimulate the senses without regard for conventional morality, and this plays a vital role in Dorian's development. The homoerotic bonds between male characters play a great role in structuring the novel.

Basil's painting depends upon his adoration of Dorian's beauty. Similarly, Lord Henry is overcome with the desire to seduce Dorian and mold him into the realization of an ideal hedonistic hero. These motives in the novel fit into Wilde's larger aesthetic values.

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- As a homosexual living in an intolerant society, Wilde asserted this philosophy partially in an attempt to justify his own lifestyle. For Wilde, homosexuality was not a sordid vice but rather a sign of refined culture of diversity and acceptance.
- Despite being married, Wilde had a secret affair with Lord Alfred Douglas. Although Wilde kept his homosexuality a secret, Alfred's father the Marquess of Queensberry found out about their affair.
- Oscar's friends who were aware of his sexual preferences advised him to flee to France as homosexuality was legalized in France in 1791 during the French Revolution.
- In a court case between Queensberry and Wilde, an arrest warrant for Wilde was issued on the charges of gross indecency.



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As a homosexual living in an intolerant society, Wilde asserted this philosophy partially in an attempt to justify his own lifestyle. For him, homosexuality was not a sordid vice but rather a sign of refined culture of diversity and acceptance. Despite being married, he had a secret affair with Lord Alfred Douglas. Although he kept his homosexuality a secret, Alfred's father the Marquess of Queensberry found out about their affair.


His friends who were aware of his sexual preferences advised him to flee to France as homosexuality was legalized in France in 1791 during the French Revolution. In a court case between Queensberry and Wilde, an arrest warrant for Wilde was issued on the charges of gross indecency.

Eventually Wilde was sentenced to 2 years in jail and the court concluded that many of his works were euphemisms for homosexuality. Today Dorian Gray is considered as a groundbreaking gay character in the history of queer literature.

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The Twentieth Century

- By the 20th century, discussions around homosexuality became more open and society's understanding of it evolved greatly. A number of novels with explicitly gay themes and characters began to appear in the domain of mainstream art and literature.
- Nobel Prize-winner André Gide's semi-autobiographical novel *The Immoralist* (1902) finds a newly married man reawakened by his attraction to Arab boys.
- In Thomas Mann's 1912 novella *Death in Venice*, a tightly wound, aging writer finds himself increasingly infatuated with a young Polish man.
- Similarly, Marcel Proust in his serialized *In Search of Lost Times* (1913-27) also explored homosexual themes.



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By the 20th century, discussions around homosexuality became more open and society's understandings of it also evolved greatly. A number of novels with explicitly gay themes and characters began to appear in the domain of mainstream art and literature. Nobel Prize-winner André Gide's semi-autobiographical novel 'The Immoralist' finds a newly married man reawakened by his attraction to Arab boys.

In Thomas Mann's 1912 novella 'Death in Venice', a tightly wound, aging writer finds himself increasingly infatuated with a young Polish man. Similarly, Marcel Proust in his serialized 'In Search of Lost Times' also explored homosexual themes. The first novel in the English language recognized as having a central lesbian theme is 'The Well of Loneliness' by Radclyffe Hall published in 1928.


A British court found the novel obscene because it defended unnatural practices between women. The book was banned in Britain for decades. This is in the context of a similar censorship of 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' which was published in 1928. The ban on this novel by DH Lawrence was lifted only in 1960 in Britain more than 3 decades after its publication.

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- British author E.M. Forster earned a prominent reputation as a novelist while concealing his own homosexuality from the broader British public.
- In 1913-14, he privately penned *Maurice*, a bildungsroman that follows a young, upper-middle-class man through the self-discovery of his own attraction to other men, and his interactions with an often uncomprehending or hostile society.
- The book is notable for its affirming tone and happy ending. Forster says the following in the novel:
 - A happy ending was imperative, ... I was determined that in fiction anyway, two men should fall in love and remain in it for the ever and ever that fiction allows... Happiness is its keynote. (250)



E. M. Forster
Source: Britannica



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E. M. Forster had earned a prominent reputation as a novelist while concealing his own homosexuality from the broader British public. In 1913 and 14 he privately penned ‘Maurice’, a bildungsroman that follows a young, upper-middle-class man through the self-discovery of his own attraction to other men, and his interactions with an often uncomprehending or hostile society.

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‘Maurice’ could be published only after Forster’s death. It was published in 1971. American novelist William Mann had suggested that the central character of Maurice is a refreshingly unapologetic young gay man from the working class, pretty different from the aristocratic gentleman of Oscar Wilde.

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- Similarly, *Orlando* (1928) is a charming historical novel written by Virginia Woolf in the form of a biography.
- The name of the central character is also an allusion to the Shakespearean character of Orlando from *As You Like It*, who also reflects gender fluidity.
- The novel is a commentary on gender and how it affects a person's public and private identities.
- Through Orlando's various experiences as both male and female, Woolf finds that a person's gender does not reflect the inner, essential self.
- Although the change of sex influenced Orlando's future, it did not fundamentally alter his core values and passions like his love for poetry and nature.



Source: Oxford University Press



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Lady Orlando felt that she has limited power and freedom with her position as woman in the 18th century. The act of cross-dressing as man makes her feel more masculine and more in control of her destiny, but there are also times when she wants to be demure and ladylike, which is when she goes back to women's clothing.



Between personas she wears gender neutral clothing. Woolf shows that the society's reaction to her choice of clothing dictated her opportunities. Through the novel Woolf says that in every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place. She believes that sexes are intermixed. This broadly applies to gender roles within a society and refuse the predominant gender stereotypes. Similar tropes of cross-dressing are found in the French novels also especially in the work of Zola.

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Contemporary Queer Literature

- In the post-war period, there were many war-influenced gay novels like *The City and Pillar* (1948) by American writer Gore Vidal. This is a significant novel because its gay protagonist is portrayed in a sympathetic manner and is not killed off at the end of the story for defying social norms.
- Other notable works of the 1940s and 1950s include Jean Genet's semiautobiographical novel *Our Lady of the Flowers* (1943) and James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* (1956). Baldwin's central character David had an internal conflict between homosexuality and heterosexuality, opening up discussions on the concept of 'bisexuality'.
- In the 1970s, more voices of female homosexuality of color began to be heard. Notable among them are the works of American writer and feminist Audre Lorde (1934-1992).



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In the 1970s, more voices of female homosexuality of color began to be heard. Notable among them are the works of American writer and feminist critic Audre Lorde. Similarly, Adrienne Rich and Judy Grahn were important poets and essayists of the post-war era, re-criticized rigid forms of feminist identities and coined the term lesbian continuum, which is a female continuum of solidarity and creativity that impacts women's lives.

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- In the late 20th century, queer literature diversified into genres of fantasy, mystery, science fiction, and graphic novels.
- During this time, English novels which received national awards and mainstream critical acclaim, like *The Color Purple* (1982) by Alice Walker, included homosexual characters and relationships.
- In the 21st century, much of LGBT literature has achieved a high level of sophistication and many novels were adapted into high profile films as well.
- Alan Hollinghurst won the Booker Prize for his 2004 novel *The Line of Beauty*, which features a young gay protagonist navigating 1980's Britain.
- American novelist Andrew Sean Greer, who is openly gay, won the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for his novel *Less*.

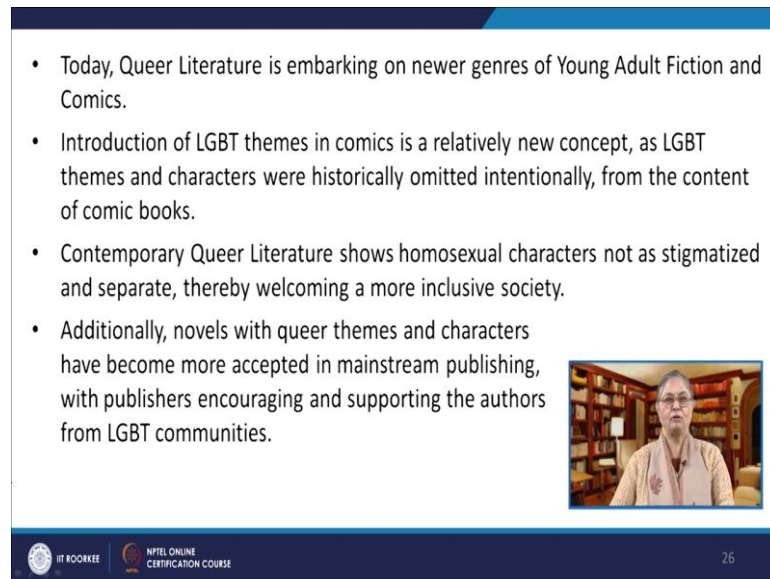


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In the 21st century, much of the LGBT literature has achieved a high level of sophistication and many novels were adapted into high profile films as well. Alan Hollinghurst won the Booker Prize for his 2004 novel ‘The Line of Beauty’, which features a young gay protagonist navigating 1980’s Britain. American novelist Andrew Sean Greer, who is openly gay, won the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for his novel ‘Less’.

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- Today, Queer Literature is embarking on newer genres of Young Adult Fiction and Comics.
- Introduction of LGBT themes in comics is a relatively new concept, as LGBT themes and characters were historically omitted intentionally, from the content of comic books.
- Contemporary Queer Literature shows homosexual characters not as stigmatized and separate, thereby welcoming a more inclusive society.
- Additionally, novels with queer themes and characters have become more accepted in mainstream publishing, with publishers encouraging and supporting the authors from LGBT communities.

Today, Queer Literature is embarking on newer genres of Young Adult Fiction and also Comics. Introduction of LGBT themes in comics is a relatively new concept, as LGBT themes and characters were intentionally and historically omitted from the content of comic books.

Contemporary Queer Literature shows homosexual characters not as stigmatized and separate, thereby welcoming a more inclusive society. Additionally, novels with queer themes and characters have become more accepted in mainstream publishing, with publishers encouraging and supporting the authors from LGBT communities.

Through this module we have looked at the historic evolution of queer literature and how certain works have established historical or artistic importance through academic inquiry and rediscovery. In the coming module, we will undertake detailed analytical study of select novels from queer literature of the 21st century.

Thank you.

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