Deviance and Disloyalty: Historiographical Discourses in Representations of the Cambridge Spies

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I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

(Signed) ................................
Dedicated to the memory of my father
Leonard James Garner
(1928-2003)
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Abstract

This thesis examines dramatic treatments of the lives of the Cambridge spies (Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean, Kim Philby and Anthony Blunt) with particular reference to the construction of a nexus between loyalty and sexuality. The queer/traitor metonym is also traced in journalistic and biographical works concerning the same characters. It is argued that this nexus arises from more general myths and archetypes of the hidden sterile alien; that its late-twentieth-century form draws its historical context from Cold War paranoia; that historical dramas made for mass audiences have been a central conduit for conveying the metonym as historical truth; and that treatments of the Cambridge spies are a principal site for studying the use of this pairing, or its exposure and denial. The authors of the prose and dramatic texts are examined with respect to their view of absolutist or relativist historiography and the concept of the ‘true’ story. Their use of particular paradigms of sexuality are also investigated, along with concepts of the ‘closet’, of Englishness, and the relationship of class and education to both sexuality and treason. Genre-related influences, such as those of television and of biography, are also taken into consideration. The role of journalists as historians is questioned, and their relationship with the government is used as an example of problematic historiography. For each of the principal playwrights (John Osborne, Hugh Whitemore, Hugh Conner, Robin Chapman, Julian Mitchell, Ian Curteis and Alan Bennett) the central task is to show how the queer/traitor nexus is either covertly confirmed or directly examined and criticized in their plays, and to consider the role of this nexus in homophobic aspects of the writing of history.
Introduction

This is Art holding a Mirror up to Life. That’s why everything is exactly the wrong way round.

Terry Pratchett

*Wyrd Sisters* (Gollancz, London) 1998

Betrayal has always been portrayed as the most severe of crimes. The worst place in the lowest level of Dante’s Inferno is reserved for Brutus, Cassius and Judas Iscariot\(^1\), and the *hubris* of the ancient Greek tragic heroes is, in part, a betrayal of an allegiance to the gods. In the twentieth century, the native spy (as distinct from the foreign infiltrator) was a type of traitor whose image was replete with dark connotations – disloyalty, secrecy, indiscretion and dissent from the nation’s culture and politics. The ‘cloak and dagger’ were symbols of the hidden and the dangerous, that is, the dishonourable stab in the back.

Treason and espionage, then, are powerful accusations to make against any group one wishes to demonize. The scapegoat group may be racial, social or sexual. During the Cold War, the existence of a group of British Cambridge-educated men who were spying for the Soviet Union drew particular attention to the sexual. The homosexual or bisexual lifestyles of the majority of this group became a peg upon which to hang a particular form of scapegoating: the ‘queer’ Communist traitor. Deviance from sexual norms became a marker of disloyalty, sufficient to dismiss any person from sensitive work despite the absence of any actual evidence of espionage. The stereotype was perpetuated in the public consciousness by *exposé* prose, biography

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\(^1\) Dante. *The Divine Comedy*, Canto XXXIV.
and historical drama, and through them the ambiguities of sexual orientation became metaphors for the ambiguities of political deviance and disloyalty.

This thesis deals with plays and other works written on the subject of the Cambridge spies (Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean, Kim Philby and Anthony Blunt) with particular reference to the construction, advocacy, exposure or criticism of an essential link between treason and non-heterosexual behaviour or identity. It will make a number of assertions concerning the nexus between sexuality and loyalty: that it arises from more general myths and archetypes of the hidden sterile alien; that its late-twentieth-century form draws its historical context from Cold War paranoia; that historical dramas made for mass audiences have been a central conduit for conveying the metonym as historical truth; and that treatments of the Cambridge spies are a principal site for studying the use of this pairing, or its exposure and denial. Plays about the Cambridge spies were written against the background of the Cold War, or its end with the falling of the Berlin wall. They were conditioned not only by the metonyms of sexual orientation but by the historical events that encouraged them. In Burgess, Maclean, Philby and Blunt, a queer/traitor stereotype appeared to be confirmed by history. Such *prima facie* examples of the doubly marginalised alien, both politically and sexually dangerous, allowed the myth to be expressed through non-fictional characters. Historiographical issues were added to the problems inherent in representing such figures in biography, journalistic writing and drama. It will be argued that the queer/traitor metonym can be critically deconstructed by the use of relativist historiographical approaches to 'evidence' and evaluating the agenda of authors and playwrights accordingly.
The scope of this study is limited in several respects including nationality, chronology and gender. For example, the texts under scrutiny all originated in Britain. In dealing with historical background, some political and cultural events in America will be studied because of their effect on the rest of the Western world, especially in encouraging fear of the homosexual as a potential Communist infiltrator. However, the plays, prose works and the historical events they describe are all British.

Because the Cold War and fear of Communism are inextricably linked with the principal issues of the plays, this thesis is chronologically restricted to texts written in the period from 1945 to the present. Earlier artefacts are used only to assist in matters of historical background, such as the treatment of homosexuals in the theatre and in British law.

The Cambridge spies were all male, and the playwrights have applied the ideological issues of their plays solely to non-heterosexual males. Historically, the paranoia of the Cold War years was directed at lesbians also, particularly in popular culture and in the construction of archetypes of the Other (dealt with in this introduction). However, the specifics of the texts under study are related to men, and so this body of work does not deal with dramatic treatments of women, nor with gender issues except in relation to images of sexual orientation. It is also questionable whether the construction of images of the male queer/traitor can rightly be applied *mutatis mutandis* to lesbians. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick states as her third axiom for *The Epistemology of the Closet*:
There can't be an *a priori* decision about how far it will make sense to conceptualize lesbian and gay male identities together. Or separately.²

The texts selected for study and the media to which they belong are all aimed at mainstream audiences. Works produced for a gay audience, or intended to be performed by gay theatre groups, are not introduced except as cultural background. This is not simply because plays about the Cambridge spies happen to have been produced for mainstream theatre and television, but because a principal focus of this study is the conveying of history and ideology to a broad public. Gay men are principally used as objects, not subjects, in these alleged ‘true stories’.

Resources from a number of subject areas have been useful in the analysis of the texts. Historical background in this thesis is drawn from cultural history, rather than that traditional historical idiom which emphasises great men and great events. Principal sources for post-war British history include Hewison’s *In Anger: Culture in the Cold War 1945-60* (1981) and *Too Much: Art and Society in the Sixties* (1986), and Marwick’s "A Social History of Britain 1945-83" in *Introduction to Contemporary Cultural Studies* (1986). *The Sixties Experience* (1991) by E.P. Morgan is also useful for the politics and youth culture of that era.

Studies of the docudrama genre include Fiske and Hartley’s *Reading Television* (1978), which examines the role of realism in television drama and the possibilities of the genre for works with agenda more radical than the usual costume drama. Paget’s *True Stories? Documentary drama on radio screen & stage* (1990) considers the meaning of Art within the genre and places it in the context of cultural materialism.

² Sedgwick 1994: 36
Tulloch’s *Television Drama: Agency, Audience and Myth* (1990) examines the roles of empiricism, nostalgia and high culture as well as the constructions of myth and counter-myth in historical and documentary drama.

Histories of the theatre in Britain after World War II include John Russell Taylor’s *Anger and After* (1963) which focuses on a perceived importance of the opening of Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* in 1956. Taylor also wrote *The Second Wave: British Drama of the 60s* (1971), covering such playwrights as Bond, Stoppard, Orton and Brenton. Innes’ *Modern British Drama 1890-1990* (1992) provides a broader perspective. Dissent from the division of theatrical history into pre- and post-Osborne can be found in Elsom’s *Post-War British Theatre* (1976). Rebellato’s *1956 And All That* (1999) also de-emphasises the significance of 1956, and contains substantial analysis of the relationship of homosexuality to the theatre.

Of all analyses of representations of gay people in drama, the best known is Vito Russo’s *The Celluloid Closet: homosexuality in the movies* (1987), which examines periods in which gay characters were successively laughable, absent, demonised and suicidal. Representations on the stage are covered in Clum’s *Acting Gay: male homosexuality in modern drama* (1992) and De Jongh’s *Not In Front of the Audience: homosexuality on stage* (1992). These works trace the history of stage representations, noting certain landmark plays. Corber deals with both media, placing specific works in the general contexts of history and politics in his *In the Name of National Security: Hitchcock, Homophobia, and the Political Construction of Gender in Post-war America* (1993) and *Homosexuality in Cold War America: Resistance and the Crisis of*
Masculinity (1997). These works are thus useful in connecting dramatic devices with the Cold-War brand of homophobia, which informs writings on the Cambridge spies.

Specific scholarship on the authors to be studied is principally confined to Alan Bennett. These works study thematic concerns and historiography with respect to Bennett’s plays but are not concerned with the link between orientation and treason. Langford’s “Fetishism & Fantasy in Bennett’s Old Country & Single Spies” (1993) considers aspects of sexuality other than the binary of sexual orientation. Turner’s article "North & South: 2 Landscapes of Alan Bennett" in Modern Drama (1994) is concerned with a regional dichotomy which carries implications of class and dramatic idiom. Scarr’s "Alan Bennett: Political Playwright" in New Theatre Quarterly (1996) seeks to position Bennett in relation to politically radical playwrights such as Brenton and in relation to such mainstream authors as Ayckbourn. Finally, in “Royal Family Values: The Americanization of Alan Bennett's Madness of King George” (1999), O’Mealy looks at Bennett's attitude to historiography and dramatic licence.

The most important theoretical debates that are relevant to the subject are in the areas of historiography and queer theory. One primary discourse questions the possibility of the transmission of an absolute historical truth, through docudrama or by any other means. The principal literature in the area of historiography includes Lowenthal’s The Past is a Foreign Country (1985), which retains the idea of an absolute historical truth but asserts that any communication of history can never be free of bias. Roland Barthes expounded principles of postmodern history in such works as “Le Discours de l’Histoire” in Information sur les Sciences Sociales (1967). Keith Jenkins’ Rethinking History (1991) and On ‘What is History?’ (1995) explain in easily
accessible terms the conflict between absolutist and relativist history, the importance of alternative histories for subsections of society, and the need for scepticism in the reading of history. Samuel’s *Theatres of Memory* (1994) emphasises the importance of popular culture and public perception of history, above the constructions of professional historians.

A cardinal point of this thesis is that representations of the Cambridge spies are subject to all the biases inevitable in historiography, and that a true and real presentation of their sexuality, their politics or their motives is impossible. Consequentially, no alternative ‘correct’ view of them will be offered. Specific issues of ‘metahistory’, to use Hayden White’s term, and of postmodern history will be addressed in several chapters. However, the relativist argument is summarized by, for example, Postlewait’s ‘twelve cruxes’ in *Historiography and the Theatrical Event.* He suggests that the subjectivity of history begins with the motives of those people who initiate events, and the conditions that render those events intelligible. Partial documentation must then be taken into account, given that only a limited number of witnesses and interested parties create historical documentation. External factors will affect the reliability of a document and the probability of its preservation. This includes value judgments concerning whether an event is significant enough to be preserved for posterity or discarded. Testimony surrounding an event is then shaped by successive commentaries. When it is subsequently researched, the values of the historian’s own age are interposed. This includes "the ideas of change that historians use to describe sequences and interpret causes of events" as well as their devices of rhetoric and narratology. Finally, the reader’s values and expectations alter the meaning of a received historical account. In

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3 Postlewait 1991

4 Postlewait 1991: 157-178
the case of a historical play, the later stages of historical transmission concern the playwright directly, but further problems arise when dramatists claim to be representing documented facts, ignoring or denying the other distortions listed.

In dealing with the realms of theatre, history and sexuality, Rebellato’s 1956 And All That warns that there are three notions to be challenged: theatrical representation as a ‘fixed set of signs that pre-exist their reception’; gay history as a simple narrative of liberation; and homosexuality as an ahistorical identity. These points are all relevant to the study of plays concerning the Cambridge spies. The values and expectations of the audience are crucial in the reception of history and biography through any medium, including drama. These values are conditioned by the cultural and political background of the times, so a survey of these conditions is essential. It will be shown that social and legal conditions for the homosexual man in Britain fluctuated over the period in question, so that his position was by no means a linear climb from pariah status to acceptance. Finally, differing paradigms of sexual orientation (which have not been chronologically successive, but overlapping) all have their influence on the plays. These models and other issues in queer theory will inform the arguments of this thesis.

Use of the queer/traitor nexus in the spy plays is heavily dependent on the paradigms of sexuality assumed or discussed in the play texts. The queer ‘identity’ model dominates, and is used to associate disloyalty with a type of person as opposed to particular behaviour. Michel Foucault postulated two paradigms of homosexuality, the first based upon individual sexual acts, which in the Christian era became bound up with the concepts of crime and sin. The second is based on identity, its basis medical

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5 Rebellato 1999: 156
but still juridical. He believed that the second model began in the 1870’s and thus the
concept of the homosexual person was invented at that time. The concept of a fixed
pseudo-ethnic subset of humanity has been politically useful, as it has facilitated the use
of civil rights arguments equivalent to those applying to women and to racial groups.

However, a third major paradigm is emerging (but not yet fully formed) in
which there are no fixed identities or boundaries, but human sexual desires are fluid.
Like most postmodern concepts, this model emphasizes multiplicity of choice and
rejects rigid and conveniently simple categories and narratives. It provides a basis for
alternative readings of the Cambridge spies’ behaviour, to set against the dominance of
the identity model in the plays.

Representations of these paradigms occur in the depiction of queer characters in
history and literature, but also at the level of language, that is, the use and meanings of
words. A useful study of the latter, which will be referred to frequently, is Sedgwick’s
*The Epistemology of the Closet*. The first of her set of axioms is the simple statement
that “People are different from each other”⁶. In this context Sedgwick gives a list of
ways in which sexuality varies other than by gender choice, and criticizes the
privileging of the gender of one’s partner to create the dominant concept of orientation.
She then addresses the problems involved in debating psychological explanations for
sexual behaviour:

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⁶ Sedgwick 1994: 22
Axiom 4: The immemorial, seemingly ritualized debates on nature versus nurture take place against a very unstable background of tacit assumptions and fantasies about both nurture and nature.\(^7\)

The plays under study often focus on education and class upbringing as explanations for the behaviour of the spies, both sexual and political. Sedgwick argues against the primacy of this dichotomy based on biology or culture, that is, on essentialist or constructivist thought. Rather, she focuses on views of sexuality that are either minoritizing or universalising. In the former, the supposed binary of hetero/homo sexuality is relevant only to a fixed minority – those who are marginalized by the distinction. In the universalizing view, sexual choices are an important and determining cultural factor for all people and relevant to all literary discourse.\(^8\) This is not only a statement about the importance of sexuality in all human thought, but recalls the post-structuralist concept in which ‘normal’ sexuality can only be defined by reference to that which is ‘deviant’. The idea of heterosexuality cannot be conceptualized without defining the behaviours it excludes. Thus, any portrait of a politically and sexually marginal traitor helps to define orthodoxy, as conceived by the hegemony existing in the Cold War years.

Certain tropes of gender arise in dramatizations of the lives of the Cambridge spies whenever, for example, Guy Burgess is depicted as an effeminate stereotype. Understanding of this phenomenon is assisted by a second dichotomy expressed by Sedgwick, namely, between views of homosexuality as liminal or separatist. Same-sex object choice is on the one hand thought of by society as a matter of transitivity between

\(^7\) Sedgwick 1994: 40

\(^8\) Sedgwick 1994
genders, but on the other it is a simple preference of like for like. The idea of a ‘woman's soul in a man's body’ preserves an essential heterosexuality - desire operates between a male identity and a female one. But in the separatist alternative it is natural that those with so much in common should bond together. This places gays at the centre of gender definition, not on the threshold.⁹

However, the three models of sexuality suggested by Foucault and by postmodern fluidity are the most significant discourse concerning representations of the Cambridge spies. It is only possible to claim that gay men tend to be traitors if homosexuality is a well-defined concept with fixed borders, that is, if there is a delimited group to be accused and people do not shift in and out of this group. At present, the concept of sexual orientation as a fixed identity is most favoured by the activist gay community, at least partly because of the aforementioned political usefulness of this paradigm. However, models of fluid desire have become a subject of debate because of the issues of inclusivity and the boundary problems inherent in an identity model. It is not yet widely recognized that negative associations such as those made in the spy plays are heavily dependent on the domination of the fixed model of sexuality over the fluid. Corber describes the connection of this debate with the terminology of sexuality:

Discarding sexual object choice as a master category of social and sexual identity, many theorists have adopted the term queer as more inclusive than the terms gay and lesbian, which reinforce binary opposition between heterosexuality and homosexuality and cannot accommodate sexual identities that do not fall under either category (for example, ⁹ Sedgwick 1994: 87
bisexuality, transvestitism, and sadomasochism). Their use of the more fluid and ambiguous *queer* is governed partly by a desire to construct a community that is no longer defined by the sexual object-choice of its members.\(^{10}\)

Paradigms of shifting desire have been most favoured by writers dealing with bisexuality. Eadie, for example, criticizes the bipolar simplification of sexuality shown in the assigning of bisexual personalities such as Oscar Wilde to the homosexual alternative, but advocates the dismantling of the dyad, not the addition of a third term for bisexuality.\(^{11}\) Klein takes the Kinsey Report’s\(^{12}\) scale of seven steps between ‘pure’ heterosexuality and homosexuality and converts it to a grid, with the second dimension consisting of past relationships, present ones, and the individual’s ideal desires.\(^{13}\) It should be added, however, that this model can be misunderstood as placing a person in a fixed position at a moment in time, denying multiplicity of desires and choices. Adoption of this paradigm would allow the Cambridge spies to be depicted as undergoing ‘conversions’ of their sexuality but still belonging to a definite homosexual or bisexual ‘ethnicity’ at the time of their treason. Daumer also argues against asserting a bisexual *identity*, as this would undercut the epistemological possibilities of a completely fluid model of sexuality:

I propose, therefore, that we assume bisexuality, not as an identity that integrates heterosexual and homosexual orientations, but as an

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\(^{10}\) Corber 1997: 195-6

\(^{11}\) Eadie 1999: 122

\(^{12}\) Kinsey Report 1948. See chapter 1 for details.

\(^{13}\) Klein 1999
epistemological as well as ethical vantage point from which we can examine and deconstruct the bipolar framework of gender and sexuality...\textsuperscript{14}

Hemmings connects this goal with Foucault’s models of homosexuality, by questioning the place of bisexual behaviour in act-centered or identity-based paradigms:

The fact that bisexuality has not been pathologised as a sexual identity \textit{per se} may be one reason for the contemporary claims that bisexuality \textit{does not exist}. It is still considered (problematically) as a set of acts. Yet there is a danger that in claiming an identity \textit{per se}, bisexuals will be categorised and contained in a similar way to homosexuals at the end of the nineteenth century. Does recognition of other sexual subjectivities outside of homosexuality and heterosexuality necessitate the assumption of a particular identity?\textsuperscript{15}

Most importantly, breaking down the identity paradigm creates a more elusive target for stereotyping. A collection of desires, rather than a well-defined group of \textit{people}, is less easily portrayed as dangerous, alien or disloyal. Since the principal model of sexuality assumed in the plays (and in prose works to be studied) is that of fixed identity, the Cambridge spies are regarded primarily as homosexual or bisexual \textit{persons}. The language of identity will therefore dominate discussion of sexuality in the texts. This thesis concurs with the emerging view of the fluidity of human sexuality, but its focus is on texts which conveyed to the audience the static version of orientation, and

\textsuperscript{14} Daumer 1999: 159

\textsuperscript{15} Hemmings 1999: 198
therefore discusses sexuality principally in terms of that concept. It will be shown that
the texts either advocate or deconstruct a connection between treason and gay identity,
as opposed to either (a) homosexual acts as in Foucault’s pre-1870 paradigm, or (b)
homoerotic desires as in the fluid model.

Discourses on the nature of sexuality arise not only in political debate within, or
on behalf of, the queer community, but in the representation of non-normative
sexualities in literature and drama. A recent and sympathetic biographical play is The
_Invention of Love_ by Tom Stoppard\textsuperscript{16}, concerning the life of the classicist A. E.
Houseman. Its most significant aspect is that Houseman’s unfulfilled love for his
colleague Moses Jackson is depicted in a manner free of moral judgments, and is
represented as a particular sexual desire, an entity in its own right, not a symptom of a
fixed sexual identity. Houseman is depicted as ‘a personality and not just a sexuality’
(to borrow a slogan from gay politics). The extent to which this is true of
representations of the Cambridge spies varies from author to author.

Corber detects a departure from the identity model in gay writing even before
the postmodern era. Examining such writers as Tennessee Williams and Gore Vidal, he
writes:

The gay male writers examined in this study tended to treat
homosexuality less as a category of identity resembling other categories
of identity such as race and ethnicity than as a form of oppositional
consciousness. They rejected models of political solidarity that were
patterned on kinship relations. Insofar as such models require the

\textsuperscript{16} Stoppard 1997
constant policing of borders to determine who did and did not legitimately belong to the gay and lesbian communities, they hindered the formation of the broadly based coalitions that were needed to overcome the racist, sexist, and homophobic structures of post-war American society.\textsuperscript{17}

The plays concerning the Cambridge spies, however, were not written by playwrights who publicly identified themselves as gay, nor will this study assert that the sexuality of the authors is a significant factor in the reception of the texts. Rather, the playwrights will be studied principally with respect to their attitudes to historiography. However, it will be asserted that these beliefs concerning historical truth are a significant factor informing the texts and the images of sexuality and treason contained in them.

When historical drama seeks to represent persons of non-normative sexuality, additional subjectivities arise, beyond those common to all historical writing. In order to place representations of the Cambridge spies against the background of other dramatic biographies of gay men, a brief survey of plays and films concerned with non-fictional homosexual men is useful, and reveals some problematic images and issues. A series of unsympathetic portrayals of historical characters can be traced. Goldman’s \textit{The Lion in Winter} (1966) depicts the relationship between the future Richard I of England and Philip II of France as a dirty secret and a matter of great distaste to Philip. Hampton’s play and film \textit{Total Eclipse} (1969), concerning Rimbeau and Verlaine, depicts Rimbeau particularly as selfish, arrogant and violent.

\textsuperscript{17} Corber 1997: 4
Comparison of films concerning T. E. Lawrence demonstrate a shift from silence to openness in the last four decades of the century. David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) concealed Lawrence’s sexuality, with regard to his homosexuality and his masochism. His autobiography, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, carries indications of both:

In the Mediterranean, woman's influence and supposed purpose were made cogent by an understanding in which she was accorded the physical world in simplicity, unchallenged, like the poor in spirit. Yet this same agreement, by denying equality of sex, made love, companionship and friendliness impossible between man and woman. Woman became a machine for muscular exercise, while man's psychic side could be slaked only amongst his peers. Whence arose these partnerships between man and man, to supply human nature with more than the contact of flesh with flesh.  

Furthermore, Lawrence’s description of the incident at Derra, when he was flogged by the Turks, shows a deep preoccupation with the details of the event and reveals his mental obsession with the incident afterwards. Lean’s film obscures this by ascribing to Lawrence a vague form of post-traumatic stress after Derra. In a form of expurgation common to biographical films of the time, no desires for men or boys are alluded to. In contrast, *A Dangerous Man: Lawrence After Arabia* (1993) depicts Lawrence's activities at the Versailles Peace Conference of 1919. In this film Lawrence's homosexuality is made clear when a woman is sent by French diplomats to seduce and

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18 Lawrence 1988: 508-9
19 Lawrence 1988: 442-7
spy on him. The latter film’s frankness is an indication of changing values on the part of filmmakers and audiences. However, this does not mean that negative images of historical homosexuals ceased to appear: using Marlowe’s play *Edward II*, Derek Jarman produced a 1992 film in which Galveston and his associates are not only murderous and devious as in Marlowe, but also decadent and sleazy.

The nature of representation is explicitly discussed by Quentin Crisp in an introduction to the teleplay based on his 1977 autobiography, *The Naked Civil Servant*. He tells the audience that he wanted the film to be made, because films are fantasies:

> But then they said “we want the film to be real – you know – real life”.
> So I said “any film, even the worst, is at least better than real life…Yes, of course you must have an actor to play me. He will do it far better than I have done”.  

Crisp is here setting out in plain language a cardinal point of dramatic historiography. He rejects the notion that any representation of himself can constitute reality, but welcomes the prospect of a simulacrum as a valuable artefact in its own right. Crisp’s concept of artistic *quality* in drama is important to him, not its degree of ‘truth’.

While queer theory is concerned with representations of gay characters and with epistemology, these matters are also connected with the use of myths and Jungian archetypes. In addition to historiography and queer theory, the study of representations of the Cambridge spies is also informed by mythical constructs concerning the ‘Other’, that is, all that is different from the ‘Self’ and is socially abnormal. These ideas infiltrate...

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20 Crisp, Q. *The Naked Civil Servant* [film], (Gold 1975)
culture at many levels, the most significant being those that reach the largest audiences. Political and sexual bindings of the Other in popular culture therefore form a foundation upon which representations of the Cambridge spies were constructed.

The social climate of the late twentieth century has strengthened the myths and archetypes of Otherness based on political and sexual unorthodoxy. Censorship of realist portrayals of sexuality in the arts has not prevented symbolic representations of ‘deviance’ in fiction, especially in the more fantastic realms such as science fiction and horror. During the 1970s and 1980s, as literary and sexual censorship relaxed, these myths were fed back into realist and historical drama. Plays and teleplays depicting the Cambridge spies were therefore informed by paranoid images of the Other, particularly as the sterile but proselytising alien. The epistemological basis for these myths lies in the placement of any kind of deviance on the marginal side of a multiplicity of binaries. The sense of Otherness, when applied to a particular target group, was reinforced by applying a second such paradigm, so that the queer/traitor association was only one of the pairings brought into play. In the 1990s, under the influence of new critical insights, these binaries have been brought to the foreground and thus deconstructed, by post-modern play and satire.

The binaries capitalist / Communist and heterosexual / homosexual may be described as ‘surface’ examples of a deeper division of terms into central and marginal. One of Derrida’s principal tools for deconstructing texts was the reversal, followed by the neutralization, of these binaries. Some of the pairs he considered most significant were presence / absence, purity / corruption, nature / culture and speaking / writing. The Marxist and the homosexual are therefore identified as absent from the visible
world - hidden, corrupt, and culturally produced, whereas the politically orthodox Briton or American and the heterosexual are held to be present, pure, and according to nature. Even the speaking / writing binary is mapped to sexuality when Derrida speaks of Orpheus entering a homosexual phase and exchanging singing for writing.\textsuperscript{21} Both Derrida and Foucault have shown that in these binaries, the central term is always already penetrated by the marginal and defined through it. Orthodox politics or sexuality cannot be conceptualised except as that which is ‘not commie’ or ‘not queer’. Though the marginalized are used as scapegoats, this phenomenon is double-sided. The original Greek \textit{pharmakon} (the literal scapegoat) was led from inside the city to the outside, to perform a purifying effect. The scapegoat is both stigmatised and beneficial, just as the Greek word means both poison and remedy. There must always be a marginalized group to be blamed for all woes, but also to give the majority a means of self-identification.

During the Cold War the highest priority target for exclusion in the West was the Communist. However, for marginalizing propaganda to be successful it was desirable that it invoke a visceral reaction in the majority of the population, and a group distinguished only by its beliefs concerning the distribution of wealth did not fit this requirement. It was too intellectual a concept and needed to be loaded with more basic biological overtones such as race or sexuality. For this reason the dangerous Bolshevik was usually paired with another marginalized group: the Jew in the Nazi and Fascist

\textsuperscript{21} Sedgwick gives an extended list of binaries that are applied to sexual orientation. Using the convention of placing the normative term first, these include disclosure / secrecy, knowledge / ignorance, public / private, masculine / feminine, majority / minority, innocence / initiation, natural / artificial, new / old, discipline / terrorism, canonic / non-canonic, wholeness / decadence, urbane / provincial, domestic / foreign, health / illness, same / different, active / passive, in / out, cognition / paranoia, art / kitsch, utopia / apocalypse, sincerity / sentimentality and voluntariness / addiction (Sedgwick 1994: 11).
regimes; the Asiatic in, for example, Australia where Communism was associated with the ‘yellow peril’; and with the homosexual on both sides of the Atlantic. Persons who posed the same threat were already metonymically the same person, but the two targets for paranoia have often been literally portrayed as the same group. Hence, in the abovementioned historical examples, the Jew is a Bolshevik even if he is a banker, Asian immigrants are a political threat even if they are shopkeepers, and the queer is a potential traitor whatever his position or background.\(^{22}\)

In popular fiction, the racial and gender stereotyping of the political villain has been commonplace. Sax Rohmer’s Chinese character Fu Manchu (in novels of the 1910s to 1950s) and Fleming’s Doctor No were the epitome of the yellow peril. The \textit{femme fatale} in Anglophone fiction was a mainland-European version of the insidious alien linked with the female (also, of course, the marginalized term of a binary). The ‘Mata Hari’ figure represented political danger through espionage combined with a dangerous sexuality. From the earliest decades of film, the ‘vamp’, exemplified by Theda Bara, provided visual images of this two-fold danger and was connected to the myth of the literal vampire.

Up to the 1960s, censorship restrained the unencoded representation of homosexuals in the fiction of espionage. In one of Ian Fleming’s James Bond novels, the sexuality of the assassins Wint and Kidd is referred to, and Kidd is said to have a

\(^{22}\) The pairing of sexual unorthodoxy with anti-capitalism began long before the Cold War. William Lecky in \textit{Democracy and Liberty} (1896) wrote that capitalism is based on hereditary property, and therefore on marriage and the family. Socialism seeks to annihilate family stability and affection, and to undermine morality (Dijkstra 1996: 270-1). This combination of sexual with economic rhetoric was inherited by such writers as Ayn Rand, in whose works the ‘real man’ is the individual entrepreneur, whose family is threatened by any form of collectivism.
‘pretty face’ but no overt sexual behaviour is depicted. A C.I.A. agent in the book ventures the opinion that homosexuals make some of the most vicious killers. In the 1971 film made from this book, however, Wint and Kidd use perfume, hold hands, and use effeminate body language throughout. Between the 1950s and 1970s, increasing license to portray homosexuals allowed a more thorough, yet thoroughly negative, picture of the queer killer to be shown. Thus, in the realm of fiction, the homosexual Cold Warrior or gangster could be depicted and exaggerated, alongside representations of the historical Cambridge spies.

From the 1960s onward, however, novels such as those of John Le Carré produced an alternative image of the Cold War, a more earthy and ruthless Cold Warrior than Fleming’s romanticized James Bond. Le Carre’s *The Spy who Came in from the Cold* (1963) uses a metaphor of a family in a car being crushed between two trucks, Communism and Capitalism, reflecting Le Carre’s portrayal of two forces equal and opposite but both deadly. The television series *Callan* (1967-72) also depicted the British secret services as no less unscrupulous than the K.G.B. This lessening in the demonization of Communism may have weakened the power of the queer/traitor metonym, but did not reduce the frequency of its use, especially since it was encoded in other kinds of popular culture besides the espionage story.

In the spy novel or film, the political (that is, Communist) half of the nexus was in the foreground, leaving the sexual half to be encoded. In more fantastical literature, however, the polymorphous aspects of the myth of the alien Other could be either deeply embedded or deliberately brought into the open in allegorical fashion. The genres of science fiction and horror are the most fruitful in tracing images dealing with

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the fear of the perverse. These two areas of popular culture contain characters analogous to the Cambridge spies - creatures who are literally rather than figuratively alien - who express outwardly the threatening aspects encoded into images of the spies. The horror genre presents archetypes at their strongest and most threatening, and thus presents the most obvious sexual subtexts. Science fiction also has an ability to present social concepts at their most basic, by stripping them of any familiar context or by reversing the normal/deviant duality.

In the realm of science fiction, the use of political/sexual binding as a tactic is explored openly in *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1981), a novel by Ursula LeGuin. On a planet whose inhabitants are hermaphroditic, the politician Estraven has a strong preference for the male role in sexual relations. Any such strong leaning in either direction is considered deviant by this rigidly bisexual society, and Estraven’s enemies make full use of it in falsely accusing him of treason. In exile, he makes a speech almost identical to one attributed to Guy Burgess in Bennett’s *An Englishman Abroad*:

> How does one hate a country, or love one?... I know people, I know towns, farms, hills and rivers and rocks... but what is the sense of giving a boundary to all that, of giving it a name and ceasing to love where the name ceases to apply?²⁴

The question being asked is ‘what are Estraven and Burgess betraying?’. LeGuin’s answer is that Estraven is betraying the norms of society, those norms in this case being the reverse of the heterocentrism of our society.

²⁴ LeGuin 1981: 181
There are many works of science fiction that throw into sharp relief a nexus between sexual deviance and traitorousness in a more cryptic manner than LeGuin. Included in this category are all works in which insidious aliens take over human beings, notably Robert Heinlein's novel *The Puppet Masters* (1951). This device reflects a particular aspect of homophobia - that one cannot tell the 'aliens' from normal people - the racist can at least detect the object of his phobia immediately. The undetectable alien also represents both the Communist traitor and the sexual deviant in that both may be spawned by normal, even elite, parents. This often-repeated mythical construct plays on the same fears that are applied to both homosexuals and Communists – they can look like normal people; they are the undetectable insurgents who, like Heinlein’s parasites, cannot reproduce and so must convert others. Here we see an allegory of Communist recruitment as well as the perceived danger of allowing ‘queers’ to influence children.

When two phenomena are invoked by the same mythical image, it is easy to engender equivalent fear of them, and promote the assumption that the presence of one in an individual implies the presence of the other. The fear is deepened by the concept of disguise, in which the concealed alien is executing a plan to take over and alter human society. In stories of the literal alien, many aspects of the invader are concomitant with fears engendered with respect to the political and sexual outsider.

It is notable that Heinlein’s *The Puppet Masters* was published in 1951, the year of Burgess and Maclean’s defection, but not filmed until 1994, after the Cold War had ended. Under Orme’s direction, the film adds significant detail to Heinlein’s aliens. When government agents arrive in the town where the invaders have landed, a female agent is the first to detect that something is amiss with the townspeople, because she is
not being subjected to the male gaze in the manner to which she is accustomed. So the first signifier of ‘alienness’ is a lack of proper heterosexual response. Since the alien creatures adhere to the outside of the human body, the compulsory removal of clothing is the second detection strategy used. The alien can no longer be closeted – the binary of openness and secrecy can be broken if deviance is written on the body. This is reflected in a desire to be able to detect homosexuals by physical means, and leads to the portrayal of such characters as Burgess and Blunt in visibly effeminate or effete ways.

A further part of this mythical construct is the lone hero or small group who alone know the danger and must convince the majority. The portrayal of characters who, for example, suspected Philby long before he defected, provides an equivalent to the heroes of ‘hidden alien’ fiction. When most people see a human shape, their tendency is to assume that the object of their gaze is a ‘normal human’ and it is difficult to convince them that s/he is an alien invader. In the same way, the heteronormative gaze can be said to cause the invisible or closeted nature of homosexuality – everyone is presumed a priori to be heterosexual. The homophobe must therefore warn the public of the danger, perhaps giving a list of small indicators of possible deviance. Life magazine in 1964 warned that the homosexual was nearly impossible to detect:

> Often the only signs are a very subtle tendency to over-meticulous grooming, plus the failure to cast the ordinary man’s admiring glance at every pretty girl who walks by.\(^{25}\)

Such markers, applied to characters such as the Cambridge spies, are the real-world equivalent of the flaws which enable the fictional hero/es to detect the invaders.

\(^{25}\) Quoted in Edelman 1994: 152
Invasion of the Body Snatchers was originally filmed in 1956 from Jack Finney’s novel, and a remake was produced by Kaufman in 1978. The activities of aliens once again become noticeable when a man fails to respond to his wife in his usual manner. Several heterosexual couples are estranged in the early part of the film, which depicts the gradual revelation of the alien presence. The next stage is the observation of secret meetings and mutual recognition by the apparently altered people, symbolizing a general fear of underground deviant societies (from gay bars to Communist cells). There is no external giveaway by which the aliens can be detected in Kaufman’s version of the myth, and hence no victory – the ending is apocalyptic.

Fear of foreign, Communist and homosexual influence on the minds of the people are also symbolized in science fiction. The aliens in the film They Live (Carpenter 1988) wear human disguises but are also converting real people to their cause via subliminal messages in all forms of media. They are exemplars of the fifth-column propagandist, and must be fought in the same manner as perceived Communists in Hollywood (vide McCarthy) or British county councils disseminating pro-gay information (restrained by the Thatcher government).

The homosexual as alien can be encoded in the fine details of script or cinematography. Russo shows how the implicitly gay character has been depicted as being from an alien world, from the demi-monde of The Picture of Dorian Grey (1945) to the elite background of Rope (1948). In the film version of Tennessee Williams’ Suddenly Last Summer (1959), the ‘offstage’ homosexual character is faceless. As with the monsters of Ridley Scott’s Alien or Spielberg’s Jaws, the camera shows only parts of him or becomes his point-of-view, to avoid any clear depiction of him. As a rule, the

26 Russo 1987: 94
alien remains in shadow, with the possible exception of a final revelation of its form when it is destroyed. The same hidden, closed and cryptic semiotics are used for monsters, for homosexuals and for spies.

The myth centring on a lone monster in the horror genre, such as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, is generally an inversion of the myth of the hero’s journey. The archetypal monster becomes a Jungian shadow of the hero. This ‘monster’s journey’ has also been frequently applied to homosexual characters, including the Cambridge spies. The hero’s journey involves phases of separation, initiation and return. Similarly, the first phase of the monster’s journey is creation, involving separation from nothingness or from an initial humanity (in, for example, vampires and werewolves). The second is, as with the hero’s journey, the longest and involves repeated clashes with opposing forces. The final stage is destruction – a return to nothingness or to a normal human death. Horror films following this pattern were produced in large numbers in the 1960s and 1970s. Films featuring homosexual characters made in the same period also show a pattern of (a) realisation or discovery, (b) conflict with societal disapproval, and (c) death by suicide or murder. It will be shown that features of this journey can be seen in some of the spy plays, especially Mitchell’s *Another Country*. Like monsters, gays were treated in mid-century films as “things” that should not have happened. They were killers, prison inmates (especially in the case of lesbians), or horror film monsters such as vampires.

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27 The tortured protagonists of *Victim* (1961), *Children’s Hour* (1962) and *The Detective* (1968) all undergo the monster’s journey. At the least they were sinister figures like the housekeeper Mrs Danvers in *Rebecca* (1940).

28 Russo 1987: 49

29 The place of gay imagery in the vampire genre has been the subject of study in its own right. Lesbian-encoded vampires feature in *Dracula’s Daughter* (1936), *Blood And Roses* (1960), *Vampyres* (1974), and
The vampire is the character from the horror genre who provides the most obvious metaphor for sexual unorthodoxy. Vampires are usually androgynes – the taking of blood replaces sexual relations and victims may be of either sex. They can be interpreted as having no sexual orientation, and are emancipated from the biological family. Another link between the vampire and the homosexual is the theme of narcissism. Freud saw narcissism as an essential part of male homosexuality and as the rationale behind desire for the similar instead of the different in choice of partners. Vampires change their victims to be like themselves. The innocent heroine becomes the ‘vamp’ stereotype, altering styles of dress, hair and body language accordingly. As well as vampiric narcissism, this device becomes another allegory of conversion - in this case from heterosexual woman to lesbian. The Communist homosexual is doubly represented in this fashion, presenting the danger of conversion of others to be like him/herself – politically, sexually or both.

This metaphor is one that has been applied as much, if not more, to lesbians as to gay men. Dijkstra has also linked the vampiress with politico-economic metonyms:

Both she and the immigrant hordes were agents of collectivism – that Semitic invention of a man named Karl Marx, who had made the call of “woman-rule” once again echo through civilization. Popular culture

_The Vampire Lovers_, one of several versions of Sheridan La Fanu’s _Carmilla_. Male gay vampires occur in Polanski’s _Fearless Vampire Killers_ (1967), _Once Bitten_ (1985) and there was recent public controversy over the degree of homoeroticism in _Interview With The Vampire_, based on Anne Rice’s novel.

30 Day 1993: 69-70

31 Weiss 1992: 94
eagerly emphasized this link. Thus the sexual vampire became a political subversive who threatened the very survival of economic individualism.32

The foremost use of the vampire myth, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, was published in 1897 when overt sexual acts could not be described in British novels. It is a novel of copious encoded sexuality. The word homosexual was not yet in use – the nearest 1897 term would have been ‘sexual inversion’. Critical analysis of *Dracula* has painted its title character as Other, culturally, physically and sexually, but also socially - he is attempting to infiltrate Britain’s middle class although he is encoded as both above and beneath them.33 As a vampire he is a lower form of life but as a Count he is of aristocratic class. It will be shown that this dichotomy arises in the depiction of the spies, especially Blunt, as upper class and yet degenerate – Marxist and yet elite.

The representation of all these myths – the alien, the monster, the vampire - was opened to new treatment from the 1970s onward, with the advent of post-modern analysis and queer theory. At first there was resistance to the queering of texts - Sedgwick’s sixth axiom states “The relation of gay studies to debates on the literary canon is, and had best be, tortuous”. She provides a list of the ways in which homoerotic speculations about literature are typically dismissed.34 However, forms of queer theory had been growing in proportion to the stridency and sophistication of attacks on homosexuality. Foucault considered this inevitable:

32 Dijkstra 1996: 281
33 Hatlen 1988: 120
34 Sedgwick 1994: 48
...but it also made possible the formation of a "reverse" discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or "naturality" be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified. There is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite it, another discourse that runs counter to it. Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations;...35

Therefore, forms of the ‘alien’ myth came under direct scrutiny by new writers in the postmodern period, starting in the late 1970s. Pearson, in a specific study of science fiction, states that ‘queerness’ is not necessarily about identity but can simply be about difference. Since sci-fi and horror are already concerned with that which is dissonant, these texts may be (a) not overtly queer but analogical, (b) proto-queer challenging sexuality and social surroundings, (c) coded but in plain sight, an open secret, or (d) overtly queer.36 Such multiple levels were open to other genres also. During this period of conscious exposure of metonyms, the vampire myth was expanded in the novels of Anne Rice, who lived in San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury district amidst the gay community. Her vampire characters are no longer on the ‘monster’s journey’, but are the often-sympathetic protagonists, struggling with the ethical problems and the isolation of their difference from humans. They do not have any human forms of sex - the drinking of blood (including from each other) is sex as well as food for them, and gender is irrelevant. Same-sex desire is never hidden in the novels of Anne Rice. Her sadomasochistic ‘Sleeping Beauty’ series depicts sexual activity in all four combinations of male/female with dominant/submissive. In the same way, her

35 Foucault 1990: 101
36 Pearson 1999: 5
depictions of vampire society break down presumptions of gender dominance and heteronormativity.

Another recent treatment of the vampire myth which is full of ‘post-modern play’ is Joss Whedon’s television series *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003). The conventions of the vampire myth are constantly satirised, and the image of the helpless female victim reversed. In addition, the encoded sexual unorthodoxy of the vampire is juxtaposed with an open treatment of human sexuality. With actual gay relationships present (and portrayed as healthy and positive), the metonymical treatment of vampires is inevitably brought to the surface and deconstructed. Pairings that were once covert in the vampire genre are brought to the surface through double-entendre dialogue. This kind of open and foregrounded homosexual metaphor occurs in Bennett’s *A Question of Attribution*, which will be examined in detail.

Generally speaking, however, the spy plays are not postmodern but belong to conventional docudrama. Since they were writing in the 1970s to 1990s, postmodern ironical devices such as those of Rice and Whedon were available to the playwrights but not used. Inquiring into the reason for this absence leads us back into the realms of genre and historiography – the playwrights were attempting to produce ‘factual’ or semi-fictional docudrama. They had certain views of history and historical writing which conditioned their treatments of politics and sexuality. Exposure of their use of queer/traitor metonyms requires greater analysis of their texts and subtexts.
This analysis will proceed in the following stages, moving from background, through early historiographical treatment of the spies in prose, to the plays and their authors:

Chapter 1 provides the historical background to the writing of the spy texts and the events they depict. The relevant cultural history ranges from global politics to the arts, including the effects of paranoia arising from the Cold War, espionage, social problems in Britain, the nature of the Left and youth culture. The loss of empire, the class and education systems and censorship are particularly relevant in this context. The position of the homosexual in post-World War Two Britain is examined with particular reference to the legal situation and the theatre. Queer representations in film, television and on stage are reviewed in order to illustrate the cultural milieu surrounding the plays in question.

Chapter 2 summarizes the events surrounding the Cambridge spies and then deals with the exposé class of prose works, written mainly by journalists. The role of journalists as historians is questioned, and their relationship with the government is used as an example of problematic historiography. The approach of these writers to documentation, ‘authoritative’ sources and the concept of truth is examined, with particular reference to Chapman Pincher – especially his use of unattributed sources (secretly approved by government) and his revision of certain matters related to sexuality. Theoretical aspects of historiography and queer studies are revisited, such as foundationalism, revisions of received ‘truth’, and history as a set of connections between facts as opposed to a collection of events. The chapter considers how these discourses can be brought to bear upon the journalistic texts.
Chapter 3 surveys relevant biographies and autobiographies. Thematic and narratological issues are raised, to determine their usefulness in illuminating this biographical material. Examples range from researched biography to personal recollection, including material from Tom Driberg, Graham Greene, Peter Wright, John Banville and Miranda Carter. Kim Philby's autobiography is also studied, along with the place of biography in received history and the problems of autobiographical memory. In particular, the chapter examines the relative importance of sexual orientation to each biographer, and the historiographical values in play. Motives, selectivity and the construction of schemata in biographical works are considered, as well as the role of semi-fictional writing.

Chapter 4 deals directly with drama, and its new layer of problematic issues in historiography. The exigencies of the documentary-drama genre and the requirements of writing for television are included, along with the historiographical approach used by each of the principal playwrights: John Osborne, Hugh Whitemore, Hugh Conner, Robin Chapman, Julian Mitchell, Ian Curteis and Alan Bennett. The content of the plays is summarized, and the place of the authors in the genres of theatre, film and television analysed. The central task is to establish each playwright’s attitude to the transmission of history, since their representation of sexuality will later be shown to have a strong connection to their placement on the scale of absolutism and relativism. Specific theories of postmodern historiography such as those of Barthes and Hayden White are examined for relevance to the playwrights’ works.
Chapter 5 analyses in depth the thematic issues of the plays. It re-examines models of sexuality, and then deals with a list of aspects of representation of gay characters in the spy plays. These aspects include: stereotypical constructions of the central characters; motives and ethical standpoints ascribed to them; homosexual identity versus act-centred definitions; the closet and the openness/secrecy binary; and the upper-class man, the educated man or the English man as traitor (in each case either *ipso facto* or via sexual orientation). For example, this chapter examines class as a significant marker of infidelity in the plays of Ian Curteis, the role of the public school in Julian Mitchell’s *Another Country*, and the centrality of Englishness in the works of Alan Bennett. Finally, the chapter shows how the queer/traitor nexus is either covertly confirmed or directly examined and criticized in the plays, and considers the role of this nexus in homophobic aspects of the writing of history.

A time-line comparing events in the political, legal and cultural worlds is provided as Appendix A.