

**Contextualizing Gender**  
**Prof. Rashmi Gaur**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee**

**Lecture - 23**  
**Queer Cinema I**

Welcome dear friends, in the previous module we had examined two important queer novels of the 21st century we have also seen that Hollinghurst 'The Line of Beauty' was adopted into a TV series by the BBC thereby attracting a larger audience through a different medium.

The visual media especially the world of cinema has played a crucial role in giving representation and exposure to the queer identity. Queer representations in popular culture and media have historically influenced normative discourses and it can challenge institutional forces which hamper homosexuality.

In this module we shall look at two significant contemporary movies which capture the experience of male homosexuality in the 20th century. The movies are 'J Edgar', a 2011 movie directed by Clint Eastwood and the 2014 movie 'The Imitation Game' directed by Morten Tyldum.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:43)

### J. Edgar

- Directed by the legendary Oscar-winning director and actor Clint Eastwood, *J. Edgar* is a 2011 biographical drama film. It is based on the career of the FBI director John Edgar Hoover.
  - The lead role of Hoover was played by Leonardo di Caprio who earned a Golden Globe Award nomination for Best Actor for this role.
  - The screenplay was written by American film director and LGBT activist Dustin Lance Black.
- Eastwood, in an interview, acknowledges that Hoover could have been gay and depicts this ambiguity in the film. says that the film is a love story, and not simply a sexual attraction; and not a political profile either.\* He had also assured the Hoover Foundation in this regard.\*\*



Source: Warner Bros. Pictures



\*<https://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/hip-secrecy/pdger-clint-eastwood-leonardo-dicaprio-edgar-hoover-story?id=14898413>

\*\* <https://www.fox.com/2012/02/02/j-edgar-hoover-secrecy/>

2

'J Edgar' is a biographical drama film based on the career of the former FBI director John Edgar Hoover. It has been directed by the legendary Oscar winning director and actor Clint Eastwood the lead role of Hoover was played by Leonardo di Caprio who earned a Golden Globe award nomination for the Best Actor for this role. The screenplay was written by American film director and LGBT activist Dustin Lance Black. In an interview Eastwood had acknowledged that Hoover could have been a gay and depicts this ambiguity in the film.


Suggesting that the film is a love story, and not simply a sexual attraction and definitely not a political profile. Eastwood had assured the J Edgar Hoover foundation that the movie would not portray an open homosexual relationship between Hoover and his lifelong male companion Clyde Tolson. However, Eastwood had stretched the truth though there is just one passionate kiss between DiCaprio and Armie Hammer the two actors portraying them in the movie.

The relationship with Tolson is a central theme in the movie. Men with a strong attraction to other men can have different degrees of acceptance from being fully closeted to being openly gay. And even if they are homosexually self aware they can either embrace it or reject it publicly. Hoover was an individual who never opened up about his own sexuality in public.


(Refer Slide Time: 03:30)

**John Edgar Hoover (1895-1972)**

- He was appointed as the director of the Bureau of Investigation – the FBI's predecessor – in 1924. He was instrumental in founding the FBI in 1935, where he remained director for another 37 years until his death in 1972.
- Hoover has been credited with several contributions to the FBI, primarily establishing modernizations to police technology such as centralized fingerprint file and forensic laboratories.
- He is also credited with the expanding of a national blacklist, commonly known as the 'FBI list' which it is said, the government compiles.



J. Edgar Hoover  
Source: Library of Congress



IFT FODRKEE | NFTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE | 3


Hoover was appointed as the director of the Bureau of Investigation, the FBI's predecessors in 1924. He was instrumental in founding the FBI in 1935, where he remained director for another 37 years until his death in 1972. Hoover has been credited with several contributions to the FBI, primarily establishing modernization to police technology such as centralized fingerprint file and forensic laboratories.

He is also credited with expanding of a national blacklist, commonly known as the 'FBI list' which it is said, the government often compiles. However, later in his life and after his death Hoover became a controversial figure as evidence of his secretive abuses of power began to surface.

(Refer Slide Time: 04:27)

- Hoover was found to have used his FBI position to harass political dissenters and activists to amass secret files on political leaders using illegal methods.
- From the 1940s, rumors circulated that Hoover was homosexual. According to multiple historians, Clyde Tolson, who was an assistant director to Hoover in his mid-40s, was a homosexual lover to Hoover until his death.\*
- Hoover and his long-time companion Tolson stayed together for nearly 44 years. The two vacationed together, often dressed similarly and are buried alongside each other after their deaths. Additionally, Hoover named Tolson as the primary heir to most of his wealth.

\* Cox, J. & Theoharis, A. (1988). *The boss: J. Edgar Hoover and the great American inquisition*. Temple University Press.




4

He was found to have used the FBI position to harass political dissenters and activists to amass secret files on political leaders using illegal methods. From the 1940s, the rumor circulated that Hoover was homosexual. According to multiple historians, Clyde Tolson, who was an assistant director to Hoover in his mid-40s was a homosexual lover to Hoover until his death. Hoover and his long-time companion Tolson stayed together for nearly 44 years. The two vacationed together, often dressed similarly and are also buried alongside each other after their deaths.


Additionally, Hoover had named Tolson as the primary heir to most of his wealth. Hoover reportedly hunted down and threatened anyone who made insinuations about his sexuality.

(Refer Slide Time: 05:25)

- On May 2, 1969, a magazine published an article titled "Is J. Edgar Hoover a Fag?" Fag is a derogatory term for homosexual men.
- One of Hoover's biographers Richard Hack does not believe that the FBI director was homosexual. Hack notes that Hoover was romantically linked to the actress Dorothy Lamour in the late 1930s.
- However, Anthony Summers, who wrote *Official and Confidential: The Secret Life of J. Edgar Hoover* (1993), stated that there was no ambiguity about the FBI director's sexual proclivities and described him as "bisexual with failed heterosexuality".



Source: Warner Bros. Pictures



ITF FROCKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE

5


The 2nd May 1969 issue of a magazine published an article with the title "Is J Edgar Hoover a Fag?" Fag is a derogatory term for homosexual men. One of Hoover's biographers Richard Hack does not believe that the FBI director was homosexual.

Hack notes that Hoover was romantically inclined to the actress Dorothy Lamour in the late 1930s. However, Anthony Summers, who wrote 'Official and Confidential; The Secret Life of J Edgar Hoover' in 1993 is stated that there was no ambiguity about the FBI director's sexual proclivities and described him as a "bisexual with failed heterosexuality". The 2011 Eastwood movie is a biopic showing Hoover's career from 1919. How he built the FBI's reputation heroically and how he kept secrets behind closed doors that later troubled his career and life.


(Refer Slide Time: 06:31)

### Sexuality and Closeted Love in *J. Edgar*

- Apart from the portrayal of Hoover's appealing role as a ruthless detective, the movie also reveals an inner life, a love story in which the protagonist struggles with his sexuality.
- Hoover is also depicted in Freudian terms as someone who is highly reliant on his mother Annie, whose matriarch role was played by English actress Dame Judi Dench. Hoover fears her wrath more than the wrath of the presidents he served.
- In the movie his mother, with an intuition that her son could be gay, tells him, "I would rather have a dead son than a daffodil for a son".



Judi Dench in *Edgar*  
Source: Warner Bros. Pictures




UJF ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE | 6

Apart from the portrayal of Hoover's appealing role as a ruthless detective, the movie also reveals an inner life a love story in which the protagonist struggles with his sexuality. Hoover is also depicted in Freudian terms as someone who is highly reliant on his mother Annie, whose matriarch role was played by an English actress Dame Judi Dench.

Hoover fears her wrath more than the wrath of the presidents he used to serve. In the movie his mother with an intuition that her son could be a gay, tells him, "I would rather have a dead son then a daffodil for a son". Annie's attitude is in consonance with the social perceptions and beliefs of the contemporary American society which thought that homosexuality was a disease.

Hoover took his mothers warning to his heart and this could be one of the primary reasons that his relationship with Tolson is clearly depicted as a case of repress longing. The following scene from the movie shows how his mother confronted him and compelled him to be more masculine rather than being more effeminate like a homosexual.

(Refer Slide Time: 07:53)



Edgar and his Mother

- In this given scene from *J. Edgar*, Hoover and Tolson go to a club where a woman asks Hoover for a dance. He becomes uncomfortable almost immediately.
- This is followed by his encounter with his mother.

Source: Warner Bros. Pictures

IT ROOKIE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE

7

In this scene Hoover and Tolson go to a club, where a women ask Hoover for a dance. He becomes immediately uncomfortable this is followed by his encounter with his mother.


Mr. Hoover, would it be out of the question to bother you for a dance? Oh, how do you mean? Well, simply a dance. You do dance, don't you? Well, that is a skill that I have not yet mastered and the night is getting long isn't it. Mister Tolson? There is no time like the present its my favourite song. Yes, Mister Tolson, I think it is time we leave. We have a great deal of work; we have a great deal of work tomorrow and I am just afraid we do not have time to dance. Well, we were very busy, aren't we Mister Tolson?

Yes, and my sincere apologies. Right now, Mister Tolson, thank you very much good evening. Good night.

I do not like to I do not like to dance mother I do not like it dance.

Edgar go look in the mirror talk the way the doctor taught you to be my little speedy.

(Refer Slide Time: 09:18)



Edgar and his Mother

- In this given scene from *J. Edgar*, Hoover and Tolson go to a club where a woman asks Hoover for a dance. He becomes uncomfortable almost immediately.
- This is followed by his encounter with his mother.

Source: Warner Bros. Pictures

IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE

7

I can spit my words out with, I can spit my words out with precision, diction and clarity, I can spit my words out with precision, diction and clarity, I am a proficient remarkable lad capable of remarkable noble feats, I am a proficient remarkable lad capable of remarkable noble feasts.

I am a precision... mother I do not like to dance, I do not like to dance with anyone, but mostly I do not like to dance with women, I think it is time you knew this and I find it humiliating and I refuse to be publicly humiliated.

Edgar stop!

Do you remember Barton Pincus?

Yes, mother he his father was a watchmaker, he was 10 years younger than me and used to call him Birdy or Daffy or something to that effect.

And do you remember what happened to Daffy? After the school custodian discovered him in a hoop skirt and flower bonnet.

He was made to stand outside in front of the school wearing the bonnet and skirt as his punishment.

Do you ever wonder why we called him Daffy? For his odd behaviour, I believe.

It is short for Daffodil, Edgar. Do you remember what happened to little Daffodil Pincus?

Yes, mother. He shot himself 6 weeks after.

That is right and I thank god every day that my own son do not suffer from his condition, Edgar, I would rather have a dead son than a daffodil for son. And now I am going to teach you to dance.

(Refer Slide Time: 11:07)

- When Edgar confesses to his mother that he doesn't like to dance with any woman, she reminds him of his schoolmate from childhood.
- She tells him how Barton Pincus, who once wore a skirt to school, earned a nickname "Daffodil Pincus" owing to a lack of dominant expression of masculinity.
- Edgar's mother points out that Pincus's 'odd behavior' was a "condition" like an illness, and she firmly says that she does not want her son to be like that.
- A calculated sternness that his mother instilled in him made Edgar a hard-hearted individual outside his home.

Source: Warner Bros. Pictures

When Edgar confesses to his mother that he does not like to dance with any woman she reminds him of his schoolmate from his childhood and tells him how Barton Pincus who once wore a skirt to school earned a nickname "Daffodil Pincus" owing to a lack of dominant expression of masculinity.


Edgar's mother points out that the 'odd behaviour' of Pincus was a 'condition' like an illness, and she firmly says that she does not want her son to be like that. A calculated sternness that his mother instilled in him beat him a hard-hearted individual outside his home.

The fear of being exposed as homosexual in a highly patriarchal society drew him to behave in a merciless manner. His gender performance then became that of an unsympathetic homophobe who cracked down on people's secrets. Although he is rather



gentle and caring towards Tolson, his vulnerability can be seen only in his relationship with his mother.

- Due to this lifelong repression of his sexuality, Hoover turned into a man who ultimately doesn't trust anybody, and the movie script implies that this was so because he couldn't trust himself. (Rainer, 2011).
- The film uses a back and forth flashback structure where DiCaprio plays the roles of Hoover both in his young and old age.
- Eastwood provides a foundational sympathy to the raging character of Hoover by exploring his psyche which was confused, riven and repressed owing to his complicated sexuality.
- Therefore, the movie was instinctively tuned to the vagaries and inner workings of the human mind which is fighting an intensely traumatic personal battle with sexuality.



IT ROOKIEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 9

Due to this lifelong repression of sexuality, Hoover turn into a man who ultimately does not trust anybody, and the movie script implies that this was so because he could not trust himself. The film uses a back-and-forth flashback structure where DiCaprio plays the roles of Hoover both in his young and old age.


Eastwood provides a foundational sympathy to the raging character of Hoover by exploring his psyche which was confused, riven and repressed owing to his complicated sexuality. Therefore, the movie was instinctively tuned to the vagaries and inner workings of the human mind which is fighting an immensely dramatic personal battle with sexuality.

Hence the movie does not blindly show him as a hero it depicts the ambivalence and immorality surrounding Hoover's life, especially when he cracks down on radicals illegally and adopts public measures against homosexuality. The cases of conspiracy and blackmailing against people and his maintaining of a homophobic persona in public life show a severely flawed character.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:39)

### Defense Mechanisms against "Sex Panic"

- American psychiatrist Jack Drescher, who is famous for his work on sexual orientation and gender identity, claims that "We confuse sexual orientation with sexual identity ... Some men do not publicly identify as gay, regardless of their sexual behavior."(Drescher, 2015)
- Edgar's defence mechanism of what Freud calls "Displacement" with aggressive behavior and an outright refusal or "Denial", protects the ego from things which the person cannot cope with - here the social stigma of homosexuality and the fear of being deemed a "daffodil" by his mother.
- Openly coming out as a homosexual would have resulted in him losing his prestigious and powerful position as the FBI Director of the US.



IT ROORKEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 10


In American psychiatrist Jack Drescher, who is famous for his work on sexual orientation and gender identity, claims that "We confuse sexual orientation with sexual identity. Some men do not publicly identify as gay regardless of their sexual behaviour." Edgar's defence mechanism of what Freud calls 'Displacement' with aggressive behaviour and an outright refusal or 'Denial' protects the ego from things which the person cannot cope with.

Here the social stigma of homosexuality and the fear of being deemed a "daffodil" by his mother. Openly coming out as a homosexual would have resulted in him losing his prestigious and powerful positions as the FBI director of the country. The need for replacement or denial to survive in a society as a closeted homosexual is reflective of the constricting rules of sexuality displayed by dominant social discourses, that has been laid down by the state.

(Refer Slide Time: 14:48)

- Gayle Rubin notes that many laws on sexuality of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are derived from the morality laws of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. \*
- She identifies 1950s as a period of “sex panic”. In the period after World War II, homosexuality was perceived as a sexual ‘perversion’.
- Non-heterosexual individuals were deemed as “sex-offenders” and federal governments conducted raids on sexual undergrounds. (Rubin, 1984)
- Such witch-hunts continued into the 1980s when Rubin was writing her essay “Thinking Sex”.
- The evidence of such sex panic prevalent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century post-war America, clearly explains the closeted sexuality of Hoover.

\* Rubin, G. S. (2002). Thinking sex. In *Sexualities II: Some elements for an account of the social organisation of sexualities* (pp. 188-202). Routledge.



IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE | 11


Gayle Rubin notes that many laws on sexuality of the 20th century are derived from the morality laws of the 19th century. She identifies 1950s as a period of “sex panic” in the period after the Second World War homosexuality was perceived as a sexual perversion. Non-heterosexual individuals were deemed as “sex-offenders” and federal governments conducted raids on sexual undergrounds. Such witch-hunts continued into the 1980s when Rubin was writing her essay with the title “Thinking Sex”.

The evidence of such sex panic prevalent in the 20th century post-war America, clearly explains the closeted sexuality of J Edgar Hoover. This social stigma surrounding same sex desire or homosexual identification is effectively depicted in this movie J Edgar. This stigma is reinforced by the rules or regulations of a state and it can be further investigated through our analysis of the next movie ‘The Imitation Game.’


(Refer Slide Time: 16:02)

### *The Imitation Game* (2014)

- A historical drama. Based on a biography called *Alan Turing: The Enigma* written by Andrew Hodges in 1983, it was filmed by the Norwegian director Morten Tyldum.
  - The screenplay was written by Graham More, who won the Oscar for 'Best Adapted Screenplay' for this film.
- The film describes the life of Alan Turing – who was an English mathematician, computer scientist, cryptanalyst and philosopher -- portrayed by the English actor Benedict Cumberbatch.
- A.O.Scott in his review calls it “a highly conventional movie about a profoundly unusual man”.\*



Source: The Weinstein Company



\*<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/28/movies/the-imitation-game-stars-benedict-cumberbatch.html>

IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE | 12

The 2014 movie is a historical drama. It describes the life of Alan Turing an English mathematician computer scientist cryptanalyst and philosopher, who has been portrayed by the English actor Benedict Cumberbatch.

The movie is based on a biography called ‘Alan Turing: The Enigma’ which has been written by Andrew Hodges and has been published in 1983. It was filmed by the Norwegian director Morten Tyldum. A. O. Scott is in his review has called the movie “a highly conventional one about a profoundly unusual man”. The movie depicts how Turing decrypted German intelligence messages from the British government during the Second World War.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:58)

### Alan Turing (1912-1954)

- Born in 1912, Alan Turing is widely considered to be the father of theoretical computer science and artificial intelligence.
- He graduated from King's College, Cambridge and earned a PhD in Mathematics from Princeton University.
- During the Second World War, Turing worked for Britain's codebreaking center, where he focused extensively on the 'Enigma Machine', a cipher device used in the 20<sup>th</sup> century for military communication.
- Turing was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of London in 1951, a high honor, and yet he was convicted of "gross indecency" only a year later.



Alan Turing  
Source: Britannica



IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE


13

Born in 1912, Alan Turing is widely considered to be the father of theoretical computer science and artificial intelligence. He had graduated from King's College Cambridge and earned a PhD in Mathematics from Princeton University.

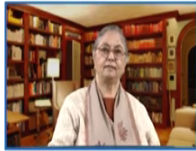
During the Second World War he worked for Britain's code breaking centre where he focused extensively on the 'Enigma Machine', a cipher device used in the 20th century for military communication. He was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of London in 1951, a high honor, and yet he was convicted of 'gross indecency' only a year later. Despite his mathematical and scientific genius and despite being a war hero for Britain Turing was also openly gay and he was arrested for his sexuality.

(Refer Slide Time: 17:56)

- Homosexuality was a crime in 1950s Britain and Turing was sentenced to 12 months of hormone therapy.
- Turing's conviction led to the removal of his security clearance and barred him from continuing with his cryptographic consultancy for the Government
- In the midst of a groundbreaking work in science, Turing was discovered dead in his bed, poisoned by cyanide. The official verdict was suicide, but no motive or conclusive evidence was established in the 1954 inquiry.
- In 2009, following an Internet campaign, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown made an official public apology to Turing. Four years later, Queen Elizabeth II granted Turing a posthumous royal pardon in 2013.



Source: Press Association Images



14

UFT KOOBEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE

Homosexuality was a crime in 1950s and Turing was sentenced to 12 months of hormone therapy. His conviction led to the removal of his security clearance and barred him from continuing with his cryptographic consultancy for the government.


In the midst of a groundbreaking work in science, Turing was discovered dead in his bed, poisoned by cyanide. The official verdict was suicide, but no motive or conclusive evidence was established in the 1954 inquiry.

In 2009, following an internet campaign British Prime Minister Gordon Brown made an official public apology to Turing. Four years later, Queen Elizabeth II granted him a posthumous royal pardon in 2013.

‘The Alan Turing Law’ is now in informal term for a 2017 law passed in the UK that pardoned many men who were previously convicted under historical legislation that had outlawed homosexual acts.

(Refer Slide Time: 19:08)

- The movie *The Imitation Game* starts in 1951, Manchester, England. Turing is a Professor at Cambridge, and is undergoing a police inquiry because his house was robbed. The police finds him as an 'insufferable person' and he was dismissive towards them.
- The plot flashbacks to 1939 in London when Britain declares war on Germany. Alan is hired by an English Commander to break the code of the 'Enigma' machine, an impressive encryption device used by the Nazis to send coded messages.
- Turing designs a machine to decipher Enigma messages. By putting a difficult crossword puzzle in a newspaper, he hires a Cambridge graduate, Joan Clarke, a woman, to be in his team.
- Turing names his machine "Christopher" and successfully breaks the code, turning the war in the favour of Britain.



ITF ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE | 15

The movie starts in 1951 in Manchester England Turing is a Professor at Cambridge and is undergoing a police inquiry as there has been a robbery in his house. The police finds him as an insufferable person and he was also dismissive towards them.

The plot flashbacks to 1939 when Britain declares war on Germany, Alan is hired by an English Commander to break the code of the Enigma machine an, impressive encryption device used by the Nazis to send coded messages. Turing designs a machine to decipher Enigma messages. By putting a difficult crossword puzzle in a newspaper, he hires a Cambridge graduate Joan Clarke, a woman, to be in his team. Turing names his machine "Christopher" and successfully breaks the code turning the war in Britain's favour.


The movie also briefly shows that in 1952, Turing is convicted of gross indecency and undergoes chemical castration which is the use of medicinal drugs to reduce sexual drive. This treatment has permanent damaging side effects like the loss of bone density, but Turing still accepted this treatment as he could avoid prison sentence and continue working in his field of expertise.

The epilogue to the movie reveals that after a year of government-mandated hormonal therapy Turing committed suicide in 1954 when he was barely 41. The movie honours his work which would eventually go on to create a modern computer.


(Refer Slide Time: 20:59)

### Ciphers and Codes

- Turing's mother Sara came from a family of engineers and scientists, while his father held a position in the Indian Civil Service, working in Madras. The family relocated to England in 1912, the year Turing was born.
- Young Alan was an unsociable and dreamy child. He attended boarding schools where he was severely bullied for being 'different' and for his 'odd' behavior.
- At 14, he attended Sherborne School where he met Christopher Morcom. This teenage friend had the most impact on Alan's formative years.
- The movie shows that it was this exceptional friend of Alan who inspired his future endeavors in science.



Alan Turing and Christopher Morcom  
Source: Polari Magazine



IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE | 16

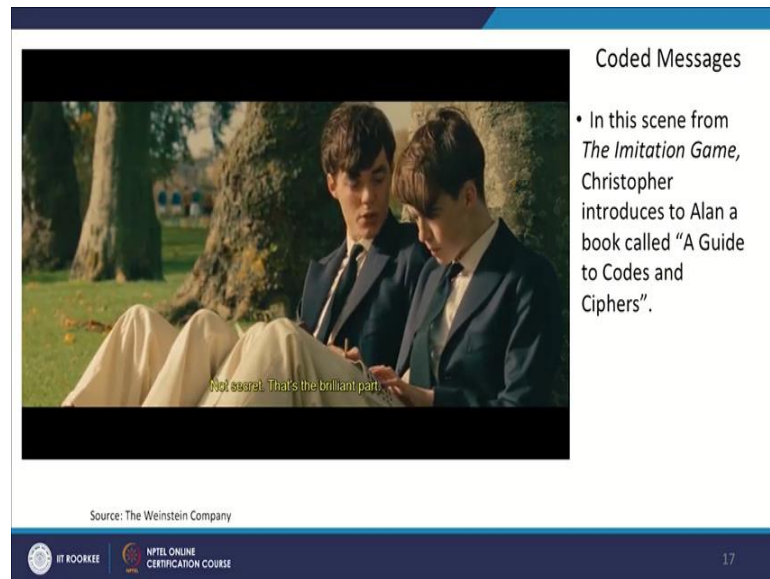
Turing's mother Sara come from a family of engineers and scientists, while his father held a position in the Indian Civil Service and he was working in Madras, they had relocated to England in 1912, the year Turing was born.

Young Alan was an unsociable and dreamy child. He attended boarding schools where he was severely bullied for being be different and for his odd behaviour. At the age of 14, he attended Sherborne School where he met Christopher Morcom. This teenage friend had the most impact on Alan's formative years. The movie shows that it was this exceptional friend of Alan who inspired his future endeavours in science.

Christopher died at the age of 19 by tuberculosis, leaving Alan traumatic and lost. Many biographers of Turing believe that Christopher was his first love. The following scene from the movie shows how Christopher introduced the world of codes and ciphers to Alan.



(Refer Slide Time: 22:21)



Coded Messages

- In this scene from *The Imitation Game*, Christopher introduces to Alan a book called “A Guide to Codes and Ciphers”.

Not secret. That's the brilliant part.

Source: The Weinstein Company

IIT ROORKEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 17

What is that you are reading?

It is about cryptography.

Like secret messages?

Not secret, that is the brilliant part. Messages that anyone can see that no one knows what they mean unless you have the key.

How is that different from talking?

Talking?


When people talk to each other they never say what they mean, they say something else. And you are expected to just know what they mean only I never do. So, how is that different?

Alan, I have a funny feeling you are going to be very good at this.

Alan reacts by philosophically musing about cryptography and how is it similar or connected to the everyday activity of talking.

(Refer Slide Time: 23:26)

- In this scene, young Alan, played by Alex Lawther, admits how he finds it hard to decode the conversations of people, especially when their words and intended meanings do not match.
- Alan, who was awkward, careless and lonely, found solace in Christopher; as he instilled in him a sense of focus and drive, and later taught him to be methodical.
- The young adolescent love of Alan towards Christopher had a decisive effect on his creative mind.
- He developed a mystical attitude towards death and spirit in his adult life after Christopher's death. This thinking had a profound impact on how he conceived the idea of a "universal machine" of computing.



Source: Pinterest.co.uk

IT ROORKEE NTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 18

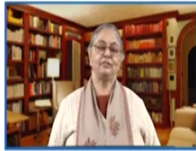
Young Alan, played by Alex Lawther, admits how he finds it hard to decode the conversations of people, especially when their words and intended meanings do not match. Alan, who was awkward, careless and lonely, found solace in Christopher as he instilled in him a sense of focus in drive and later taught him to be methodical. The young adolescent love of Alan towards Christopher had a decisive impact on his creative mind.

He developed a mystical attitude towards death and spirit in his adult life after Christopher's untimely death. This thinking had a profound impact on how he conceived the idea of a "universal machine" of computing. After the loss of Christopher, Turing started to puzzle over the nature of mind and spirit and its relationship with the body. Questions of free will and determinism and the extent to which the mind controls the body are at the core of computable numbers.

In his 1950 paper "Computing Machinery and Intelligence", he asked the question, can machines think? And he links this question back to his love story and its consequences. The term imitation game is also taken from this famous paper.

(Refer Slide Time: 24:56)

- The 'imitation game' is a guessing game that Turing describes in his 1952 paper. Three players - first a man, second a woman and third of either sex – are the participants of the game. Through written notes alone, the third player has to determine the sex of the players. The first two players can use the tactics of imitating the opposite sex in writing to confuse the one who is guessing.
- Examined more closely, this title is also a metaphor for Turing's inability to understand and relate well to others, as it was also a time when gender was equated with sex.
- His difficulty with human interaction and lack of coherence in matters of the normal (or 'normalized') world can be related to the incoherence pertaining to the universalizing views of heterosexuality.



IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 19


The 'imitation game' is a guessing game that Turing has described in his 1952 paper. Three players- first a man, second a woman and a third of either sex- are the participants of the game. Through written notes alone, the third player has to determine the sex of the players, the first two players can use the tactics of imitating the opposite sex in writing to confuse the one who is guessing.

Examined more closely, this title is also a metaphor for Turing's inability to understand and relate to well to others, as it was also a time when gender was equated with sex. His difficulty with human interaction and lack of coherence in matters of the normal or 'normalized' world can be related to the incoherence pertaining to the universalizing views of heterosexuality. This motif of imitation in the movie can be further explored with reference to Judith Butlers philosophy of gender performance.

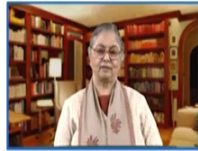
(Refer Slide Time: 26:10)

### Gender Performativity and the Game of Imitation

- American philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler demonstrated that like languages, gender norms too are culturally and historically variable and only appear natural by virtue of our repeated performance of them.
- When she talks about 'gender performance', she is moving beyond the metaphor of a stage. She says that gender performance gets "inflected differently depending on what space we are in" (Butler, 2017).
- When Turing was working with the British government, he proposed and got engaged to his colleague, Joan Clarke.
- Naturally, this would lead everyone to believe that he is heterosexual.



Judith Butler  
Source: artreview.com



IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE

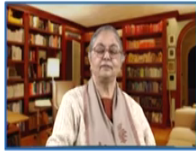
20

Butler has demonstrated that like languages gender norms too are culturally and historically variable and only appear natural by virtue of our repeated performance of them. When she talks about 'gender performance', she is moving beyond the metaphor of a stage, she says that gender performance gets "inflected differently depending on what is space we are in".

When Turing was working with the British government, he proposed and was engaged to his colleague Joan Clarke. Naturally, this would lead everyone to believe that he is a heterosexual. This imitation of heterosexuality in Turing placed him in a precarious living condition.

(Refer Slide Time: 26:57)

- In a recent interview conducted by Julie Phelps in 2013, Butler compares her concept of gender performativity with 'performance art'. She says:
  - One thing I appreciate about performance art and its cultural focus is that performance is not restricted to the stage. So what's performed on a stage can give us a way to grasp and be riveted by what people are doing with heavily laden norms of gender or race or any number of social issues that can be performed on stage. *So for a while*, as an audience, we approach those issues differently. But when we talk about gender performance broadly, we're talking about it beyond the stage - what we were doing before the show, on the streets and in the public, at the thresholds of public and private, within the home or within the shelter. (Butler, 2013)
- Hence, gender performance that Butler envisions cannot be understood as a mere method of imitation similar to acting on a stage, as it is heavily regulated by social norms and influenced by human interdependence.



IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE | 21

In a recent interview conducted by Julie Phelps in 2013, Butler compares her concept of gender performativity with 'performance art'. She says and I quote: “one thing I appreciate about performance art and its cultural focus is that performance is not restricted to this stage. So, what is performed on a stage can give us a way to grasp and be riveted by what people are doing with heavily laden norms of gender or race or any number of social issues that can be performed on stage. So, for a while as an audience we approach those issues differently. But when we talk about gender performance broadly, we are talking about it beyond this stage what we were doing before the show on the streets and in the public, at the threshold of public and private within the home or within the shelter.”


Hence gender performance that Butler envisions cannot be understood as a mere method of imitation similar to acting on a stage, as it is heavily regulated by social norms and influenced by human interdependence. The performance on the stage only last for a while, but sustained gender performance in real life as Butler has remarked cannot be a simple exercise similar to acting for a limited period, since we are historically situated and shaped by societal regulations and discourses.

Troubling his gender category with subversive performance would have caused Turing his job reputation and position. More importantly, a 'coming-out' in public would have forcefully separated him from his scientific projects which it result the most. The

following video shows the scene from the movie where, Turing breaks up with Joan after their engagement. In the movie the role of Joan was played by the famous English actress Keira Knightley.

When Alan confesses that he is a homosexual, Joan does not react in surprise, rather she suggests that challenging the traditional notions of marriage they could be united in their minds.

(Refer Slide Time: 29:39)



- Here, when Alan confesses that he is a homosexual, Joan does not react in surprise.
- Instead, she challenges the traditional notions of marriage, and argues that they could be united by their minds.

Source: The Weinstein Company

IT ROORKEE NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 22

I need you to leave Bletchley.

What?

Its Menzies I do not trust him it is not safe here.

Do you think it is any safer anywhere else?


You need to get away, you need to get very far away from me.

Alan, what's happened?

We cannot be engaged any more, you your parents need to take you back and find you a husband elsewhere.

What is wrong with you?

I have something to tell you.



- Here, when Alan confesses that he is a homosexual, Joan does not react in surprise.
- Instead, she challenges the traditional notions of marriage, and argues that they could be united by their minds.

Source: The Weinstein Company

IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE

22

I am, I am a homosexual.

Alright.

No no Men Joan not women.


So, what?

Well, I just told you.

So, what?

I had my suspicions I always did. But we are not like other people. We love each other in our own way. And we can have the life together that we want. You would not be the perfect husband well I can promise you I have no intention of being the perfect wife.

(Refer Slide Time: 30:41)



- Here, when Alan confesses that he is a homosexual, Joan does not react in surprise.
- Instead, she challenges the traditional notions of marriage, and argues that they could be united by their minds.

Source: The Weinstein Company

IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE

22

I will not be fixing your lamp all day while you come home from the office, I will work, you will work and we will have each other's company. We will have each other's minds that sounds like a better marriage than most.

Because I care for you and you care for me and we understand one another more than more than anyone else ever has.

I don't.


However, Alan disagrees with Joan by saying that he does not care for her the same way as she does. Patriarchal notions of gender hierarchy are discernible in the portrayal of Alan as well as of Joan.

Joan is also expected to confirm to societal feminine expectations. Society cannot understand that a woman can also be an excellent mathematician. At the workplace, she was given a secondary role seating arrangements with male colleagues were also not allowed.



(Refer Slide Time: 31:57)

- When Joan originally joined Alan's team, there were several instances of sexism from the organization. She dealt with institutional obstacles, sexism, and social prejudices that faced anyone who was both female and a mathematician at that time. It is only because of Alan that she was allowed to sit down with the male cryptographers instead of being ostracized.
  - Joan's parents forbade her to work with an all-male team. She is instead appointed as a telegraph clerk with other women on the project. But Alan secretly ensures that she receives the team's cryptographs via telegraph into her living area.
  - Mid-way through the project, Joan's parents wanted her to come home and get married to a worthy suitor.
- It would endanger the project if Joan were to leave. So, Alan 'proposed' to her, as a cover to satisfy her parents and allow her to remain on the Enigma project.



IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 23


When she originally joined Alan's team there were several instances of sexism within the organization. She dealt with institutional obstacles, sexism and social prejudices that faced anyone who was both female and a mathematician in contemporary times. It was only because of Alan that she was allowed to sit down with male cryptographers instead of being ostracized.

Interestingly, her parents said also forbidden her to work with an all-male team. She is instead appointed as a telegraph clerk with other women on the project. However, Alan secretly ensures that she receives the teams' cryptographs by a telegraph into her living area. Mid-way through the project her parents wanted her to come home and get married to a worthy suitor. It would endanger the project if Joan were to leave. So, Alan proposed to her as a cover to satisfy her parents and allow her to continue her work on the Enigma project.


During the course of the project, Joan admired his brilliant mind and she thought that he was also in love with her. He broke up with her in a quick and dispassionate manner because Joan was in danger of being punished for the violation of the official secrets act. Valuing her freedom and confessing his homosexuality he calls off the engagement. Alan knew that it would be impossible to imitate a heterosexual life throughout his marriage.

(Refer Slide Time: 33:38)

- So compared to Edgar Hoover, Turing did reveal his homosexual identity and his love for Christopher to a select few people, if not publicly.
- He named his favourite invention “Christopher” and in the movie he can be seen saying that “he was never alone”.
- Turing had been a practicing homosexual since his puberty, and apparently regarded his sexuality as simply a part of who he was. He was not ashamed of it like Hoover was in his interactions with his mother.
- Although Alan confessed to Joan about his homosexuality, she remained willing to continue the engagement.



Source: The Weinstein Company




IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 24

So, compared to Edgar Hoover, Turing did reveal his homosexual identity and his love for Christopher to a select few people, if not publicly. He named his favourite invention “Christopher” and in the movie he can be seen saying that “he was never alone”. Turing had been a practicing homosexual since this puberty and apparently regarded his sexuality as simply a part of who he was. He was not ashamed of it like Hoover was in his interactions with his mother. Although he did not confess to Joan about his homosexuality Joan remained willing to continue the engagement.

Biographers of Turing show that it was after they spent a week together in Wales that he decided that it would not work and decided to break off the engagement. So, Alan is someone who explored his sexuality and gender identity and was sure that he was not a bisexual he was self assured that his homosexuality was not a psychological disorder, which was the common belief of the period after the Second World War in Britain as well as in America.

(Refer Slide Time: 34:58)

- Thus we can see that there is a fascination with the multifaceted entanglements between cinema, gender and the body, and their continually shifting critical allure.
- The confluence of same-sex attractions and expressions in cinema opens up a wide variety of theories, debates and philosophical considerations.
- In *The Imitation Game*, we see that Alan Turing is vilified and savagely punished for his sexuality.
- Criminalization of homosexuality similar to that of 1950s England was also predominant in the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century America.
- By remaining closeted about his sexual identity, Hoover was able to escape the persecution by the law.



IT ROORKEE | NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE 25

Thus, we can see that there is a fascination with the multifaceted entanglements between cinema, gender and the body and their continually shifting critical allure. The confluence of same-sex attractions and expressions in cinema opens up a wide variety of theories, debates and philosophical considerations. In ‘The Imitation Game’ we see that Alan Turing is vilified and savagely punished for his sexuality.

Criminalization of homosexuality similar to that of 1950s England was also dominant in the first half of the 20th century America. By remaining closeted about his sexual identity, Hoover was able to escape his persecution by the law. Both the directors of these brilliant films focused on the characters psyche and development rather than inventing siliceous scenes on the big screen.

Both Turing and Hoover had to display a public facade of male heterosexuality at several stages in their carriers and these are reflective of the struggling attempts to divert inherent sexuality from its unacceptable form two more culturally acceptable ways.

The two movies ‘J Edgar’ and ‘The Imitation Game’ which we have looked at today deal with the closeted and appealing world of male homosexuality in the first few decades of the 20th century.



In the next module we shall look at the queer cinema which examines the tropes of female homosexuality and queer expression.

Thank you.

(Refer Slide Time: 36:47)

## References

- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2013). Interview with Julie Phelps: On Performativity and Performance. CounterPulse. <https://www.counterpulse.org/judith-butler-gender-performativity/>
- Cox, J. & Theoharis, A. (1988). *The boss: J. Edgar Hoover and the great American inquisition*. Temple University Press.
- Drescher, J. (2015). Out of DSM: Depathologizing homosexuality. *Behavioral Sciences* 5(4), 565-575. <https://dx.doi.org/10.3390%2Fbs5040565>
- Eastwood, C. (Director). (2011). *J. Edgar* [Film]. Warner Bros. Pictures; Imagine Entertainment; Malpaso Productions.
- Hodges, A. (2014). *Alan Turing: The Enigma*. Princeton University Press.
- Rainer, P. (2011). Clint Eastwood's 'J. Edgar,' starring Leonardo DiCaprio: movie review. *The Christian Science Monitor*.
- Rubin, G. S. (2002). Thinking sex. In *Sexualities II: Some elements for an account of the social organization of sexualities* (pp. 188-202). Routledge.
- Summers, A. (1993). *Official and Confidential: The Secret Life of J. Edgar Hoover*. Open Road Media.
- Turing, S. (2012). *Alan M. Turing*. Cambridge University Press (Originally published in 1959).
- Tyldum, M. (Director). (2014). *The Imitation Game* [Film]. Black Bear Pictures; The Weinstein Company.

 IT KOOKEE  NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE