Alan Turing, the Politics of Sexual Science, and the Making of a Gay Icon

Chris Waters
(Williams College)
He broke the unbreakable, imagined the unthinkable, and spoke the unspeakable.

Alan Turing, the Politics of Sexual Science, and the Making of a Gay Icon

Presented by Chris Waters
Hans W. Gatzke ’38 Professor of Modern European History, Williams College

Tuesday, November 6 • 4:00-5:30 • ICT 121

In the 1940s, Alan Turing’s homosexuality was an open secret amongst his co-workers at Bletchley Park. In 1952 the secret became widely known when Turing was arrested on charges of “gross indecency” under the same 1885 law that had led to the imprisonment of Oscar Wilde over half a century earlier. Opting for chemical “treatment” of his “condition” rather than imprisonment, Turing was one of many well-known casualties of a heightened drive against homosexuality in postwar Britain that drew the line between the normal and the deviant more sharply than ever before. In his talk, Chris Waters will discuss Turing’s sexual proclivities and their meanings in the context of his times, focusing in particular on his arrest and subsequent fate in the context of the sexual politics of the first half of the 1950s. In addition, he will discuss the shaping of Turing’s posthumous reputation, beginning with the attempts made by the Gay Liberation Front in the 1970s to render Turing the gay icon he has become today.
He broke the unbreakable, imagined the unthinkable, and spoke the unspeakable.
'Turing was one of the most brilliant men of the first half of the twentieth century, but the refusal of post-war society to accept his sexuality drove him to commit suicide... We can and should honour him now.'

Chris Smith
Turing is a gay man who ‘has rightly taken on an iconic status for LGBT communities and who will increasingly do so as he comes to the attention of more and more people.’

(‘Turing as a Gay Icon’, The Turing Centenary Site, posted 2 Dec. 2011)
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‘It says no good thing about the year 2012 that Turing’s supposed marginalization by the society of his time has become in many popular accounts a perverse credential for his greatness.’

the Heart in Exile

a disturbingly frank novel of homosexuality in London

Rodney Garland
FINISTÈRE

A Powerful Novel of a Tragic Love

35c

Fritz Peters

A SIGNET BOOK

Complete and Unabridged

FINISTÈRE

a novel by

FRITZ PETERS

The tragedy of Matthew, passionate & innocent, who finds that, in a world far from innocent, love & its corrupt simulacrum may have the same physical manifestations.

by the author of "THE WORLD NEXT DOOR"
### Number of Homosexual Offenses Known to the Police

(England and Wales)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Buggery</th>
<th>Indecent assault etc.</th>
<th>Gross indecency</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>1276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>1523</td>
<td>561</td>
<td>2331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>3087</td>
<td>1686</td>
<td>5443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>766</td>
<td>3556</td>
<td>2322</td>
<td>6644</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Verdict of You All

Rupert Croft-Cooke
Against the Law
PETER WILDEBLOOD

The moving inside story of the ‘Montagu Case’ by the young journalist who was one of its victims.

A first-hand account of what it means to be a homosexual, and to be tried in a controversial case and imprisoned. ‘The noblest, and wittiest, and most appalling prison book of them all.’ — New Statesman

COMPLETE 2/6 UNABRIDGED
UNIVERSITY READER PUT ON PROBATION
To Have Organo-Therapeutic Treatment

At Cheshire Quarter Sessions at Knutsford on Monday, Alan Mathison Turing (39), F.R.S., O.B.E., single, university reader, of Adlington Road, Wilmslow, des...
Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution

Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department and the Secretary of State for Scotland by Command of Her Majesty September 1957

LONDON HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE FIVE SHILLINGS NET

Cmd. 247
Remarks of Prime Minister Gordon Brown

10 September 2009

This has been a year of deep reflection – a chance for Britain, as a nation, to commemorate the profound debt we owe to those who came before. A unique combination of entrepreneurship and events have allowed us to see pride and gratitude that characterized the British experience. Earlier this year I stood with President Sarkozy and Obama in honour of the service and the sacrifices of the heroes who cared the beaches of Normandy 65 years ago. And last week, we marked the 70 years since the British government declared its willingness to take up arms against fascism, and declared the outbreak of the Second World War.

So I am both pleased and proud that, thanks to a coalition of computer scientists, historians and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) activists, we have now a chance to mark and celebrate another contribution to Britain’s fight against the darkness of dictatorship. That of code-breaker Alan Turing.

Turing was a quite brilliant mathematician, most famous for his work on breaking the German Enigma code. It is no exaggeration to say that, without his outstanding contributions, the history of the Second World War could have been very different. He was one of those individuals we can point to whose unique contribution helped to turn the tide of war. The sense of gratitude he has fostered makes it all the more horrifying, therefore, that he was treated so shabbily.

In 1952, he was convicted of “gross indecency” – in effect, tried for being gay. His sentence – and he was faced with the miserable choice of life or prison – was chemical castration by a series of injections of female hormones. His life itself was just two years later.

Thousands of people have come together to demand justice for Alan Turing and recognition of the appalling way he was treated. While Turing was dealt with under the law of the time, and we can’t put the clock back, his treatment was of course utterly unfair, and I am pleased to have the chance to say how deeply sorry I am and all we are for what happened to him. Also and all the many thousands of other gay men who were convicted, as he was, compulsorily, under homophobia laws, were treated unfairly. Over the years, millions more lived in fear of persecution. I am proud that those days are gone and that in the past 12 years this Government has done so much to make life fairer and more equal for our LGBT community. This recognition of Alan’s role in one of Britain’s most famous stories of homophobia is another step towards equality, and long overdue.

But even more than that, Alan deserves recognition for his contribution to humanity. For those of us born after 1945, into a Europe which is united, democratic and at peace, it is hard to imagine that our continent was once the theatre of mankind’s darkest hour. It is difficult to believe that in living memory, people could become so consumed by hate – by anti-Semitism, by homophobia, by xenophobia and other murderous prejudice – that the gas chambers and crematoria became a piece of the European landscape as surely as its galleries and universities and concert halls which had marked out the European civilization for hundreds of years.

It is thanks to men and women who were tirelessly committed to fighting fascism, people like Alan Turing, that the horrors of the Holocaust and of total war are part of Europe’s history and not Europe’s present. So on behalf of the British government, and all those who live freely thanks to Alan’s work, I am very proud to say: we’re sorry. You deserve so much better.
sorry
CODE BREAKER
Alan Turing's Life and Legacy
St. Vincent & The Grenadines

1987: Alan Turing’s theory of digital computing

Informatica e Comunicacoes

Portugal

Alan Turing 1912–1954
Mathematician and WWII code breaker

St. Helena

Alan M. Turing, codebreaker and an Enigma Code Machine
ENGLISH HERITAGE

ALAN TURING
1912~1954
Code-breaker
and
Pioneer of
Computer Science
was born here
ALAN TURING
1912~1954
Code-breaker and Pioneer of Computer Science was born here

ALAN TURING
1912-1954
Founder of computer science and cryptographer, whose work was key to breaking the wartime Enigma codes, lived and died here.
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was born here

ALAN TURING
1912 - 1954
Founder of computer science
and cryptographer, whose work
was key to breaking the
wartime Enigma codes,
lived here.

Baston Lodge
ALAN TURING
1912 - 1954
Founder of computer science
and cryptographer, whose work
was key to breaking the
wartime Enigma codes,
spent his childhood here.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER
ALAN MATHISON TURING
1912 - 1954
A Creator of Computer Science,
Code Breaker and Mathematician
Reader in Mathematics
1948 - 1954
ALAN TURING 1912–1954
Code-breaker and
Pioneer of Computer Science
was born here

ALAN TURING 1912 - 1954
Founder of computer science and cryptographer, whose work was key to breaking the wartime Enigma codes, lived and died here.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER
ALAN MATHISON TURING
1912-1954
A Creator of Computer Science, Code Breaker and Mathematician
Reader in Mathematics
1948-1954
Turing rainbow festival
The first queer pride festival of Madurai-2012

CENTANARY CELEBRATION

"to honour the man who knew too much"

Srishti
DON'T ASK...

His name is Alan Turing, a British genius, mathematician, and father of the modern programmable computer. During World War II, his work resulted in the invention of code breaking machines that could decrypt Germany's "Enigma" cipher.

With Enigma broken, Allied convoys could know the positions of German U-boats in the North Atlantic, avoid them, and deliver their supplies safely.

Countless lives were saved.

He was prosecuted for being a homosexual in 1952. Forced to undergo hormonal injections and chemical castration to "cure" his condition, he grew breasts as a side effect.

His conviction resulted in the loss of his security clearance and barred him from further intelligence work. He committed suicide in 1954.

...DON'T TELL

WE NEED OUR HEROES.

TELL YOUR CONGRESS MEMBERS TO END "DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL"
What if Alan Turing, founder of the modern computer age, escaped assassination by the secret service to become the lover of Beat author William Burroughs?

What if they mutated into giant shapeshifting slugs, fled the FBI, raised Burroughs's wife from the dead, and tweaked the H-bombs of Los Alamos?

A wild beatnik adventure, compulsively readable, hysterically funny, with insane warps and twists—and a bad attitude throughout.

Born in 1946 in Kentucky, Rudy Rucker is a writer, a mathematician, and a computer scientist. He's authored thirty-plus books, two of which received Philip K. Dick awards.

Rucker's works include cyberpunk and transreal novels, plus nonfiction books on infinity and the fourth dimension.