**‘Mother Says I’m Just an Odd Duck’: Alan Turing, *The Imitation Game* and the ‘Gay Boffin’**

**Matthew Robinson**, University of Derby

**Abstract**

The legacy of mathematician Alan Turing comprises both his contribution to the British war effort decrypting the German Enigma code at Bletchley Park and his treatment after the war, when he was convicted of gross indecency, underwent hormonal therapy and committed suicide. *The Imitation Game* (Tyldum, 2014), a ‘prestige’ biopic about his life, negotiates Turing’s problematic legacy as both war hero and gay martyr by modelling him through the ‘Boffin’ stereotype present in British films about scientists. The Boffin’s key characteristic is his ‘outsider’ status and the biopic reworks this to construct Turing as an outsider in different communities – at Sherborne School, within the code-breaking team at Bletchley but also, due to contemporary homophobic legalization, in wider British society. This article examines *The Imitation Game*’s depiction of Turing as ‘gay Boffin’, how it negotiates the different histories that Turing’s life embodies and how film reviewers criticized *The Imitation Game* for its lack of scenes depicting gay relationships. Unlike other contemporary efforts that challenged the suppression of Turing’s homosexuality in public memory, *The Imitation Game*’s gay Boffin instead exemplifies a continued anxiety with Turing’s legacy as a homosexual war hero.

**Keywords**

biopic

Alan Turing

scientist

homosexuality

stereotype

*The Imitation Game*

Alan Turing is renowned as a brilliant mathematician, computing pioneer and major contributor to the Allied war effort in the Second World War through his code-breaking work at Bletchley Park. Turning was also a victim of the homophobic legislation of the time, which led to his chemical castration and suicide in 1954. Because of this varied legacy, Turing is ‘a person of interest across multiple and diverse constituencies from science buffs to political activists, queer studies practitioners to historians of homosexuality’ (Doan 2017: 116).

*The Imitation Game* (Tyldum, 2014), a ‘prestige’ biopic about Turing’s life, frames a distinctly British history of technical ingenuity but it was also important to recognize Turing’s status as a homosexual war hero and international gay martyr. These different histories are negotiated through the film’s modelling of Turing as a ‘boffin’ – a stereotype of scientists presented in British films released between 1945 and 1970 (Jones 1997: 31–48). The boffin is a male scientist and his key characteristic is his ‘outsider’ status, his ‘quality of belonging and at the same time not belonging to the governing elite in wartime’ (Jones 1997: 40). This stereotype is reworked in *The Imitation Game* to construct Turing as an outsider in a range of communities including Sherborne School and the code-breaking team based at Bletchley. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick employs the term ‘male homosocial desire’ to encapsulate the complex, contradictory relations between men – ‘the spectrum of male bonds that includes but is not limited to the ‘homosexual’ (1985: 85) – and both Sherborne and Bletchley form ‘homosocial’ environments that privilege close male bonding between pupils and between male code-breakers (see Sedgwick 1985: 1–2). *The Imitation Game* portrays Turing as a man who can inhabit these homosocial settings but whose sexuality renders him an outsider, different from the heterosexual men who populate these male communities. Thus *The Imitation Game* represents Turing’s homosexuality as an extension of his boffin identity and it is through the ‘gay boffin’ that the film attempts to negotiate the different histories that Turing represents, as code-breaker and persecuted homosexual.

This article considers how *The Imitation Game* reworks the boffin stereotype to negotiate the different histories which Turing’s life embodies. It first examines the film’s wider institutional and cultural context and goes on to conduct a close textual analysis of the film itself. It then studies the film’s reception and the extent to which film reviewers felt these different legacies are recognized.

**‘Whitewashed out of the Official Record’**

Many studies of the scientist biopic (cf: Elena 1993: 205–23, 1997: 269–78; Radcliff 2008: 62 –71; Bingham 2010: 289–310; Linke 2011: 138–55) focus on Hollywood productions, including *Madame Curie* (LeRoy 1943), the Dian Fossey biopic *Gorillas in the Mist* (Apted, 1988) and *Kinsey* (Condon, 2004). In contrast, *The Imitation Game*’s depiction of Turing owes more to depictions in British cinema. Robert Jones examined the representation of the scientist in British film in a number of essays (1998: 135–47, 2001: 365–82) and identifies the prevalence of the ‘boffin’ stereotype.

*The Imitation Game* is one of a small group of contemporary biopics that foreground British scientific and mathematical achievement, including those about Charles Darwin (*Creation*, Ameil, 2009), Stephen Hawking (*The Theory of Everything*, Marsh, 2014) and Srinivasa Ramanujan (*The Man Who Knew Infinity*, Brown, 2016). Budgeted at $14 million (Feinberg 2015) and produced by Black Bear Pictures and Bristol Automotive, its distribution strategy emphasized Turing’s contemporary relevance and how his achievements in computing paved the way for innovators such as Mark Zuckerberg and Steve Jobs. Each feature in biopics of their own – *The Social Network* (Fincher, 2010) (see Sheehan 2014: 35–51), *Jobs* (Stern, 2013) and more recently in *Steve Jobs* (Boyle, 2015). The Weinstein Company, which handled North American distribution, wished to capitalize on these associations and initially exhibited *The Imitation Game* in a series of ‘target screenings’ in locations such as Silicon Valley for Mark Zuckerberg and others (Wiseman 2014).

*The Imitation Game* also formed one of several initiatives in the twenty-first century that sought to re-evaluate Turing’s legacy as a gay man and his treatment by the state. Richard Morrison, writing in *The Times* in 2004, contends that Turing’s treatment personifies both what is ‘remarkable’ and ‘appalling’ about twentieth-century Britain (2004: 3). In 2009 computer programmer John Graham-Cumming organized a petition that led to a posthumous government apology from then Prime Minister Gordon Brown (Cohen 2009). Numerous events were organized to mark 2012, the centenary of his birth, and he was granted a Royal Pardon in December 2013. British gay magazine *Attitude* featured Turing on the October 2013 front cover with the caption, ‘The gay man who saved the world’ and awarded Turing the magazine’s posthumous ‘Icon Award for Outstanding Achievement’ (McCormick 2013). In America, Turing was named the Honorary Grand Marshal for Boston Pride in 2006 and in 2012 he was inducted into the Legacy Walk, an outdoor public display in Chicago that memorializes notable LGBT figures from history.

The film’s producers were aware that Turing’s story went beyond his innovations in artificial intelligence and that his post-war treatment is a crucial part of his legacy. Producer Ido Ostrowsky identified Brown’s apology as a factor in the film’s production: ‘[f]rom there, we started to research who he was and found his story incredibly moving. We didn’t know why his life hadn’t made more of an impact on popular culture’ (quoted in Grosz 2014). But Turing’s impact was already substantial. The film was based on Andrew Hodges’ biography *Alan Turing: The Enigma*, first published in ([1983] 2014). Other previous representations of Turing’s life include Hugh Whitemore’s play *Breaking the Code* (1986), adapted for television in 1996, and *Codebreaker* (Beavan, 2011) in 2011 (see Doan 2017: 117–20). The importance of foregrounding Turing’s legacy as a *homosexual* war hero was compounded by his representation in an earlier big-budget film, the espionage thriller *Enigma* (Apted, 2001). Whereas Hodges’ biography and *Breaking the Code* foreground Turing’s status as a gay man (Pullen 2011: 408), *Enigma* portrayed Turing as heterosexual mathematician Tom Jericho (Pullen 2011: 398). Indeed in Robert Harris’ eponymous novel on which the film was based Turing is a marginal presence and there is no mention of his homosexuality (Valente 2012: 227). Similarly, the publicity materials that accompanied the unveiling of a statue built in his honour at Bletchley in 2007 made no mention of his being gay (Smith 2007).

Screenwriter Graham Moore suggested that *The Imitation Game* was presenting an interpretation of Turing’s life that was previously unknown to the public: ‘[h]e is this tremendous inspirational symbol of this sort of secret queer history of the Second World War, the secret history of computer science that has been whitewashed out of the official record’ (quoted in Peterseim 2014). Moore’s claim reflects the ambitions of the biopic genre more broadly. According to Márta Minier and Maddalena Pennacchia, ‘the biopic may aim to “set the record straight” and “get things right” about any misconception of the subject, doing justice to a source or subject that may previously have been, in their view, misrepresented or underrepresented’ (2014: 13). The following analysis considers how Moore’s comments regarding ‘queer’ history and the ‘secret’ history of computer science are negotiated in the film’s construction of Turing as a gay boffin.

 **‘Victim Heroes’ and ‘Eureka** **Moments’**

*The Imitation Game* details three periods in Turing’s life. In 1951 Detective Nock (Rory Kinnear) investigates a break-in at Turing’s (Benedict Cumberbatch) Manchester home and discovers that Turing is gay when prostitute Arnold Murray (uncredited) admits to the robbery. Turing is arrested for gross indecency and taken to a police station, where he describes his life to Nock through two flashbacks. The first depicts Turing and the code-breakers working to decipher the Enigma code, eventually devising the Bombe machine to do so and, following the war’s end, destroying the evidence of what the team accomplished. This flashback also shows his friendship and brief engagement to Joan Clark (Keira Knightly), a proposal made to enable Joan to meet public, gendered expectations at Bletchley while continuing to work secretly as a code-breaker. The second flashback depicts Turing (played as a child by Alex Lawther) at Sherborne School in 1928, and his friendship there with Christopher Morcom (Jack Bannon). The film’s final scenes represent Turing after his chemical castration, confined to the house with ‘Christopher’, the name that he gave to the Bombe machine, unable to complete the crossword puzzles that he formerly enjoyed due to the effects of his ‘therapy’.

Moore frames the narrative of Turing’s life as one of tragedy: ‘we really wanted to watch this vibrant, brilliant mind slowly be extinguished under this terrible medical treatment, under societal pressures and the public shaming that happened to him’ (quoted in Peterseim 2014). This theme also appears in films about politician Harvey Milk (*Milk*, Van Sant, 2008) and television personality Pedro Zamora (*Pedro*, Oceano, 2008). These films’ characterization of their gay subjects resembles Vladimir Propp’s notion of ‘victim heroes’, a problematic characterization that diminishes their significance by foregrounding tragedy: ‘the narrative focuses on the punishment and trial of the central character, rather than on the use, or compatibility, of the character in the larger narrative world’ (Pullen 2011: 400). This tragic theme is in marked contrast to biopic paradigms. In Dennis Bingham’s account, mostly concerned with Hollywood film production, he remarks that biopics about women feature a distinct trajectory in which ‘[t]he female subject is either victimized because of her position in society or implicitly punished for her presumption and ambition in trying to make a life outside of it. Madness is a frequent destination in these films’ (2010: 98). This applies to *The Imitation Game* and its depiction of Turing as a homosexual man punished by the state. Thus, the film follows a trajectory more typical of female-centred biopics.

*The Imitation Game* does adhere to other conventions and themes associated with the genre, including that of the maverick figure who challenges authority and conventional ways of thinking, a consistent theme in Hollywood and British biopics (see Custen 1992: 188; Robinson 2016: 185). For example, Turing argues with the sceptical Bletchley Commander Dennison (Charles Dance), insisting that his machine will work. Films about scientists and artists frequently depict discoveries, both artistic and scientific, which occur through luck rather than skill or creativity (Radcliff 2008: 66). In *Pollock* (Harris, 2001), the single event that signals a change in the artistic style of abstract expressionist Jackson Pollock occurs when he accidentally spills paint on the floor. In *The Imitation Game*, Turing’s ‘eureka moment’ – the moment that ‘typically marks a revelation after which everything is perceived differently’ (Radcliff 2008: 66) – occurs away from the code-breakers’ hut, in the bar at Bletchley. Unable to establish the Enigma settings quickly enough to counteract the Germans resetting the machine’s encryption each day, Turing overhears a fellow Bletchley worker discussing how the intercepted German messages feature recurring words. Turing realizes that the Bombe can be programmed to decode words assumed to be present within each message, such as ‘Heil Hitler’.

 **A Boffin at Bletchley Park**

*The Imitation Game* reworks the boffin stereotype to incorporate Turing’s homosexuality. The boffin is typically a scientist working for the government on weapon production and *The Imitation Game*’s construction of Turing conforms to certain boffin characteristics: he is ‘obsessive’ (Jones 1997: 36) and his personal drive causes conflict with his Bletchley colleagues including when he challenges the authority of Denniston and when he casually fires two codebreakers, illustrating his inability to function within a team. Such instances can also be understood intertextually through Cumberbatch’s on-going role in the drama series *Sherlock* (2010–present), a remodelling of Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes as a contemporary London detective who is an ‘emotionally stunted figure’ exhibiting a ‘quirky individualism’ (Hills 2015: 324). Turing is also depicted as an ‘innocent’ (Jones 1997: 36) describing code-breaking as a ‘game’, ignoring its importance to the wider war effort. Turing’s perceived insensitivity and difficulty in understanding the other code-breakers’ casual, conversational language suggest a condition that differentiates him from both the team at Bletchley and his fellow pupils at Sherborne.

However, Turing’s motivations are undercut with an ambiguity that is absent in other films about boffins. *The Dam Busters* (Anderson, 1955) shows Barnes Wallis, the classic boffin, persevering with the ‘bouncing bomb’ design to aid the British war effort (Jones 1997: 35). This altruism permeates films about American technical ingenuity and the biopics about Graham Alexander Bell (*The Story of Alexander Graham Bell*, Cummings, 1939) and Thomas Edison (*Edison, the Man*, Brown, 1940) where the inventors’ lives are shaped through ‘myths of noncommodification’ and their ideas are constructed as a benefit to wider society rather than a commodity (Bingham 2010: 52). Turing, by contrast, is constructed in the early scenes as *personally* motivated and lacking this sense of altruism. He informs Denniston that he enjoys solving puzzles and that the German Enigma machine is ‘the most difficult problem in the world’. Unlike Wallis, whose motivations are framed in national terms, Turing’s motivations are personal. They resonate with the construction of T. E. Lawrence in *Lawrence of Arabia* (Lean, 1962), who remarks ‘[i]t’s going to be fun’ before travelling to the Arabian Peninsula and uniting the Arab factions against the Turks (Bingham 2010: 79). *Lawrence* formed a deconstruction of the ‘Great Man’ approach to history by foregrounding Lawrence’s personal ambition rather than national responsibility and *The Imitation Game* portrays Turing as a similarly enigmatic figure.

The defining characteristic of the boffin is outsider status – ‘this quality of belonging and at the same time not belonging to the governing elite in wartime’ (Jones 1997: 40). *The Imitation Game* reworks this to address how Turing, as a homosexual, cannot be fully assimilated within the intensely homosocial culture of Sherborne School and the code-breakers’ base in Bletchley Park. Indeed, Hodges’ description of Turing’s life as a homosexual – ‘he was living an imitation game, not in the sense of conscious play-acting, but by being accepted as a person he was not’ ([1983] 2014: 163–64) – resonates with the boffin’s outsider status.

One sequence that visually signifies Turing’s unease with Bletchley’s homosocial structure takes place in the bar where the staff are celebrating Turing and Joan’s engagement. While Joan and two other women working at Bletchley discuss Turing’s marriage proposal beside the bar, the male code-breaking team sit at a table listening to a joke with a sexual theme delivered by Turing’s fellow code-breaker, the suave and flirtatious Hugh Alexander (Matthew Goode). Although Turing is dressed in the same style as the other men, tie and suit, he is the only one still wearing his suit jacket, a sign of his inability to integrate completely. The boffin’s ‘separateness’ is frequently signified in his clothing (Jones 1997: 35, 40). This inability to integrate is reaffirmed through the foregrounding of Turing’s beer glass, which remains full, surrounded by the empty pints that the team have enjoyed while relaxing and smoking. The scene also constructs him as an outsider because of his sexuality: as the men sit around the table laughing after the punch-line is delivered, the shots foreground how Turing does not participate in this display of distinctly heterosexual bravado – they laugh raucously while he remains expressionless. It is not until the joke is completed that Joan and the other women arrive at the table to encourage the men to dance with them. The joke serves to cement the homosocial ties of the other men in the code-breaking team, who need to reassert their heterosexuality in male company.

Turing’s reaction can be explained as rooted in his difficulty interacting with the team and an inability to integrate into the team’s understanding of heterosexual masculinity. Although superficially Turing can ‘pass’ within these surroundings, his disinterest in sustaining the homosociality of the team through participating in the laughter signals his outsider status.

**The origins of the Gay Boffin**

In the flashbacks to Turing’s childhood at Sherborne School in 1928 there is a similar emphasis on the pressures of conforming to masculine norms. These scenes dramatize themes of secrecy and subterfuge in the context of the public school, a homosocial institution in which homosexual attractions must be concealed from schoolmasters and heterosexual pupils. The representation of Sherborne recalls *The Loom of Youth* (1917), Alec Waugh’s account of the fictional Fernhurst School that drew heavily on his experience as a Sherborne pupil that highlights the prevalence of bullying and obsession with sports, challenging the conventional view of public schools as institutions devoted to civilized values and high morals (Mangan 2012: 1701–14). Controversially, *The Loom of Youth* suggests that schoolmasters were aware of homosexual relationships between pupils but showed no inclination to intervene to prevent them (Hodges [1983] 2014: 37; Richards 1988: 239–40).

Like *The Loom of Youth*, *The Imitation Game* portrays Sherborne as a homosocial hierarchy characterized by sadistic bullying that is ignored by the schoolmasters. In the dining hall Turing is depicted obsessively separating the carrots and peas on his plate when another boy pours a bowl of food over him. A long shot then displays rows of boys laughing and their identical uniforms – navy blazer, dark tie, white shirt and cream-coloured trousers – serve to emphasize conformity and by implication Turing’s separateness. On one occasion Christopher Morcom rescues Turing, who has been trapped under the floorboards of a classroom by the bullies. Turing confides in Morcom that his mother considers him ‘an odd duck’ and the pair begin a relationship distinct from the violent homosocial community.

These scenes construct the origins of Turing’s identity as gay boffin. In a critical sequence Morcom offers Turing a book on codes and ciphers and the pair develop a cryptographic code to communicate secretly during classes. A long-shot establishes them, dressed in formal school clothes, sitting together behind a tree on a playing field; a line of trees hides them from their rugby-playing peers. The scene is characterized by a careful physical intimacy in the touching of knees as Turing studies the book (although the film never suggests that Morcom reciprocates Turing’s sexual desire) and the proximity of the rugby game is conveyed through the out-of-focus movement of bodies between trees and occasional indistinct shouts. Following the Second World War, certain meeting places in London, such as parks and cafes, and special codes used for making contact with other like-minded individuals, facilitated an underground homosexual culture (Hornsey 2008: 40). *The Imitation Game* evokes these practices by showing how Turing’s homosexual desire can be expressed in coded language that excludes the other students and schoolmasters.

These exchanges between the boys continue until Morcom fails to return to Sherborne at the start of term, while Turing eagerly waits with a coded note expressing his love. Summoned to the headmaster’s office he is informed of Morcom’s death from bovine tuberculosis. The interplay of shots of both characters across the table evokes the interrogation by Nock in 1951 but in the flashback Turing dismisses the headmaster’s suggestion that they were friends and enquires from whom the suggestion had come. The sequence captures the surveillance and gossip that Hodges associates with Sherborne: ‘Alan was conscious that he was a boy in another house, and that everything was open to comment’ ([1983] 2014: 56). A zooming camera suggests Turing’s attempt to disguise his homosexuality. The school master explains Morcom’s death and the camera gradually moves from a medium shot of Turing seated in front of the desk to frame him in a tight, claustrophobic close-up. As the schoolmaster continues, the camera remains fixed on Turing rather than reverting to a shot/reverse shot pattern. His quivering lip and distant gaze, emphasized through the camera’s slow zoom, signal the stress of an illicit homosexual attraction. Turing’s experience at Sherborne serves as a precursor to that at Bletchley, with a commanding male authority figure, in the one case a teacher, in the other a Commanding Officer, and the regimented homosocial structure of the school and the male code-breaking team.

Representations of public school as a life of sadistic bullying, homosocial hierarchies, surveillance and secret messages recall that presented in *Another Country* (Kanievska, 1984). This film was loosely based on the early life of Guy Burgess, one member of ‘the Cambridge Five’ whose story has informed various representations across different media (Willmetts and Moran 2013: 49–70). As in *The Imitation Game*, *Another Country* is told in flashback to Guy Bennett’s experience at public school in the 1930s. The school forms a repressive regime ruled by ‘Gods’ (lead prefects) and schoolmasters who use violent punishment to enforce the homosocial culture of the school: when two pupils are caught masturbating together by a schoolmaster, one commits suicide before he can be expelled. Surveillance is evoked as Bennett watches fellow pupil James Harcourt through binoculars from the house windows because Harcourt, like Morcom, belongs to a different house. The pair meet at night in the school grounds to avoid detection, before the authoritarian prefect Fowler intercepts a love letter between them. When Bennett is then threatened with flogging he counters by suggesting that he will reveal the identities of prefects with whom he has had sexual encounters, which in turn implies that homosexuality within the school is widespread among the homosocial hierarchy. The spying, passing of notes and night meetings suggest that being homosexual under this repressive regime schooled Bennett for his role as a Soviet agent.

Similarly, *The Imitation Game* constructs Turing’s childhood interest in cryptography and his feelings for Christopher Morcom as precursors to his later wartime career, suggesting that Turing’s contribution to the war effort can be explained through his identity as a gay boffin and his childhood spent as an outsider navigating oppressive homosocial institutions through coded communications. These childhood experiences are used in the wartime sequences to contextualize Turing’s sympathy for Joan, a skilled mathematician marginalized within the patriarchal institution of Bletchley. Turing’s desire to integrate Joan into the code-breaking team signals a rebellion against the homosocial values of both Bletchley and Sherborne.

**Outsiders of Bletchley Park**

The boffin’s quality of ‘belonging and not belonging’ is reinforced by Turing’s relationship with both Joan and John Cairncross (Allen Leech), figures who share his outsider status. Whereas Joan’s gender renders her difference visible, Cairncross, a Soviet spy modelled on the fifth member of the ‘Cambridge Five’, navigates the code-breaking unit undetected. Ellen Cheshire suggests that the biopic ‘often gets slated, as concerns are raised that it is the more popular film versions of history that will be the one that people see and remember’ (2015: 10) and this is reflected in Hodges’ criticisms of the film. Hodges comments that ‘[t]hey have built up the relationship with Joan much more than it actually was’ and labelled Turing’s and Cairncross’ relationship as ‘ludicrous’ because, in reality, they worked on different Bletchley projects (quoted in Day 2013). Foregrounding Joan might suggest an intention to normalize Turing by introducing a ‘heterosexual angle’ (Doan 2017: 117) and, in the casting of Keira Knightly, to secure a larger audience. However, it can also be understood, conversely, as reinforcing the outsider quality of Turing’s gay boffin. Unable to join the male code-breakers, Joan initially relies on the classified code that Turing delivers to her off base, an action that characterizes their relationship as one of night-time transgression and illicit meetings. Turing’s relationship with Cairncross, in contrast, functions to highlight how the gay boffin’s outsider status makes him vulnerable to a character with secrets of his own.

In his account of the studio biopic’s generic characteristics George F. Custen identifies ‘close friends and guides’, often older figures who offer words of wisdom to the figure, as a component of many films (1992: 69). In certain respects Joan fulfils this function in *The Imitation Game*: she encourages Turing to offer apples to his fellow code-breakers after he has alienated them and following Turing’s chemical castration she comforts him, reminding him that the world is a better place because of him. However, *The Imitation Game* departs from this convention by representing Turing as in turn supporting Joan.

Joan’s marginalized position is first foregrounded when she attends an examination to recruit mathematicians to Bletchley. Initially, a condescending male invigilator informs her that ‘secretaries’ are based upstairs. Such inequality is foregrounded within the film through Hugh Alexander, who comments on the attractiveness of the female secretaries who arrive at Bletchley by bus and are herded to their offices away from the male code-breaking team’s hut. Turing’s unease with authority, a characteristic of the boffin, is shown as he channels decoded Enigma intercepts to Joan, who lacks the necessary security clearance, by cycling from the base to the women’s dorm at night. These illicit contacts evoke the illegal practice of ‘cruising’ for homosexual encounters and also the secret exchanges of information in espionage (Greven 2009: 228), which are depicted in later night-time sequences in which Cairncross leaves Bletchley to post information to Russia.

Cairncross too is an outsider with secrets to hide and his inclusion in *The Imitation Game* suggests an attempt to contextualize Turing’s persecution within the revelations regarding the Cambridge Five spy ring. Indeed, overt references to the spy ring are first made when the detective Nock evokes the Cambridge Five to justify his initial pursuit of Turing. The revelations about the Cambridge Five created a link in the public imagination between homosexuality and espionage, a link that was reflected in the representation of spies in cinema. The revelations ‘fundamentally challenged the conventional notion of the British spy as a heroic and patriotic heteronormative agent’ (Willmetts and Moran 2013: 54). Divulged to the British press in 1951, these revelations centred chiefly on British diplomats Burgess and Donald Maclean, on Burgess’ homosexuality and the pair’s defection to the Soviet Union. The Cambridge Five case formed a real case of ‘deviant’ sexual activity becoming interwoven with state treason and ‘established a parallel between sexual and political deviance which was one of the central tenets of the ideologies informing the Cold War’ (Medhurst 1984: 25). In the wake of news regarding Burgess and Maclean, who were former Cambridge professors, Government officials with an intellectual public school background were subject to ‘positive vetting’ to identify any weaknesses that might make them vulnerable to blackmail (Hodges [1983] 2014: 632). An editorial in *The Times*, titled ‘Personal Habits As Danger To Security’ and prompted by a debate in the House of Lords concerning Burgess’ and Maclean’s defection, asserted the connection between homosexuality and national security and warned of ‘the possible connexion between a weakness of character, a particular form of perversion, and security’ (Anon. 1955: 5).

In *The Imitation Game*, links between homosexuality and espionage are represented visually through depth-of-field and staging. Early scenes establish that Bletchley has been infiltrated by a spy. Following a journey to deliver code to Joan, Turing returns to find Denniston conducting a search of the code-breakers’ hut after receiving information that the Navy has intercepted encrypted messages meant for Soviet forces. At this point, Cairncross’ role as the other outsider operating in Bletchley is unknown. In the bar scene, after Hugh has told the joke the code-breakers leave the table to dance and Cairncross and Turing are left to discuss Turing’s recent engagement to Joan. Turing admits to Cairncross his lack of romantic interest in Joan before Cairncross interjects that he ‘suspected’ that Turing was homosexual. Cairncross encourages Turing to keep his sexuality a secret to avoid disruption to the team at Bletchley. Turing subsequently discovers a bible on Cairncross’ desk and realizes that passages from it were used to form the encrypted message to the Soviets. Cairncross uses his knowledge of Turing’s sexuality to blackmail him and protect his own secret. The pair then form an uneasy alliance based on Cairncross’ threat to reveal Turing’s sexuality if the latter exposes his status as a Soviet agent.

The classic espionage scene, in which a husband or a male lover delivers a flimsy excuse to a woman before leaving to meet his contact, can be understood as a metaphor for the secretive sexual dynamics of closeted gay life (Greven 2009: 229). Although the bar scene in *The Imitation Game* does not adhere to this precisely, espionage is still characterized by ‘covert, clandestine meetings, usually at the expense of normative heterosexual relations’ (2009: 229). This is visually realized in the use of depth-of-field and a lowering in volume of the diagetic music playing in the bar. As the pair talk, the camera is positioned behind them, with Turing occupying the left and Cairncross the right of the frame. Their heads are turned towards each other in the foreground and between them, slightly out-of-focus in the mid-ground, Hugh dances with Joan. The sequence recalls the covert exchange between Turing and Christopher Morcom: the shallow focus and staging visually connote the pair’s collusion, their status as outsiders separated from other members of the code-breaking team and bound together by their political and sexual transgression.

The flashback sequences at Sherborne construct the origins of Turing’s identity as gay boffin when he evades detection through coded messages and denials, whereas the wartime sequences show how knowledge of his sexuality can be used as a weapon against him, and when, in the narrative present Nock discovers Turing’s sexuality, this is followed by his arrest. Nock’s fellow officers describe Turing’s behaviour as ‘bloody disgusting’ and label him a ‘poofter’, their overt homophobia reflecting contemporary social attitudes and the current law. The film shows him being comforted by Joan at his Manchester home after his chemical castration and subsequent mental decline. *The Imitation Game*’s final sequences, in which Turing tearfully wanders about his filthy Manchester home in a dressing gown, secure Turing’s legacy as both war hero and victim of state betrayal.

**Contested legacies**

*The Imitation Game* was widely successful. It was nominated in several categories at the 2015 Academy Awards, winning Best Adapted Screenplay, and grossed $200 million globally (McClintock 2015). Reviewers praised the representation of Turing’s wartime contribution; the *Empire* magazine review noted how the film ‘seamlessly combines its thriller and biopic elements: the story of Turing, it posits, is the story of the Enigma codebreaking’ (Jolin 2014). Such comments underscore a significant feature of the biopic, a genre in which ‘[p]ersonality and point of view become the conduit of history in stories that often boil down complex social processes to gestures of individual agency’ (Vidal 2014: 3). The extent to which this process masks the complexities of historical events was recognized by certain film viewers who identified the film’s omissions. User reviews uploaded onto the Internet Movie Database criticized *The Imitation Game* for ignoring other figures based at Bletchley such as Harold Keen, an engineer who played a key role in designing the British bombe (see Qrobur 2015).

The absence of a gay sex scene present in earlier scripts caused greater controversy. Writing in the *Sunday Times*, journalist Jonathan Dean described an earlier version in which Turing and another man begin ‘tugging off each other’s clothes’ and commented that, following Turing’s Royal Pardon, ‘releasing a film that has cut scenes of overt homosexuality could be seen as backwards’ (Dean 2014: 10–11). References to Turing’s sexuality in *The Imitation Game* include his written declaration of love to Christopher Morcom, his telling Joan that he is gay before their marriage and his account of his soliciting Murray to Nock. However, the lack of a sex scene and scenes depicting homosexual romance attracted wide comment.

Biopics about heterosexual subjects frequently foreground romance. In studio-era biopics love interests served to humanize historical figures and in cases where these were absent from the figure’s life they were created by scriptwriters and producers who perceived them as pivotal in making a successful film (Custen 1992: 158–61). Romance can also serve, as it does in the biopics about musicians Ray Charles (*Ray*, Hackford 2004) and Johnny Cash (*Walk the Line*, Mangold 2005), to recuperate figures damaged by childhood traumas (Smith 2009: 236). However, in *The Imitation Game*, a biopic about a gay subject, love interests and romance were either ignored or removed. The *Daily Telegraph* review proposed that Turing’s ‘story’ was only partially addressed – ‘the film backs away in embarrassment from showing a single encounter between him and another man’ (Robey 2014) – while the *New York Times* review suggested that ‘a vital aspect of his identity and experience deserves more than a whisper and a wink’ (Scott 2014). Similar criticisms were levelled at *Milk* which was denounced by reviewers in the gay press for ‘desexualizing’ Milk, a reaction that illustrated the different ‘ownership claims’ attached to the politician’s life (Erhart 2011: 159). Reactions to *The Imitation Game* reflected an anxiety about Turing’s legacy and the need to ensure that his sexuality is recognized.

The director, Morten Tyldum, defended the film: ‘[i]f I have a gay character in a movie, I need to have a sex scene in it – just to prove that he’s gay?’ (quoted in Lee 2015) whereas Cumberbatch intimated that a sex scene would have appeared crass: ‘[i]f you need to see that to understand that he’s gay, then all is lost for any kind of subtle storytelling. It’s not something that needed to be made obvious’ (quoted in Duffy 2014). Yet the case for making Turing’s homosexuality ‘obvious’ was compounded by the earlier representation in *Enigma* and the script changes introduced to normalize gay figures in earlier biopics. In *Night and Day* (Curtiz, 1946), a studio biopic about American composer Cole Porter, the script was modified to ensure that discourses of heteronormativity were maintained in an era characterized by Production Code regulations. Although Porter was married he led a gay life in private, but the film suggests that his music was inspired by his marriage, and by extension, heterosexual love. For those producing biopics in this period, Custen suggests, ‘the first problem of picturing a life […] might be to eliminate those areas that the culture tells us should not exist’ (1992: 122). Hodges’ biography and Whitemore’s *Breaking the Code* both made links between Turing’s homosexual attraction to Christopher Morcom and his later wartime work (Pullen 2011: 407). Furthermore, earlier British films about playwright Joe Orton (*Prick Up Your Ears*, Frears 1987), artist Francis Bacon (*Love Is the Devil*, Maybury, 1998) and music producer Joe Meek (*Telstar*, Moran, 2008) foregrounded gay relationships, although these relationships were frequently shown to be destructive and volatile (see Street 1997: 105; Codell 2014: 166–67).

There was evidently an anxiety that a sex scene would alienate potential audiences and *The Imitation Game* had a significantly larger budget than these biopics to recoup. Moreover, Tyldum’s and Cumberbatch’s defence fails to recognize Turing’s significance within the gay community. Turing, Laura Doan suggests, ‘features prominently in a collective memory experience sustained by LGBT and queer organizations with political investments in configuring Turing as a gay icon or “homo hero”’ (2017: 118). Certain initiatives, such as The Alan Turing Memorial, have more successfully negotiated Turing’s different legacies and ‘ownership claims’ (Erhart 2011: 159). Unveiled in 2001, the memorial is located in Sackville Street Gardens between the University of Manchester’s science department (where he previously worked) and Canal Street, the location of Manchester’s gay village (see Doan 2017: 118–20). The village developed its character as a compact, visible gay space in the 1990s following extensive gentrification but also a collective resistance to a homophobic policing campaign (Skeggs 1999: 218). The statue displays Turing holding an apple, the fruit he laced with cyanide before his death, and is accompanied by a plaque that reads: ‘Father of computer science, mathematician, logician, wartime codebreaker, victim of prejudice’. The memorial is ‘[r]eminiscent of shrines in which the venerated saint motions to the instrument of martyrdom’ and ‘a poignant reminder of how homophobia drove one of the world’s “greatest minds” to suicide’ (Doan 2017: 119–20). Geographically the memorial site serves to recognize Turing’s achievements as a mathematician and scientist while locating him within the history of the highly visible homosexual community of Manchester. Although this article has suggested that these different legacies are negotiated within the film by a reworking of the boffin stereotype, *The Imitation Game*’s reception indicates that, for many critics, the biopic failed to strike an effective balance between these legacies.

**Conclusion**

Extending the theme of the boffin’s outsider status – am uneasy position of belonging and not belonging to the wartime elite – *The Imitation Game* suggests that Turing’s homosexuality rendered him an outsider at every stage of his life. The biopic represents Turing as navigating a series of oppressive structures: the openly homophobic police and oppressive anti-gay legislation; the sadistic public school; and the paranoid world of Soviet espionage. Turing’s life is constructed as a web of secrecy and concealment.

Although numerous initiatives celebrated Turing’s wartime work and advances in computing, the revision of his legacy in popular memory is equally propelled by the international gay community’s wish to secure Turing’s status as a gay icon – a symbol of the suppression of homosexuality in Britain before its decriminalization. Such initiatives reflect an ambition to reverse the public repression of Turing’s homosexuality. Sequences depicting homosexual relationships in *The Imitation Game* would have served to emphasize the existence of non-heterosexual desires in a period where a gay man was harassed, arrested and desexualized through government-mandated chemical castration. Despite the efforts to depict Turing as a gay boffin, the absence of a sex scene clashed with the different initiatives that sought to foreground Turing’s homosexuality in the years before the film was made. While these initiatives sought to draw Turing’s sexuality to the surface, making it visible where chemical castration sought to nullify it, certain commentators perceive the film as reinforcing the repression of Turing’s homosexuality. This thread of the film’s reception illustrates that for many the legacy of Alan Turing remains insecure and that his legacy as a gay war hero is still to be addressed by filmmakers.

**Acknowledgements**

Special thanks are due to Estella Tincknell for reading an early draft of this article.

**References**

Amiel, Jon (2009), *Creation*, UK: Recorded Picture Company and BBC Films.

Anderson, Michael (1955), *The Dam Busters*, UK: Associated British Picture Corporation.

Anon. (1955), ‘Personal habits as danger to security’, *The Times*, 23 November, p. 5.

Apted, Michael (1988), *Gorillas in the Mist*, USA: Warner Bros. and Universal Pictures.

\_\_\_\_ (2001), *Enigma*, UK and USA: Jagged Films, Broadway Video and Scion Films.

Beavan, Clare (2011), *Codebreaker*, UK: Channel Four.

Bingham, Dennis (2010), *Whose Lives are They Anyway? The Biopic as Contemporary Film Genre*, London: Rutgers University Press.

Boyle, Danny (2015), *Steve Jobs*, UK, Japan and USA: Scott Rudin, Entertainment 360, Mark Gordon Company, Decibel Films and Cloud Eight Films.

Brown, Clarence (1940), *Edison, the Man*, USA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

Brown, Matthew (2016), *The Man Who Knew Infinity*, UK: Edward R. Pressman and Animus Films.

Cheshire, Ellen (2015), *Bio-Pics: A Life in Pictures*, London: Wallflower Press.

Codell, Julie F. (2014), ‘Gender, genius, and abjection in artist biopics’, in T. Brown and B. Vidal (eds), *The Biopic in Contemporary Film Culture*, London: Routledge, pp. 159–75.

Cohen, Benjamin (2009), ‘Gordon Brown apologises for treatment of gay war hero Alan Turing’, *Pink News*, 11 September, <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2009/09/11/gordon-brown-apologises-for-treatment-of-gay-war-hero-alan-turing/>. Accessed 12 April 2017.

Condon, Bill (2004), *Kinsey*, UK, Germany and USA: N1 European Film Productions GmbH, American Zoetrope and Pretty Pictures.

Cummings, Irving (1939), *The Story of Alexander Graham Bell*, USA: Twentieth-Century Fox.

Curtiz, Michael (1946), *Night and Day*, USA: Warner Bros.

Custen, George F. (1992), *Bio/Pics: How Hollywood Constructed Public History*, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Day, Aaron (2013), ‘Alan Turing’s biographer criticises upcoming biopic for downplaying gay identity’, Pink News, 24 June, <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2013/06/24/alan-turings-biographer-criticises-upcoming-biopic-for-downplaying-gay-identity/>. Accessed 14 April 2017.

Dean, Jonathan (2014), ‘You could just make it up’, *The Sunday Times*, 2 November, pp. 10–11.

Doan, Laura (2017), ‘Queer history / queer memory: The case of Alan Turing’, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 23:1, pp. 113–36.

Duffy, Nick (2014), ‘Benedict Cumberbatch: There’s no need for gay sex in film about Alan Turing’, Pink News, 8 October, [http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2014/10/08/benedict-cumber batch-theres-no-need-for-gay-sex-in-film-about-alan-turing/](http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2014/10/08/benedict-cumber%20batch-theres-no-need-for-gay-sex-in-film-about-alan-turing/). Accessed 24 April 2018.

Elena, Alberto (1993), ‘Exemplary lives: Biographies of scientists on the screen’, *Public Understanding of Science*, 2:3, pp. 205–23.

\_\_\_\_ (1997), ‘Skirts in the lab: Madame Curie and the image of the woman scientist in the feature film’, *Public Understanding of Science*, 6:3, pp. 269–78.

Erhart, Julia (2011), ‘The naked community organizer: Politics and reflexivity in Gus Van Sant’s *Milk*’, Biopics and American National Identity, special issue, *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, 26:1, pp. 156–70.

Feinberg, Scott (2015), ‘How the Weinstein Co. Turned “*Imitation Game*” director into an Oscar contender’, *Hollywood Reporter*, 8 January, [http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/rac e/how-weinstein-turned-imitation-game-749575](http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/rac%20e/how-weinstein-turned-imitation-game-749575). Accessed 4 April 2017.

Fincher, David (2010), *The Social Network*, USA: Scott Rudin, Michael De Luca, Trigger Street and Columbia.

Frears, Stephen (1987), *Prick Up Your Ears*, UK: Zenith and Film Four.

Greven, David (2009), ‘Cruising, hysteria, knowledge: *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956)’, *European Journal of American Culture*, 28:3, pp. 225–44.

Grosz, Christy (2014), ‘*The Imitation Game* producers on bringing Alan Turing’s tale to life’, *Deadline Hollywood*, 17 December, [http://deadline.com/2014/12/the-imitation-game-producers-interview-alan-turing-1201328821. Accessed 4 April 2017](http://deadline.com/2014/12/the-imitation-game-producers-interview-alan-turing-1201328821.%20Accessed%204%20April%202017).

Hackford, Taylor (2004), *Ray*, USA: Anvil Films and Baldwin Entertainment Group.

Harris, Ed (2001), *Pollock*, USA: Pollock Film and Zeke.

Hills, Matt (2015), ‘Rebranding *Doctor Who* and reimagining *Sherlock*: “Quality” television as “Makeover TV Drama”’, *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 18:3, pp. 317–31.

Hodges, Andrew ([1983] 2014), *Alan Turing: The Enigma*, rev ed., London: Vintage.

Hornsey, Richard (2008), ‘The queer (Spatial) economies of “*The Lavender Hill Mob*”’, *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 5:1, pp. 38–52.

Howard, Leslie (1942), *The First of the Few*, UK: Misbourne-British Aviation Pictures.

Jolin, Dan (2014), ‘*The Imitation Game*’, review, *Empire*, 27 November, https://www.empireonline.com/movies/imitation-game/review/. Accessed 15 April 2017.

Jones, Robert A. (1997), ‘The Boffin: A stereotype of scientists in post-war British films (1945–1970)’, *Public Understanding of Science*, 6:1, pp. 31–48.

\_\_\_\_ (1998), ‘The scientist as artist: A study of *The Man in the White Suit* and some related British film comedies of the post-war period (1945–1970)’, *Public Understanding of Science*, 7:2, pp. 135–47.

\_\_\_\_ (2001), ‘“Why Can’t You Scientists Leave Things Alone?” Science questioned in British films of the post-war period (1945–1970)’, *Public Understanding of Science*, 10:4, pp. 365–82.

Kanievska, Marek (1984), *Another Country*, UK: Goldcrest Films and Television.

Lean, David (1962), *Lawrence of Arabia*, UK and USA: Horizon.

Lee, Benjamin (2015), ‘*The Imitation Game* director defends film’s lack of gay sex scenes’, *The Guardian*, 22 February, [http://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/feb/22/the-imitation-game-director-defends-lack-gay-scenes-alan-turing-benedict-cumberbatch. Accessed 15 April 2017](http://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/feb/22/the-imitation-game-director-defends-lack-gay-scenes-alan-turing-benedict-cumberbatch.%20Accessed%2015%20April%202017).

LeRoy, Mervyn (1943), *Madame Curie*, USA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

Linke, Gabriele (2011), ‘*Kinsey* – an inquiry into American sexual identity’, Biopics and American National Identity, special issue, *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies*, 26:1, pp. 138–55.

Mangan, J. A. (2012), ‘Conformity confronted and orthodoxy outraged: *The Loom of Youth* – Succès de Scandale? In search of a wider reality’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 29:12, pp. 1701–14.

Mangold, James (2005), *Walk the Line*, Germany and USA: Twentieth-Century Fox, Tree Line Film, Konrad Pictures and Catfish Productions.

Marsh, James (2014), *The Theory of Everything*, UK: Working Title Films.

Maybury, John (1998), *Love is the Devil*, UK: BBC, Première Heure and BFI Production Board.

McClintock, Pamela (2015), ‘Box-office milestone: “*The Imitation Game*” crosses $200 Million Globally’, *Hollywood Reporter*, 3 March, https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/box-office-milestone-imitation-game-778902Accessed 15 April 2017.

McCormick, Joseph Patrick (2013), ‘*Attitude* magazine unveils Alan Turing cover: “The gay man who saved the world”’, *Pink News*, 16 October, [http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2013/1 0/16/](http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2013/1%200/16/)attitude-magazine-unveils-alan-turing-cover-the-gay-man-who-saved-the-world/. Accessed 24 April 2018.

Medak, Peter (1991), *Let Him Have It*, UK and France: Film Trustees and Vermilion Films.

Medhurst, Andy (1984), ‘*Victim*: Text as context’, *Screen*, 25:4&5, pp. 22–35.

Minier, Márta and Pennacchia, Maddalena (2014), ‘Interdisciplinary perspectives on the biopic: An introduction’, in M. Minier and M. Pennacchia (eds), *Adaptation, Intermediality and the British Celebrity Biopic*, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, pp. 1–31.

Moran, Nick (2008), *Telstar: The Joe Meek Story*, UK: Aspiration Films.

Morrison, Richard (2004), ‘The war’s forgotten hero’, *The Times*, 31 May, p. 3.

Oceano, Nick (2008), *Pedro*, USA: Bunim-Murray Productions.

Peterseim, Locke (2014), ‘Interview: *The Imitation Game*’s writer Graham Moore and director Morten Tyldum’, Hammer and Thump, 11 December, http://www.openlettersmonthly.com/hammerandthump/interview-the-imitation-games-writer-graham-moore-and-director-morten-tyldum/Accessed 4 April 2017.

Pullen, Christopher (2011), ‘Heroic gay characters in popular film: Tragic determination, and the everyday’, *Continuum*, 25:3, pp. 397–413.

Qrobur (2015), ‘Fine acting but an highly inaccurate story’, Internet Movie Database, 1 January, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2084970/reviews?start=20>. Accessed 15 February 2016.

Radcliff, Matthew (2008), ‘Absentminded professor or romantic artist? The depiction of creativity in documentary biographies of Albert Einstein’, *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 36:2, pp. 62–71.

Richards, Jeffrey (1988), *Happiest Days: The Public Schools in English Fiction*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Robey, Tim (2014), ‘*The Imitation Game*, review: “Clever, Calculated”’, *Daily Telegraph*, 13 November, [https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/filmreviews/11077848/e-Imitation-Game-review-clever-calculated.html. Accessed 24 April 2018](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/filmreviews/11077848/e-Imitation-Game-review-clever-calculated.html.%20Accessed%2024%20April%202018).

Robinson, Matthew (2016), ‘Mapping the British biopic: Evolution, conventions, reception and masculinities’, Ph.D. thesis, unpublished, Bristol: University of the West of England.

Scott, A. O. (2014), ‘Broken codes, both strategic and social’, *New York Times*, 27 November, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/28/movies/the-imitation-game-stars-benedict-cumberbatch.html>. Accessed 24 April 2018.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky (1985), *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Sheehan, Rebecca A. (2014), ‘Facebooking the present: The biopic and cultural instantaneity’, in T. Brown and B. Vidal (eds), *The Biopic in Contemporary Film Culture*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, pp. 35–51.

*Sherlock* (2010–present, UK and USA: BBC and WGBH).

Skeggs, Beverley (1999), ‘Matter out of place: visibility and sexualities in leisure

spaces’, *Leisure Studies*, 18:3, pp. 213–232,

Smith, Glenn D. (2009), ‘Love as redemption: The American dream myth and the celebrity biopic’, *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 33:3, pp. 222–38.

Smith, Richard (2007), ‘The Enigma of Alan Turing’, *The Guardian*, 19 June, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/artblog/2007/jun/19/theenigmaofalanturing. Accessed 24 April 2018.

Stern, Joshua Michael (2013), *Jobs*, USA: Five Star Feature Films.

Street, Sarah (1997), *British National Cinema*, London: Routledge.

Tyldum, Morten (2014), *The Imitation Game*, UK and USA: Black Bear Pictures and Bristol Automotive.

Valente, Ken (2012), ‘Alan Turing: Reflecting on the life, work, and popular representations of a queer mathematician’, in J. K. Sklar and E. S. Sklar (eds), *Mathematics in Popular Culture: Essays on Appearances in Film, Fiction, Games, Television and Other Media*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland, pp. 219–32.

Van Sant, Gus (2008), *Milk*, USA: Focus Features, Axon Films, Groundswell Productions, Jinks and Cohen Company.

Vidal, Belén (2014), ‘Introduction: The biopic and its critical contexts’, in T. Brown and B. Vidal (eds), *The Biopic in Contemporary Film Culture*, London: Routledge, pp. 1–32.

Waugh, Alec (1917), *The Loom of Youth*, London: Grant Richards.

Whitemore, Hugh (1986), *Breaking the Code*, Haymarket Theatre.

Willmetts, Simon and Moran, Christopher (2013), ‘Filming treachery: British cinema and television’s fascination with the Cambridge Five’, *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 10:1, pp. 49–70.

Wise, Herbert (1996), *Breaking the Code*, UK: BBC.

Wiseman, Andreas (2014), ‘*The Imitation Game*: Cracking the Code’, *Screen Daily*, 5 December, [http://m.screendaily.com/5080700.article. Accessed 24 April 2018](http://m.screendaily.com/5080700.article.%20Accessed%2024%20April%202018).

**Contributor details**

Matthew Robinson is an associate lecturer in media at the University of Derby. His main research interest is the British biopic and his work has also been published in the *Open Screens* journal.

Contact:

School of Arts, University of Derby, Markeaton Street, Derby, DE22 3AW, UK E-mail: M.robinson2@derby.ac.uk