

CREATIVE WRITING PORTFOLIO

By MacKenzie Blaylock

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THE TIDES OF HOPE

By MacKenzie Blaylock

Approx. 3,200 words

On a small island in the Caribbean lived a village of folks that had created a community of love and strength. Plantains gave them life. Children gave them hope. Fish gave them energy. They coexisted with the earth in a way many others struggled to understand. They lived that way peacefully until tragedy struck.

Bastian was a young boy in this village, no more special than the next boy, but he had a heart that lived and breathed with his village. When one of their own died, he lost his appetite. When a child was born, he felt strength run through his blood. Perhaps this was simply because he was a child of the village, or perhaps it was because of his response when terrible events occurred.

His first experience with tragedy happened when he was a mere ten years old. Bastian recalled the day clearly, the memory forever seared in his mind. Children were a common occurrence in his small island village, but none were as special as his new sibling. Bastian had been off gathering wood, picking up fallen twigs and branches that scattered the perimeter of the village, when he heard chatter volley between people that a baby was being born that day. Bastian immediately dropped all of his sticks, sprinting back toward his shelter, knowing in his gut that that new baby would be his sibling.

He entered his house through the front door, carefully closing it as the twine holding it threatened to snap. He ignored the groaning walls and the bending thatched roof, hearing the buzz of enthusiastic voices inside. Several men sat in the living area, joking about the thought of

a new boy and drinking coffee. Higher voices lilted from the sleeping area, accompanied by thick, painful screams coming from his mother. This being his first sibling, Bastian knew nothing of birth but assumed that these sounds were normal considering no one seemed concerned.

Bastian placed himself carefully in the corner, tense as he listened to his mother's wails. He wanted to help, despite knowing he would be useless. Women passed through the doors often, carrying cloths and buckets of water. With each passing woman, their looks became more worried. Their brows scrunched a little further, their mouths turned from hard-set determination to downcast dread. With each woman, the men chatted a little less, looking toward the sleeping area with concern. As Bastian's mother's screams turned more piercing, a woman flew from the room, running out to the village. When she returned with the healer in-tow, all the men stood up. Bastian, wanting to be a man too, stood up with them, though his legs wobbled beneath him.

The woman led the healer to the sleeping area, locking the men outside. The women's voices carried through the walls, their words ineligible but their tones anxiety-inducing. The men began to pace, not a one of them talking to another.

Bastian couldn't process the screaming. He'd never heard a sound as awful. It seemed to shake his brain, muddle his thoughts. At some point, her screams had changed from those of childbirth to those of begging. He could hear that begging in his head, wanting to stay alive, wanting to complete her birth with a healthy baby, wanting, overall, to end this torture. Yet her screams persisted, and Bastian's legs finally gave out, lowering him to the floor.

Eventually, her cries quieted, but still no one sat down. A few seconds later, a new, higher cry started. The cry of his little sibling. The men patted his father on the back, but no one said a word of celebration. Bastian felt a pain in his heart, one he was sure all the men felt as well. He

rubbed his chest as it spread through his stomach, traveling down to his toes. He saw nothing except blackness in front of him, his vision entirely gone.

A door opened somewhere. He heard the healer, a garbled voice reaching him. He rubbed his ears, hearing “dead” and nothing else. Deep sighs passed through the room, men exiting as his father stayed behind. Bastian soon heard the sounds of digging behind the shelter, the natural place for a family member to be buried. When his vision cleared, his father was sitting down.

This was Bastian’s first introduction to tragedy. There was no real reason why this death was any more monumental than the other childbirth deaths that occurred within his village, except that it was his mother. The woman who had raised him for ten years was now gone and there was nothing he could do except wish her peace in the afterlife. But Bastian refused to believe he was useless.

He couldn’t prevent such natural deaths, but he could do better than sitting around in a daze while they occur. So, Bastian pushed himself to help his village in any way he could. Never did he sit around again, instead gathering food, supplies, or water. He learned from the healer all that he could and experimented with natural resources to see if he could invent new medicines. He spoke with everyone in the village, learning about their desires in life. And when he could, he saved a life.

The next tragedy happened when he was fifteen. Bastian was out on the sea alone when a ship appeared on the horizon. Though it was far away, Bastian couldn’t believe his eyes. The ship was massive. Bright white sails stretched across the sky, causing his canoe to appear pitiful. Bastian began paddling back to shore, wanting to inform his village of their oncoming visitors.

As Bastian arrived on land, he ran from house to house, shouting that new life approached. He joined the crowd that formed at the beach, watching as the ship anchored itself at sea and a few men dislodged a rowboat to paddle to shore. When the men arrived on land, both groups stared at each other for a moment, taking the other in.

The men were dressed in strange outfits. Instead of relying on fashions made of leaves and vine, they seemed to be using an opaque material crafted from something Bastian assumed his village did not possess. They covered their whole bodies with this material and laid hats upon their heads. They each held long tubes of a shiny material, the ends of the tubes shaped to be nestled comfortably in a person's hands. Though they held the items loosely at their sides, Bastian feared the strange objects, sensing the inherent danger they implied.

The men smiled then, talking in a language foreign to their own. The chief of Bastian's village stepped forward, greeting them, but the foreigners had the same confused expression his village held. The chief then announced to the villagers to return to life as normal but that they would throw a feast for the visitors tonight. The villagers whooped, loving any excuse to throw a party, but Bastian stayed silent. He didn't trust a man he couldn't understand.

Despite the gifts the foreigners offered or the smiles they shared, this moment was the beginning of Bastian's second tragedy: the destruction of his people. Bastian soon found out that these foreigners came from a land named Spain and that they had a thirst for conquering lands.

Their relationship with the Spaniards started jovial. They both shared knowledge and resources, but the Spaniards seemed to believe their knowledge was superior. They began to lash out and brandish their weapons when they caught villagers using "old" knowledge, claiming they were savage for not accepting this "modern" way of living. Bastian quickly adapted, picking up

the Spaniards' way and language. It was easier to steal their food if he knew how to cook it. It was simpler to gain their trust if he could communicate with them.

Then, the Spaniards demanded control of their livestock. They demanded the crops be harvested for them and then distributed as needed. They forced the women into subservient roles. They forced the men to work all day, only taking a break to eat a handful of food.

Bastian's father had a heart like his own and his father couldn't bend to the Spaniards' will. He gathered the men, forming a rebellion against the foreigners. Together, they grabbed their spears and their arrows and faced the front of bullets and swords. Bastian begged to join, to help save his people, but his father forbade him, claiming his knowledge was what made him valuable. They needed an accomplished healer. They needed a Spanish speaker. Bastian envied the men who could fight, but this tragedy pushed him to grow even more.

For the next five years, Bastian watched as his people were slaughtered, enslaved, and demoralized. The village lacked the life it once held; his people kept their heads down, they shied from the eyes of the Spanish troops that marched to keep them in order. But Bastian didn't relent. He continued to sneak food to the malnourished. He climbed onto Spanish ships under cover of night to steal their books, learning everything he could about the world larger than that of his small island.

Now twenty years old, Bastian couldn't help but feel as though he had failed his village. They were losing their war. His father grew weary and weak. His neighbors could no longer feel the glow of hope. For all his studying, Bastian knew nothing of how to save his people.

Bastian walked through his village with his head held high, dodging out of sight whenever he spotted a foreigner. He then ducked into Abeni's shelter. Abeni was a neighbor who

had been confined to her house but still escaped to try and help anyone who needed it. She currently sat on a mat, working on crushing leaves for medicine.

“Abeni,” Bastian greeted.

“Bastian! My boy, get over here.” She quickly rose to hug him. Abeni’s spirit was what inspired Bastian to keep moving during these dark times.

“Did you set the chickens free?” she questioned, pulling him to the floor.

“Yes, Abeni. They’re likely at the other end of the island by now.”

Abeni laughed, patting his back, but Bastian couldn’t feel proud of his work. He’d spent five years learning, robbing, and cheating, but it had led to nothing. Abeni quieted down, looking at him with soft eyes.

“Bastian, have you heard the news?”

“No, what is it?”

Abeni paused for a moment. “It’s your father. He died yesterday out at sea, thrown overboard by those ruthless Spaniards.”

Bastian’s heart thumped. A feeling raced through him; one he was familiar with. As he started to shake and his vision began to darken, he shook his head. His father was dead. Finally gone, knowing only death the past five years. A third tragedy had struck.

Bastian stood abruptly, putting his hands on his head. “I don’t understand. What did we do to them? Why do they torture us so?”

“Because they are bad humans,” Abeni said. “They do not respect life any more than they reject murder. They lie and plunder. They wish to own the world yet do not see that which already lives on it.”

“I will not let this go on any longer,” Bastian declared, and left Abeni’s house.

Bastian didn’t know how he was going to stop a terrible war. Or how he would defeat foes that were far more powerful than him, but he would figure out a way. Passing by a food cart, Bastian snatched a piece of fruit from the top, hearing the seller’s angry voice follow him down the walk. Bastian began to run once he heard the noise of Spanish officers.

He ran into the jungle, trusting his knowledge of the land to lead him where he needed to be. He bounded over roots, ducked under stretching branches, and splashed through creeks. The officers didn’t follow him for long, but he still kept running. Eventually, he came to a stop in front of a rock wall covered in vines, panting. He reached to put a hand on the wall to steady himself but stumbled as his hand passed through the vines.

Carefully, Bastian pushed the vines aside, dropping the fruit as he saw a hidden cave. The cave was innately ethereal, with flowering vines stretching across the walls and small streams bumbling around the rocky floor. Small plants tried their best to grow, displaying dazzling colors within their blooms. Bastian had never beheld such a tranquil place.

The only place clear of vines was the far wall where a carving had been traced into the stone. The carving depicted a woman adorned with jewelry whose legs had been replaced with a fish’s tail. Bastian stepped forward toward the drawing, feeling the air grow warmer as he got closer. This was Yemoja, the goddess of the ocean, fertility, and protection. Bastian had often grown up hearing stories of her but always passed them off as folk tales.

Bastian hadn't once prayed to the gods. He believed knowledge and hope would save a man. But maybe hope had dried out and knowledge was nothing more than some fancy words in your brain. Still doubting the validity of the gods, Bastian admitted maybe a bit of mysticism could help in these dark times.

Bastian knelt before the carving, feeling the cool water bend around his knees. He laid his hands on his knees, feeling the serenity of the cave wash over him. "Goddess, hear me and my prayer, please. My people suffer without protection. We have no way to defend ourselves and nothing else to give, yet these foreigners demand more. I beg for a gift. Something that will save my people."

A second after he finished, the carving began to glow. It sprouted from the Goddess's heart and grew outwards, filling in the drawing until the whole cave lit up. Then the air began to warp, and a figure appeared, resembling the carving.

"Yemoja," Bastian gasped. The Goddess seemed nearly angelic, her body nothing more than light wrapping around the air. Her translucent body didn't match the power that Bastian could feel filling the cave.

"Hello, my son." Bastian bowed his head as the Goddess's voice rang through him. "You have gone through many hardships, witnessed and felt the pain of each death. Do you wish to distance yourself from this pain?" she asked, her voice lilting and melodic.

"No," he said firmly. "My pain is that of my people's. If I do not feel pain, then I have no connection to those of whom I am born. I only wish to save my village, to have a place to call home where we can protect ourselves."

A breeze fluttered through the cave, rustling the flowers. “I will grant you your wish, young one.” Bastian raised his head, staring at this beautiful Goddess who looked at him with soft eyes. “Your people are my people, and I find I do not have enough power to help you on this island. So, I give you a command, Bastian. Gather your people, leave in the shadows of night. Row out to the ocean where you will be farthest from land, from humankind. When you believe you will never see sand again, row a little further. There you will find a city of glass, half above water and half below. Here, my oceans can protect you from most foes. Follow a tower down to the bottom of the ocean and my gift to your people will be waiting. Embrace the water.”

Then Yemoja left with a gust of wind, leaving no remnant that she ever existed. Bastian could feel his heart pounding, rejuvenation inviting his legs to sprint, his arms to pump. Carefully, he left the cave, returning to the village and keeping out of sight of the Spanish. The rest of the day, Bastian set to work organizing their escape.

He first went to each dwelling, informing the current inhabitants that they were to leave. Plans were made to assist the elderly and the sick. He let Abeni spread the word to the women. He then told the troops, who rallied to create a plan to break out the enslaved and imprisoned. Stealth was of the utmost importance. Fishers prepared their largest rowboats, ensuring enough seats for every person. As word spread to each villager, Bastian was amazed at the trust his people showed in him. What he didn’t realize was that his work the previous ten years—caring for people, providing hope—created a respect that no other villager garnered.

When night fell, people moved. Dark shadows darted around light, avoiding the moon’s reflection. With hardly a word, the boats slowly filled. Pride soared as Bastian saw the soldiers return with their missing people. His story was not the only one worthy of telling. As the ocean current shifted to aid their boat, they began to row.

And row they did. For hours they rowed, trading off shifts to sleep and eat. Many complained often, worried they would die before they found land. Bastian could do nothing except tell them to keep their hopes up. Even he started to doubt himself as a whole day passed, wondering if his father's death had caused him to hallucinate. Bastian was a boy who responded to tragedy with action, but maybe this action was the wrong one.

Then, just as his skepticism threatened to take over, he saw a blinding reflection of the sun ahead of them. Bastian stood up, seeing the spires of a city start to form. He whooped as a glass city, reflecting the blue of the ocean, appeared on the horizon. With renewed vigor, the village rowed more, celebrating as they came closer to their new home.

When they arrived, Bastian stepped off the boat first. The city provided small walkways intersected by water to reach each tower. Keeping the Goddess's instructions in mind, Bastian searched each tower, his village following behind. The last tower he checked held a long spiral staircase, leading down through the water yet staying completely dry. One by one, they began to trek down the steps.

When he reached the bottom, Bastian discovered a replica of the cave he had stumbled into, complete with trickling water. The cave's entrance led to the ocean, a strange power keeping the water outside. Lying in front of the carving was a small fountain, blue gems scattered around the stone.

Hearing the Goddess's instruction to embrace the water, Bastian filled his hands with water, pouring it over his head. Then, inviting his village to watch, he dove into the ocean. Twisting magic wrapped around his legs, strangling them before covering them in scales, ending in a single tail. Flipping his tail, he jumped back into the cave, changing back to his normal two

legs. Amazed, his village followed suit, creating the first population of merpeople in the Goddess's image.

Bastian thanked the Goddess, knowing she had saved them all. Silently, the Goddess thanked him because, truly, it is a young person's determination for a life better than what they are handed that changes the world. And now, thanks to the newly named Chief Bastian, his village could live protected by the rage of the sea, coexisting with the ocean in the city of Atlantis.

A WALK THROUGH HISTORY

By MacKenzie Blaylock

Approx. 2,800 words

A dull brick building graces my view in front of me, its windows drab and the door needing a new paint job. I'm not one to visit random brick buildings but a friend told me the historical experience here was unlike anything he'd ever visited. So, when I was bored on a day off, I walked down to the building, and now I find myself wondering what all the fuss was about. It doesn't look like anything special, really. In fact, it doesn't even have a sign describing what it is. I assumed it was a museum but now I'm starting to doubt myself. What kind of museum is this? I can only assume my friend suggested it because of our shared sexual predilections.

Sighing, I walk to the door, a strong *fuck it* echoing through my thoughts. When I enter, a white room greets me. Behind a wooden desk sits a brightly young man, looking up at me with all the eagerness that only youth can supply. On his desk sits a small rainbow flag and nothing else.

"Hello! Welcome in, welcome in," he says cheerily, standing up and rounding the table. "Are you here for the experience?"

"I suppose so," I say.

He claps his hands, nearly smacking the glasses off his own face. "Wonderful! What's your name?" He turns back to the desk, practically climbing over the damn thing as he reaches into a drawer.

"Garret Cooper."

“Great, great.” He turns back around brandishing a piece of paper. “If you would just sign this waiver, you’re welcome to explore the exhibit.”

“Waiver?”

“Just a precautionary measure, I assure you.”

Perhaps I should be more cautious myself, but I take the pen he offers, scribbling my name along a line at the bottom, hardly paying attention to what the hell I agreed to.

“Great, great.” He tucks the paper in an empty drawer. “Feel free to enter that room and enjoy the experience!”

I turn to the only other door in the room. It’s a plain white door, nothing ominous about it at all. I turn back to the boy. “What kind of museum is this exactly?”

“Oh, it’s not a museum. Think of it like an interactive walk through history,” he explains, a sheepish look on his face.

Okay, then. Whatever that means. Guess there’s nothing left to do except walk through that door. I grab the handle and open the door, seeing only a white light escaping. With one last breath, I face whatever adventure I’ve gotten myself into and brace for the worst.

The first thing I notice is that it’s a different time of day. I came to the museum around mid-afternoon, but it must be nearly dusk now. The second thing is that I am definitely not in a boring brick building. In fact, I’m surrounded by a town built with stone and marble. It feels almost Roman, but the structures are far too impressive to have been built for the museum.

“You going in or you just trying to break up the fun?” a gruff voice asks.

I jump and turn to a man who's wearing a robe draped lazily around his body held up by a straining cord of rope. The man has a beard, barely groomed and threatening to take over the rest of his face. I notice I'm standing in front of a doorway, blocking the entrance to a building.

"Where am I?" I ask.

The man looks me up and down and smiles. "I think you've found the right place." He slaps a hand on my shoulder, despite the extra height I have on him, and leads me into the building. "Call me Helvius, boy." It's been a long time since anyone has dared to call me boy. The roughness of my hands show my age.

We enter the building, revealing an open pool with several rooms surrounding it, some open, some sheltered. In the area are dozens of men, each entirely undressed. Out of politeness, I turn away when one of them looks over at me.

Helvius laughs deeply and grabs my face, turning me to look at that man. "Don't be shy, boy. This is the place for revelry."

I stumble back out of his grasp. "I'm sure I'm in the wrong place now, thank you anyway."

"What are you wearing?" another voice asks, shocked. I turn to a young boy, no older than sixteen. He walks up, more confident than I expected. Fingering my shirt, he says, "There's no clothes in here. I think you should remove them immediately."

"Excuse me?"

“Relax,” Helvius says, dragging the boy away. “Nothing happens in this room; there’s communal or private chambers for those activities. Besides, he’s probably not your type anyway, right?”

Now, it probably shouldn’t have taken so long for me to figure out what was going on, but in my defense all of this is rather shocking. I still am not quite sure what an “interactive walk through history” entails but I have a feeling I am not in the modern world right now.

Ignoring Helvius’s comment, I ask, “We’re in a bathhouse, aren’t we?”

“Want a tour?” I nod. “Rules are clothes off inside,” he explains as he begins to undress, lying his items along benches behind us.

Seeing no harm, I begin to do the same, imagining my high school locker room. Except, I look up and see small decals of young boys, each sporting dangling penises above our heads.

“Why the nude sculptures?” I ask.

Helvius roars, clapping me on the back. “Aren’t they funny? I wasn’t sure when they first put them in but boy, do they really lighten up the place. Gets you in the mood, too.”

I’m not sure about getting me in the mood but I can admit a little nudity can be humorous. Helvius grabs my shoulder once more, guiding me around the bathhouse. As he points out lounge, bathing, and athletic areas, I notice looks from many men. We don’t leave the central area, but I wonder what the rest of the crawling expanse of the bathhouse has to offer.

Helvius’s arm has fallen around my waist during our walk, his fingertips dancing across my skin. “I could show you more, if you’d like? There’s some things that shouldn’t be done under an open sky.”

As I glance around the pool, despite the touches shared between men, there's nothing particularly explicit happening. I re-examine Helvius, noting his smaller stature and unkempt hair. He certainly isn't from my time. But there's something charming about his confidence and I'm so curious about the rest of the bathhouse. I tell myself I can always say no.

"Lead the way."

I follow Helvius through an open doorway, taking one last glance at the pool before walking through a blinding white light.

Familiar with the disorienting feeling, I know right away that I'm not in Rome anymore. The sky above me is pitch black and streetlamps dot the path with flickers of flame. I've returned to being fully dressed and though few people are around, the buildings burst with sounds, muffled voices filling the air. The people I do see are dressed in outfits I certainly wouldn't choose for myself. Dresses, heels, feathers, and anything that contradicts the beard they are growing or the muscles in their arms. While not my style, I can't help but be impressed by their confidence.

Behind me lies the loudest building, a sign outside dubbing it "Margaret Clap's" house. Shrugging, I walk up to the door, rapping on it with a knock I hope is loud enough. A small hole in the door opens, covered by metal bars.

"Yes?" a feminine voice asks.

"May I enter?"

"What's your name, hun?"

“Garret Cooper.”

A scoff. “Come back when you’ve got a better name, hun.”

The little door shut with a clap, making me blink. I stand there in shock for a moment, confused on how I am supposed to enter, when a group of girls walk up. Or at least girls in the drag sense of the term.

“You lost, dear?” one of them asks, sliding a hand up my arm.

I give them a small smile. “I’m sure I’m not lost.” I must have been sent to the house for a reason, after all. “But I’m afraid I don’t know how to get in.”

The ladies judge me for a moment before seeming to come to a conclusion. “We’ve got you, don’t worry.” They knock on the door with a rhythm. When it opens, they announce themselves, “Hiya Maggie, it’s us again and seems we’ve picked up a stray. You can call her Molly Garter.”

The door opens fully, revealing a bar and a crowded room. Maggie smiles at the entrance. “Glad to see you’ve found a name, hun.”

Guess I have. I walk into the building, noticing every patron here wearing a style of feminine clothes or makeup. Some even are wearing wigs or fake pregnancy bumps. Most everyone smiles at our entrance, greeting us with cheers or a drink thrown into our hands. I’m sure it’s not me they’re cheering for, but the energy is infectious.

I settle down at a table, enjoying the revelry around me. The feeling is similar to the bathhouse except more inhibitions are thrown aside. People talk, dance, and touch each other

without a care in the world, though I notice there are still some activities reserved for a private room.

“Hey gorgeous, whatcha doin’ all alone?” someone slurs in my ear.

I face the girl talking to me, noticing the red that stains her lips. “Came here alone,” I answer.

“You ever been to a house before?” She crumples into a seat next to me, putting a hand on my thigh.

“First time.”

“And I’ll bet it’s the time of your life.” She laughs, her alcohol-soaked breath reaching my nose.

“Something like that.” It certainly is memorable.

“Well, there’s a tradition you ought to know about,” she announces. Her hand begins to crawl up my thigh, masculine fingers inching inwards. “When someone first visits, they have to get married. It’s the law.” She nods seriously then laughs again.

“The law? Well, that does sound mighty serious. Who would I get married to?” I play along. What’s a night of revelry if one doesn’t engage?

“Any of the girls, really,” she admits. Her eyes meet mine. “But not everyone will give you the time of your life.”

I stand up and grab her hand, pulling her up with me. “Now, where can I find a girl like that?”

She giggles, the sound dark and husky. “Here, I’ll show ya,” she says, dragging me as she makes her way to a door at the back of the building.

The moment we reach the door, a buzz spreads through the building, anxiety cutting through the fun like a dull knife. Drinks are hidden quickly. Some people opt to strip themselves of the feminine pieces they are wearing while others adjust them to make them seem more realistic.

My companion’s body starts to shake, her fingers growing clammy in my hand. “Is everything alright?” I ask.

She faces me, her eyes wide. “You must go!” She opens the door behind us. “There’s an exit back that way.” She kisses me on the mouth, a peck that is far more innocent than it should have been tonight. “A newbie doesn’t deserve the fate the rest of us must deal with. Go!”

She shoves me without another word, forcing me into that door glowing with a white light.

I appear once again on a street, the cover of night being fought by the electric lamps that lined the street. Unlike my previous experience, the street is lively, people packed along it. There are people dancing, drinking, and waving lighters in the air. Music from a crackling speaker fills the air and there are people dressed in colors of every shade. Behind me, a bar has a sign labelled “Burgfrieden.”

I grab onto the first person I see, a young man with painted hearts on his cheeks. “What’s going on?” I ask.

“A *Fasching!*” he yells in my ear.

“What?”

“A carnival! This one is special and impromptu. We are legal now, so we celebrate 1968!”

He then lifts his bottle of beer and chugs the whole thing.

“We?”

The man shakes his head. “Look around. Us! The other, the peculiar, the queer. No longer will they arrest us for simply looking at another man sideways. Cheers!”

I find myself with a bottle in my hand and I lift it to the man’s. “Cheers,” I concede. The man sloshes his drink and wanders off, clapping people on the back as he weaves through the crowd.

Quite a change from my last experience, I find myself giddy with the elation echoing through the streets. I toss my own drink back and dive into the crowd, speaking with all the folks that have interesting stories to tell. One speaks of a raid they lived through, describing their time in jail. Another speaks of his fear thirty years prior, proud to have survived and to represent the older generation. Each story speaks of determination and courage with the knowledge that nothing can change who they are.

Unlike the places I’ve visited in the past, people are loud and proud but are not engaging in sexual acts. People are celebrating simply to celebrate. They are enjoying the freedom they have finally been allowed and are proving that they will make good use of it.

Very quickly I find myself adorned with celebratory accessories. Beads and feather boas surround my neck. My eyelids are painted blue and I'm sure my lips are a bright shade of red. I don't own makeup but the guys applying it compliment my color scheme and complexion.

Eventually, I stumble out of the street, ending up in an alleyway filled with some dumpsters and rats. As I empty my stomach of the copious amounts of alcohol I've consumed, a man stalks in the hallway, his outfits a dull gray compared to the colors I've been enjoying.

"You lost?" the man asks with a gruff voice.

Like I'd never drunk anything at all, my mind sobers in an instant, hearing the anger in his voice. Remembering my stature, I stand to my full height, forcing the man to step back. "Nah, just needed some fresh air," I answer, picking my words carefully.

"I'd say," he grumbles. Seeming to gain some confidence, he grabs my sleeve. "Listen here, just 'cause you homos can't be arrested, doesn't mean you don't need a good beatin' every once in a while to remind yous of your place."

His fists begins to raise but I shove him away before it can fly. "I wouldn't start, man. Go sober up and cry about people getting privileges that don't take away from you at all. Violence isn't the answer."

"Don't you go tellin' me what to do," he warns, stepping forward.

"I'm not. Just don't want to cause a scene. The party isn't going to hurt you and isn't even leaving the street. If you go back home and leave us alone, you'll find we don't affect your life all that much."

The man mutters and grumbles but goes back the way he came, leaving the party behind. I'm sure he isn't the first man to try and break the party nor will he be the last, but this group of people will continue to fight despite them. This first win will lead to many more.

Sober, calm, and satisfied, I look around and see no door to enter through, no blinding white light to call me home. I put my hands into my pockets, looking to see if I should return to the carnival, when I feel something. I pull out a small piece of paper. It says, "One ticket home." Without a second thought, I crush the ticket, ready to return.

In a blink, I'm back in a white room with a wooden desk. The same young man sits behind his desk, looking up as I appear. A wide smile splits his face, reminding me of the same smiles I saw throughout my journey.

"You're back! Did you have fun?"

I stare down at myself, noting the absence of jewelry or alcohol stains. "Surprisingly, I did."

"And did you learn anything? History's supposed to be informative," he says cheekily.

I think back to the places I visited. "I think I learned that I'm not as unique as I thought I was, which only makes me all the more special."

JIM HENSON: DREAMER

By MacKenzie Blaylock

Approx. 2,500 words

One day, in 1955, a young man sat on the floor of his family's living room with a pair of scissors, his mother's green coat, and a ping pong ball. After a few sharp cuts, the man set to work sewing the piece into something new, something timeless. A green shape formed a puppet, molding effortlessly to his hand in way many of his other foam puppets did not. The ping pong ball, now cut in half and painted, were placed as eyes. In just a few steps, the man had created a character for his show named *Sam and Friends*, a popular puppet show. At this time, Jim Henson was unaware of who this character would be but was very proud of his new friend named Kermit.

Jim Henson was a revolutionary thinker, someone who dared to dream of doing something that was not only enjoyable, but *new*. Today, Jim Henson lives on through his creations, including Kermit the Frog and friends. These beloved characters are household names and come in numerous forms of collectible decorations. Jim proves his worth with this legacy, but, unfortunately, most couldn't even tell you his name.

I remember my first time watching *The Muppet Christmas Carol*. I had already grown up watching *The Muppet Show* and many of the other Muppet movies, but I had yet to see one of the first works produced after Jim's death using his muppets. Even without Jim's magical touch, I was entranced by the movie. A combination of songwriting, storytelling, heart-touching moments, and undeniable knowledge of humor formed a movie that held Jim's touch simply because of the footprints he left behind to follow. It was as I watched this movie that I promised

myself to never forget his name, and to honor it by following in his footsteps of determination and imagination.

Building a Reputation

I think there's a certain expectation that if you're going to be famous, then you will find fame early, which isn't always the case. Sure, there are a number of well-known figures who reached that level through a family name or were discovered almost instantly, but most see failure before success. This is the part many, including myself, struggle with. I hate failing, I hate seeing room for improvement, but I know that it's the path forward. These stories of people who succeeded only through the amount of effort they put forth are what inspires me to keep moving forward. After all, if they can do it, then I see no reason why I can't as long as I try.

Jim himself wasn't always famous. From a normal life, he had to succeed using only his vision as a guide. This vision happened to occur under only one medium: television. When Jim was a young boy, his family bought their first television set, and he was hooked. Constantly searching for an opportunity, Jim found his first one when a local network put out a call for new puppeteers for their show. Despite not knowing puppetry, Jim applied to be on the show, dedicating his free time to studying the art with a friend for hours upon end. Jim seemed to be a natural; the network hired him and his friend immediately.

Though the network didn't last long, Jim didn't let it slow him down. He went on to study studio arts at the University of Maryland, eventually switching to studying home economics to aid his puppetry. During this time, he took a puppetry class where he met his soon-to-be-wife and future partner in many of his works, Jane. Jane was immediately intrigued by the way Jim looked

at the world, saying “he had that boy-genius quality about him.” She never could have predicted the road he’d lead them on.

Eventually, Jim and Jane earned a spot on television right before *The Tonight Show*. The show he ended up producing became known as *Sam and Friends*, a highly loved puppet show where the characters would lip-sync to songs and end up in ridiculous scenarios. Kermit ended up being the only puppet from this show to continue being used afterwards. In his downtime, Jim was constantly producing short films and TV commercials, experimenting with using the camera as the audience in ways that hadn’t been done before.

In 1966, two television producers thought of a profound idea for a kids’ educational show but were still looking for the right format. They soon reached out to Jim, asking if he would lend his muppets and talent to them. Jim, seeing the rabbit hole of kid’s content his puppets could fall into, initially declined the offer. He believed his muppets could be appreciated by all ages, making this point by consistently having adult humor such as violence included in most productions. However, the producers were determined, and eventually persuaded Jim to join their cause. *Sesame Street* aired in 1969, the first television show to base its content and production values on educational research and the first to contain a curriculum. Now, *Sesame Street* is the fifth longest-running television show in the U.S. with 54 seasons and counting.

The show also ended up producing a number of other memorable names such as Big Bird, Oscar the Grouch, and, of course, Bert and Ernie. To Jim, Bert and Ernie were more special than the others. For one, he had the opportunity to play Ernie with his counterpart, Frank Oz’s, Bert. Additionally, Ernie held a special place in Jim’s heart, being a character that was so similar to Jim’s own personality. Even Oz, Jim’s lifelong friend, admitted, “It was obvious that Ernie was more of Jim because Jim was very playful.” *Sesame Street* wasn’t just an opportunity for Jim

to build a bigger television presence, but it was where Jim finally established what his love of puppetry was all about. It wasn't about creating something popular but connecting with your work in such a way that it becomes the most meaningful thing you do.

Due to its long-running airtime, the show has a unique quality of connecting multiple generations of children. I watched the show when I was little, as did my older sister, as did my mom. Maybe three different generations will never have the same experiences, maybe we will each see the world in a different way, but we have all learned from Elmo. We have all taken a walk down Sesame Street. These are indisputable commonalities that can bring people together before we find other reasons to differ from one another.

Is This Fame?

I never got along the greatest with my brother. He was older than me, but I was undoubtedly more mature than him, creating a weird rift in our bond. Though we liked many of the same things, I didn't want to be associated with him, so I avoided the things he liked. If he played a game, I would play a different game. Despite this, whenever *The Muppet Show* was put on, that feud would dissipate. Together, we'd sit in front of that T.V. and he'd laugh so hard. My parents would be somewhere in the background, telling him to quiet down, but soon enough they'd join us in watching the show, too. Now, watching the show, I'm not sure it would live up to today's level of television, but if one man's dream can bring even a couple people together, then I think it's done its job.

Jim always had an overactive imagination. He was always dreaming of the next new idea or a compilation of creative twists to a known classic. Despite the success of *Sesame Street*, Jim wasn't satisfied. So, he started planning what to do next.

In the 1970's, during a trip to Germany, Jim stumbled upon a classic style of shown known as vaudeville. Vaudeville often includes a variety of zany acts unrelated to one another; they were simply there to entertain the audience. While watching that show, Jim knew his wacky, out-of-control muppets could find a home on a vaudeville-like stage.

Jim raced home to his studio, digging through a box of puppets searching for the right ones to star in his show. A bear became Fozzie the comedian. A raggedy old puppet became Gonzo, who thought eating a tire to music was art. A singing pig who liked karate became Miss Piggy. Those four over there would become the band, Electric Mayhem. That one over there would be the gofer, since his uncle owned the theater, and he would be named Scooter. Most importantly, Jim needed a leader. Someone to tie this band of misfits together and try to run a show in the meantime. When Jim slipped on the puppet constructed of his mother's old coat, he knew he'd found his answer in Kermit the Frog.

Despite Jim's reputation and lovable cast of characters, it was surprisingly difficult to sell the idea of *The Muppet Show* to television producers across the country. Many outright avoided meetings with him, claiming they were sick or were on vacation. Most declined the idea of the show, saying puppets were for kids. Years later, Jim had run into the problem he was so afraid of happening when he agreed to do *Sesame Street*. In contradiction to his usually calm demeanor, Jim produced a short series himself out of rage titled *The Muppet Show: Sex and Violence*. Unsurprisingly, the show didn't perform well. It wasn't until someone with a lot of money to spare across the sea in London called Jim, saying the network he owned had twenty thirty-minute

slots available if he wanted them. Without a moment to spare, Jim, his family, and his company packed their bags and moved to London.

The show was an immediate hit, with each character becoming a global icon around the world. I grew up watching, loving *The Muppet Show* and to this day my family still quotes the show and mimics the characters. If I didn't learn from what Jim Henson had to teach, I wouldn't be the same person I am today. This is especially true for the aftermath of the Muppets, including other movies, spin-offs, and television series.

Perhaps the most famous of all, *The Muppet Movie* set the tone for what a Muppet movie should embody. It included humor, fourth wall breaks, new technology, a memorable plot, and, most importantly, a message. Unique to *The Muppet Movie*, its message came straight from Jim Henson's mouth. Finishing the movie, he advises the audience to "write your own ending" to your movie because he and the rest of the muppets crew have "done what [they've] set out to do / thanks to the lovers, the dreamers, and you." Jim Henson's humble attitude shines bright in this movie as he thanks the audience for helping him reach the point he's gotten to.

Somehow, I didn't watch *The Muppet Movie* until I was much older. On my own, I threw the movie on, and felt this level of nostalgia for a time I didn't grow up in. Each of these characters now had a story, a reason for being, and that made my connection with them so much stronger. I realized, then, that it doesn't just take a good imagination to create something people love, but that you must create characters with reason. A villain must be a villain for a reason and the side character must want to tag along for some selfish purpose. Jim succeeded because he knew this and I hope I can succeed with my writing now that I've learned from him.

The Road to the End

When people imagine success, they imagine a life of luxury. Maybe expensive cars, walking down the red carpet, their bank accounts filled with all the money they could dream of. They imagine awards and champagne and signing autographs. Perhaps most importantly, they imagine settling down, that success providing them with the freedom to never have to work that hard again. I know that's what I imagine.

But not Jim.

Once Jim hit five seasons of *The Muppet Show*, he stopped, hitting the 100-episode mark to allow for television reruns. Already, Jim was onto the next project. *The Dark Crystal* was a monumental challenge. The movie required an extremely advanced level of puppetry, relying on brand new technology to create a completely fantastical world inhabited only by these puppets. Originally, the movie was mostly made of a nonsensical language these creatures were speaking, but test audiences rejected it completely. Twice, the movie was rewritten to try and match what was already shot. *The Dark Crystal* wasn't a hit quite like its Muppet predecessors, but it did well, allowing Jim to continue creating new pieces of media.

Jim then jumped to *Labyrinth*, a movie starring David Bowie. Relying on the same level of puppetry, though now Jim had to learn how to direct humans, the movie flopped. Critics admired the level of detail and effort that went into the movie, but said the plot fell to the background and didn't hold that Jim Henson "spark" many of his other works did. Through many struggles with convincing the public of his puppets, this was the first time Jim felt that they just didn't like it.

Still, with a broken heart, Jim kept moving. He created *Fraggle Rock*, a show that lasted five seasons that started with Jim saying, “I’d like to do a show that stops war.” The show maybe didn’t stop war, but it tackled fundamental issues in society in an entertaining manner. He made *The StoryTeller*, a show in which puppets and actors told children’s stories. He created a CGI character for his show *The Jim Henson Hour* that was controlled like a puppet. He eventually decided to sell the company to Disney, partnering with the CEO at the time, Michael Eisner, to bring the Muppets to the parks. Jim wanted more time to have fun, to worry less about business and more about creativity.

And that was where time ran out.

On May 16, 1990, Jim Henson died due to toxic shock syndrome. He was 53 years old. The family ended up reclaiming the company, leaving the Disney parks without the Muppets for many years. The only thing left behind was Jim’s final project, Muppet*Vision 3D, which is now set to be removed from the parks 35 years later.

The world grieved when Jim died. A creative visionary. An educator. A generous man. Now gone forever. Well, the man himself was gone forever, but he left behind a world of films, shows, and imagination that can still inspire those around the world. *Sesame Street* is still being produced, new Muppet movies have been made, and Kermit the Frog is likely to never be forgotten. But Jim is.

Very few can still name who created The Muppets. Jim was quiet, happy to settle into the background while being a leader, but it came at a cost. No one remembers the person behind it, they only remember the lovable Muppets and the future they’ve inspired. But maybe Jim was okay with that. He wanted to create, he wanted to find success, but he knew it wouldn’t last

forever. It's up to us to take what he started, to look at the path that he took, and use it to follow our own vision. And maybe, just maybe, we can find love for this world along the way.

A MEMORABLE ADAPTATION

By MacKenzie Blaylock

Approx 2,400 words

When looking at the genre of film adaptations, it can be difficult to decipher what makes a “good” adaptation. It could be easy to classify a good adaptation as one that performs successfully in the box office or is inherently truthful to its source material. I propose that a good adaptation is not one that is widely accredited but one that resonates with a higher authority in the global atmosphere. In order to look at this directly, I will be comparing and contrasting two remarkably similar adaptations: *The Imitation Game*, made in 2014 and directed by Morten Tyldum, and *Oppenheimer*, made in 2023 and directed by Christopher Nolan. Both films follow joint plots, scientific discoveries, and the analyzation of humankind. However, I argue that *The Imitation Game* is a better adaptation of a WWII biography than *Oppenheimer* because its message and purpose remain more culturally significant.

On a surface level, *The Imitation Game* and *Oppenheimer* are practically the same, with the only difference being their budgets. Both are adaptations of WWII biographies centering around a singular inventor that changed the outcome of the war. *The Imitation Game* is based on the 1983 biography, *Alan Turing: The Enigma*, by Andrew Hodges. The title itself and the “game” played throughout the movie is based on Alan Turing’s own paper “Computing Machinery and Intelligence.” Alan Turing is well known as one of the key figures for the invention of the modern computer, having created the machine for Britain that broke the “unbreakable” German code, Enigma. On the other hand, *Oppenheimer* is based on a 2005 biography, “American Prometheus” that focused on J. Robert Oppenheimer, who contributed to

the invention of the atomic bomb. *The Imitation Game* was made in 2014, with a budget of only \$14 million, while *Oppenheimer* was made in 2023 with a budget of \$100 million. The difference in budgets between the two films is clear, with many of *The Imitation Game*'s action scenes being real, black-and-white footage from the time period, while *Oppenheimer* was able to use special effects and create its own explosions. At this point, it would be difficult to judge which film would be better than the other, meaning the true difference between them surely must rely on the storytelling itself.

Oppenheimer begins its story not with Oppenheimer's production of the bomb, but instead much later on, in a hearing to determine whether or not Oppenheimer is a Soviet spy. In this moment, it is clear that Oppenheimer's access to classified materials and his own respect as a nuclear physicist is at stake. The film then jumps between time periods, focusing on Oppenheimer's development of the bomb, his actions after the two bombings of Japan, and the hearing. Director Christopher Nolan makes sure to use black-and-white scenes and color to portray objective and subjective scenes, creating an untrustworthy narrator in Oppenheimer and allowing the audience to decide what they think of his actions. This is an especially effective tactic to use in an adaptation of a true story because it doesn't require the director or screenwriter to decide if Oppenheimer is a good or bad person, or if he felt extreme guilt or not. Instead, the film shows the facts as they are, as the world knows them, and the audience must put themselves in Oppenheimer's position to decide how they would feel. *Oppenheimer*, after its release, was accredited highly for staying true to the real story and avoiding embellishment.

The Imitation Game also follows a similar plot progression to *Oppenheimer*. The film begins with Alan Turing having been arrested and accused of being a Soviet spy after the end of the war. It then jumps back in time to Turing's development of the machine as well as further

back to Turing's time in primary school. By doing so, the film focuses strongly on who Turing is as a person, what his morals are, and how he's been treated throughout his life. Opposite to *Oppenheimer*, the film stays firm in how it portrays Turing, establishing him as a socially awkward, Autistic, gay man that seems to have the world against him. Additionally, the film was highly criticized for straying from the truth, having invented people, scenarios, and positions that never existed in Turing's actual life.

Throughout both films, there is a consistent reminder of the pitfalls of developing technology, especially those used by governments for warfare. *Oppenheimer*'s bomb presents an obvious moral dilemma, asking both its inventor and the audience what scenario constitutes a reason to use it? When developing technology for governments, it no longer belongs to its inventor the moment it is completed, now able to be replicated and manipulated. Turing runs into his own problems with his machine after finishing it. Breaking the German code, Enigma, was merely one step, but the rest now lies in statistically analyzing the war to decide which attacks they can stop and which they must let happen in order to keep the Germans thinking that Britain hadn't broken their code. *The Imitation Game* keeps a theme of a race against the clock, portraying the battle continuing as the cryptography team works, visualizing the thousands dying each passing month. By doing so, the victory of breaking the code becomes even more heartbreaking as they realize these deaths won't stop yet, just become minimized. *Oppenheimer* has a similar sorrow in its victory, as Oppenheimer realizes just how many people his bomb will kill. Perhaps strangely humorous, Oppenheimer attempts to kill his teacher with a cyanide-laced apple, eerily similar to Turing's actual death which is thought to have been caused by him purposefully eating a cyanide-laced apple. Though they deviate slightly from each other, both

films maintain similar ways of storytelling, meaning the strength of one over the other exists within the messages they leave their audiences with.

The Imitation Game repeats the quote, “Do you know why people like violence? It is because it feels good. Humans find violence deeply satisfying. But remove the satisfaction, and the act becomes hollow.” While the film mostly uses it in context for the bullying Turing receives and the acts of aggression he must endure as a pacifist, it is much more applicable to *Oppenheimer*. During war, violent people receive an outlet for their violence, a way to feel satisfaction constantly. However, Oppenheimer is shown to struggle with his actions. He doesn’t have any satisfaction in violence, no desire to use his bomb as a weapon, and so he is hollow. Though the film will never specify if Oppenheimer is truly feeling guilty or not, it’s clear that he doesn’t wish to repeat his actions and removes himself from creating future nuclear bombs.

Oppenheimer’s message begins and ends with this line of thinking. The film proposes a question of morals and how they change during wartime. It implies figures in military authority positions must not have a conscience about the lives and deaths of those from other countries, only the continuing existence of their own. In Oppenheimer’s case, he joins the military as a scientist, not a tactician, and so is shocked by how his own morals are stripped away from him and he becomes yet another cog in the military machine. However, *Oppenheimer* fails to create a powerful meaning that is applicable to commonfolk within this message. An audience member is easily able to watch the film, be disgusted by Oppenheimer’s actions, and leave the theater thinking they would choose a completely different path. Most people will never have to manage such horrible and life-altering decisions, therefore disregarding the film’s message as a whole. *Oppenheimer* falls into a large collection of movies that are wildly entertaining, greatly accredited, and easily forgettable. Already, it is beginning to be remembered as a great movie

about that one guy who created the atomic bomb. And, at the end of the day, there's nothing more to it.

If a movie that just falls short of making \$1 billion worldwide cannot be classified as a uniquely memorable adaption, then it begs the question of what makes a movie memorable? *Oppenheimer* already fulfills many checkboxes for a great movie, including its visuals, soundtrack, and characters—although I do believe Oppenheimer, as a character, is difficult to understand and isn't solidly defined. *The Imitation Game* demonstrates what it's missing: emotional impact. It's impossible to feel personally connected to Oppenheimer, a combination of his career and character portrayal leading to little personal impact in the theater. On a national scale, the only impact it made was inspiring a revision to the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act, which compensated people affected by radiation and nuclear testing. While this was needed, the movie did not inspire social change.

The Imitation Game is not just a movie about Alan Turing, the man who cracked the Nazi code, but it is a movie about gender inequality, autism, and homophobia. Gender inequality is represented by Keira Knightley, who played Joan Clarke. Clarke, in the film, is the only female cryptographer on the staff. There are multiple moments throughout the film in which her position on the staff is questioned, as she's nearly sent away from the all-male hiring process, restricted by her parents from working with men, and needing to find a husband to be successful in the time period. Though many of the expectations set upon her are from the 1940s, many of them are still applicable today. Clarke struggles to prove her worth in a male-dominated environment, something women in STEM still continue to do. Though women can now work freely with men, there are negative stereotypes about both single and married women, many of which are associated with their productivity in the workforce. Even through the struggles she faces, Clarke

is not representative of hostile feminism, as she personally wants a husband regardless of what society tells her to do. Clarke represents what women must do to work, what they must do to be respected. She speaks to all the women in the audience and inspires them to ignore the expectations of society and to go for what they want. *Oppenheimer* falls short of this message, with the women in the film being mostly supportive figures revolving around Oppenheimer himself. Clarke succeeds even without Turing.

Alan Turing, played by Benedict Cumberbatch, is not defined to be autistic but Cumberbatch clearly plays him as so. Turing is socially awkward, missing jokes and requiring clear sentences to understand what people are saying. He also lacks a regard for authority and discipline, hyper-focusing on his machine instead. The character is controversial, as some studies say he had Asperger's while others note it is impossible to tell. Nevertheless, there are many accounts of Turing being sociable and bright, implying that Cumberbatch's representation of him may not be completely accurate. This is one example of how *The Imitation Game* ignores society's expectation of a factual adaptation in favor of creating one with meaning instead. Turing is a representation of autism in a powerful position, something that few film directors choose to portray. Not only are his struggles as someone with autism explained clearly, but he never has to change to find success. He may be socially awkward but finds success in what makes his mind different from others. It is a call to action for anyone with autism, inspiring them to use their experiences and their differences in ways that no one else can.

Finally, *The Imitation Game*'s largest message involves Turing's identity as a gay man. It starts during the plotline of Turing's young life, when he falls in love with a classmate, Christopher Morcom, who passes away during their time at school. Following this devastation, Turing continues to hide his homosexuality since being gay is illegal in Britain at the time. At

one point, he ends up engaged to Joan Clarke to help her continue working and when admitting his homosexuality, she accepts him. After the war, Turing is being investigated for espionage when he is arrested for purchasing prostitution from a man. He is then given hormonal therapy, and the film ends by stating he committed suicide while taking it. Though Turing didn't actually commit suicide under hormonal therapy, the film's portrayal of the discrimination against gay men in Britain is shocking and disgusting. It's hard to escape the implications of the movie when a war hero, such as Alan Turing who shortened the war by an estimated 2 years, is shamed and killed for being queer. In fact, it led to a petition that eventually turned into the Policing and Crime Act 2017, or the Alan Turing Law, which served as an amnesty law to pardon men who were cautioned or convicted under historical legislation that outlawed homosexual acts. Not only did *The Imitation Game*'s message connect people across countries, but it inspired a movement to make genuine social changes and rewrite history.

If *The Imitation Game* included only one of these messages, it may not have been as powerful a movie and likely would have fallen to criticism of its historical inaccuracies. However, by combining all three, the film purposefully uses past mistakes to inspire and uplift society to correct them and change their ways of thinking. This is repeated through the film's quote, "Sometimes it's the very people who no one imagines anything of who do the things no one can imagine." No matter which oppressed category someone falls into, they can find inspiration within that quote to do something greater than anyone thought they could do. By providing a representation for marginalized communities, *The Imitation Game* is able to be remembered for more than its plot. It can be remembered as something impactful, something meaningful, rather than something merely entertaining.

Oppenheimer and *The Imitation Game* seem almost identical, to the point that *Oppenheimer* can present an argument for a larger budget creating a more successful movie. However, success does not replace cultural impact. *Oppenheimer*'s flaw is that it refuses to directly state an opinion on the social characteristics of the time period. *The Imitation Game*'s flaw is that it deviates from reality as an adaptation, but this doesn't matter so long as it proves itself as a meaningful and worthy deviation. *The Imitation Game* does this and more, proving that a good adaptation means creating something culturally significant and long-lasting.