



Conflict of Sexual Identity in the film *The Imitation Game* (2014)

ROJAN JUDIE. E

Department of English
Arignar Anna Govt Arts College,
Annamalai University, Chidambaram.

Abstract It is widely known that the LGBTQ community is considered a minority based on their sexual and gender orientation. In all walks of life, they have been subject to similar prejudices rooted in the beliefs about their sexuality. They have been targeted as a socially minority group facing many forms of socioeconomic and cultural injustices. This paper brings to light the injustice done to the community by analyzing the film, *The Imitation Game* (2014) through the character of Alan Turing. It focuses on how life the LGBTQ community is hampered in every possible way, be it their career, marriage, decision making etc., They face intolerance, discrimination, harassment, and the threat of violence due to their sexual orientation, much more than those who identify themselves as heterosexual. Highlighting some major problems faced by LGBT people across the world is the theme of this paper.

Keywords heterosexual, intolerance, prejudices, socioeconomic, cultural injustices, heterosexual, LGBTQ community.

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I. Introduction

The Imitation Game (2014) was an adaptation of the novel *ALAN TURING: THE ENIGMA* by Andrew Hodges. The film was directed by Morten Tyldum, starring Benedict Cumberbatch in the lead role. The researcher had only foregrounded the Conflict of Sexual Identity aroused in the film. The film was set at the time of chaos which was World War II. This presentation does not focus on the importance or the impact of the war felt in the society but brings out the conflict of Sexual Identity by highlighting the injustice done in the film to Alan Turing. The film would make the spectators contemplate, "Is LGBTQ a taboo? If it is, why it is so? Though the film had the war as its key setting, the importance was not the war but the tribulation faced by the LGBTQ community in the society.

The film can be considered a voice of the marginalized because it makes the spectators rethink about the contribution of Alan Turing, who can be even assumed as the pioneer of artificial intelligence and wonder why he is not present in any of the books like Darwin or Newton. Alan Turing is the protagonist of this film who belongs to the community of LGBTQ. This film had brought the contributions of Alan Turing to limelight. It had also picturized the suffering and injustice done to him. This paper focuses on the tribulations faced by Alan Turing just because he belonged to the LGBTQ community which was targeted in the society. So here, violence was the default technique.

The society portrayed in the film, which followed the prejudiced norms for no reason, had greatly impacted the life of the protagonist, Alan Turing. The LGBTQ community was charged with indecency and some were even put to death in the film. This was portrayed to be normal for the people belonging to the LGBTQ community. Alan Turing who represented the LGBTQ community, was threatened by a spy who was indulged in treason. The agony here was the helpless situation of Turing, who was threatened for his sexual identity, which would be revealed to the higher officials. So here the community was considered to be superior to the convict who indulges in national treason.

II. Conflict of Sexual Identity in the film The Imitation Game (2014)

Sexuality is a term used to the attributes connected with the way people experience and express themselves. The film opened with the soliloquy of Alan.

“What I need from you is a commitment. You will listen closely and you will not judge me until I am finished. If you cannot commit to this, then please leave the room”.

This argument made by Alan Turing to the spectators in order to defend him and this also implicated that the ‘voice of the voiceless must be heard’. The LGBTQ community was always prone to judging of the heterosexuals. This resulted as threat to the individual who belonged to the LGBTQ Community and to his surroundings. In this case the surrounding referred here was his Christopher, who was his love-interest whom he considered as his everything- the very purpose of his existence. The irony here was that the individual chose a machine (Christopher) as his surroundings. So here Alan demanded the spectators to forbid judging as he was tired of it.

Enigma was the most significant refrain used in the film. The Oxford’s Learner’s Dictionary explains enigma as “a person, thing or situation that is mysterious and difficult to understand”. In the film, Enigma was introduced to the spectator as the Nazi code for dropping missiles, which was decoded by the Nazi soldiers by using a machine made for it. The actual enigma in this case, was Alan Turing.

The film opened with a scene where Alan Turing was seen as an intelligent, confident and dominant individual. But all these qualities diminished as his sexuality identity surfaced. So here the spectators were forced to find out what would be the reason for his diminishing qualities. Thus, Alan Turing was the Enigma, who was inbuilt of his qualities and was opened to the spectators to decrypt.

Intelligence was shown as one of his key qualities. Here, these voluntary clichés, is evident that, to recognize his one’s sexuality, an individual must be intelligent. The taboo-vacuum of Sexual Identity was surfed by Alan Turing by using his intelligence. So, this proved that he was in the higher rank of the society with respect of intelligence. Later this intelligence was suppressed by the society because of his sexuality identity. The spectators realized that his pathetic situation was not for the individual but for the entire LGBTQ community. Here the pathetic condition was brought to light through the sufferings of Alan Turing in the film.

The film was filled with scenes of Alan Turing solving puzzles. The real puzzle here was Alan Turing. In the initial phase the detective suspected him as a spy because of his unusual silence which he had during the interrogation of crime, which took place at his residence. The detective failed to solve the puzzle here as he assumed Alan Turing to be a spy. The actual puzzle was his sexuality which was revealed by the confession of Alan Turing to the detective. Alan was aware of the fact that his sexual identity would definitely get him into trouble yet he revealed his Sexual Identity. This can be considered as empowerment in the case of his sexual identity. The movie was shifted to the school time of Alan Turing. At school Alan Turing was always seen trying his hand at puzzles. Solving puzzles was an integral part of his entire life. The puzzle which he kept exploring was a symbol of his sexuality, which was explicitly shown to the spectators.

Aloofness can be considered as the key motif in this film. Though Alan Turing was in the constant company of his colleagues and fiancé’, he preferred to be alone. This was because of the violent memories he had with his classmates and the unforeseen death of his love-interest Christopher. The aloofness can also be assumed as a strategy to overcome the void of Christopher in Alan Turing’s life. It was Christopher who first introduced him to the passion of solving puzzles, thus Christopher can be considered to be the North Star for Alan Turing to tread his sexuality, which was complex for him at his adolescent age. This was the reason behind the naming the puzzle- solving machine as Christopher. This machine represented the Eros of his adult life. The machine was a memento of Eros shown to the character named Christopher. Alan Turing proved himself to be a true lover, irrespective of the sexual identity of him which was labeled as a taboo in the society.

The post war period in the film, enlightened the spectator with the enormous contribution of Alan Turing. In spite of this, self-stigmatization became his priority, which was unusual, but this action of Alan Turing can be understood by the spectator. The self-stigmatization was because of his sexual identity which was revealed to the spy. Alan Turing was always suspected for treason and crime which was not committed by him. He readily accepted that he had a secret (which was sexuality) which was not revealed to the higher officials. The secret of his sexual identity was a constant threat to him and to his Christopher (which was the machine) in the prejudiced society. It also resulted in inferiority complex. So self-stigmatization was not the choice of Alan Turing but ultimately became his priority, because of the social norms of the period.

Marriage was a forced institution of the society in the film. Joan Clarke was forced to get married by her parents because of her advancing age. In the case of Alan Turing, marriage meant fear and guilt because of his sexual identity. Alan Turing honesty was understood by the spectator as he was afraid of what could happen if he revealed his sexuality identity to his fiancé’, and this resulted in the blunder of revealing it to his colleague, the Russian spy, thus he gains a strong hold over Alan Turing. The stronghold was utilized by Crain cross- if Alan Turing revealed that Crain cross was a spy, he in turn would reveal Alan Turing’s sexual identity. Alan Turing became cautious for the fear of being recognized in the society, thereby posing a threat to Christopher’s

existence. Here the reaction of the British society was portrayed through Crain cross, which aimed at making the LGBTQ community extinct.

Alan Turing was a rebel of the British ideology in respect of his sexuality. The powerlessness of an individual who belonged to the LGBTQ Community was brought to light here because though he was a rebel, his action was governed by the British society. Joan Clarke can be seen as a sensible character in the film. Her action was more sensible than Alan Turing because of the platonic ideology she had of marriage. He proved his honesty again; Alan Turing assumed that by making her stay away from him would be a remedy for the disgrace brought to an individual who was acquainted to an individual belonging to the LGBTQ community.

The helplessness of Alan Turing can be recognized here by the spectator because the initial thought of him, was to pursue the relationship. But, since he was governed by the British ideology, he was stopped. He wore his usual mask of being mean to her. This was unusual because Alan Turing pursued Joan Clarke for the only reason that he loved talking to her. This scene was considered to be important because it separated two individuals who were seeking a platonic relationship. The society decided that the heterosexual as eligible to be married. The state governed all the actions of Alan Turing including his stand or decision on his marriage too. It was obvious that the state had made the sexual identity as a problem, more than the person whom he was about to marry.

The first act of denial of his sexual Identity with respect to Alan Turing's time-line was at his school. On being called to the headmaster's office, he pre-assumed that it was to gain clarity of his relationship with Christopher. Feared of the circumstances Alan Turing declared that Christopher was a stranger to him. The tragic emotion was suppressed by the fear of the punishment he would have received, if he stood for his sexual identity. The only dishonest phase of Alan's life was this denial. The spectator must also be aware of the dishonest action of him was of the treatment that existed in the society, which he was wholly aware of. Thus, the society here had suppressed the innocence of a kid, with its stereotypical norms. This resulted in the denial of his relationship with Christopher. Later, this repressed Eros was let out by naming the machine, Christopher.

The threat for survival was placed at the final part of the film which was treatment meted out to the LGBTQ community made by the British society. After Alan Turing revealed his sexual identity to the detective, he was provided with the curse of choosing castration or prison. Alan Turing chose Castration, because opting for prison had the high risk of making Christopher extinct. On the other hand, chemical castration suppressed his homosexuallibido. In simple terms, castration was a slow poison. Prison would have brought death to him while castration would give him the privilege of saving Christopher. So, Alan Turing made his life inferior for the affection and care he had for Christopher. Hence, he was projected as a true lover of Christopher because for choosing the death over a machine, which was named after his love-interest.

The society had brought death over an individual for the simple reason of his sexual identity; he was massacred in a more cruel way, which was pacified by the stereotypical ideology of the society. The remarkable contribution made by Alan Turing was completely ignored which was common to the LGBTQ community. Here Alan Turing stood as a symbol for the ravished LGBTQ community. At the end of the film, Alan Turing was seen moving towards the dark room where Christopher was kept, the darkness here denoted his death. This proved that the society can kill an individual for its illogical ideology.

III. Conclusion

Difference was not entertained throughout the film, and was stamped as illegal. Christopher had already explained this to Alan Turing; Alan Turing was not targeted because of his intelligence but for the difference he had. The difference prohibited here was Alan Turing's sexuality.

Only at the initial part of the film, Alan Turing was in command by using his intelligence. As the film progressed and when his sexuality was revealed to the spectators and the society, he turned himself into an intelligent puppet. This action of Alan Turing was because of the ideologies of the state. Though he had his own sensible ideologies, he ended up choosing the society's norms. Here the unusual was forced to wear the mask of the usual. This statement was justified by the threatening action of Crain cross to Alan Turing. The spectator of this age would be puzzled why national treason was made inferior to homosexuality? by wearing the usual mask given by the society. Still, in most parts of the world, the LGBTQ community is not recognized and considered as a social disgrace. The major population takes a tacit stand in accepting this community in the society but ignore them in their individual surroundings. In short, the society is very aware of the shift but scared to acknowledge it.

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